

Ways to help with sensory difficulty

Sight

Difficulty identified	Suggested activities/strategies
Holds objects close to eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eye test to check for short-sightedness• Help child to filter out irrelevant information and focus on what is important to them
Fascinated by tiny threads on carpet/small patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place large play mat/cloth on floor to discourage thread pulling and encourage task focus
Stares at fluorescent lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer sensory environments as relaxing alternative
Likes to see toys spinning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporate spinning in play activities, gradually reducing spinning and increasing emphasis on toy function, eg rolling
Excited by flashing lights on toys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit toys to use as motivators for short periods
Turns lights off/avoids looking at print in books	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase natural colours in child's environment• Keep artificial lights dimmed; increase natural light• Reduce unnecessary visual information• Create 'den' or designated area which is visually sympathetic for the child

Touch

Difficulty identified	Suggested activities/strategies
Avoids holding hands with adults or children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a no pressure approach and allow child to watch from a distance• See if child will tolerate adult holding onto a sleeve• Expose child to range of tactile experiences
Craves rough and tumble play	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build more gentle play sequences into play• Include a wind down period in this play and gradually increase time

Holds people tightly/leaning on others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give firm handshakes or high fives throughout the day • Play clapping and guess the object by feeling games • Divert child to pressure toys eg squeeze balls, encourage to press down on a beach ball
Strips off clothing	<p>Analyse what the issue is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are tags rubbing? Remove if possible • Stick to familiar acceptable clothes and gradually introduce new garments for short periods <p>A fitted vest/body stocking can sometimes help to comfort against irritating fabrics</p>
Finds nappy change distressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure mat is not cool – place towel underneath child when changing • Determine if child needs firm or light touch and use single quick movements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team activity with familiar song or toy
Avoids messy play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate familiar toys into messy play, eg car in paint tray • Let child manipulate materials with long, then short handle tools • Use Ziploc bags filled with messy materials for close exploration
Doesn't show distress when hurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expose to variations of touch eg light and firm to help child to learn to identify different sensations

Smell and taste

Difficulty identified	Suggested activities/strategies
Smells toys before playing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show alternative ways of identifying toys, eg by texture • Use scratch and sniff books during play
Puts objects up nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show child appropriate distance to hold objects when smelling them • Allow to sniff different fragrances on large pieces of fabric

Eats non-food items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene and replace with small food item; use small box with seal to encourage child to eat edible items • Direct to special box of chewable toys (teethers, rings) each time an inedible item is put in mouth
Chews/mouths everything	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly at stage of development where mouth exploration is dominant • Provide with range of textured toys/objects to explore with hands
Bites people for no apparent reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be experiencing overload. Approach child slowly from front, not touching child • Child could wear a small rubber ring to divert to when he feels urge to bite
Eats specific foods only – dry, sloppy, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentle taste tests; child is offered very small pieces of new food in between favourites • Reward for any positive approach to new food such as smelling, touching or holding in mouth • Exploratory play with various food materials, eg wet spaghetti, porridge oats
Refuses to sit at table to eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult to model sitting at table with child • Decrease amount of time child is expected to sit at table. After short period of appropriate sitting, allow to move away to do favourite activity
Licks people/objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert child to different ways of identifying people through sight and touch

Movement and body sense

Difficulty identified	Suggested activities/strategies
Climbs to excess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give lots of opportunity to play on large play equipment • Play running /catch games
Seeks rocking motion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in paired play eg row the boat, roly poly song • Use of a large child sized gym ball to simulate rocking motion

Spins excessively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play games where spinning appropriate, eg ring a roses • Read books that involve swirling actions, eg Bear Hunt
Constantly on the move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide child with regular, frequent bursts of gross motor play • Reduce time spent on sit down activities
Difficulty negotiating around obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise sight awareness of obstacles with regular reminders • Put visual markers on fixed obstacles • Play games involving moving around obstacles
No sense of danger when climbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure safety by diverting climbing to appropriate play equipment and reinforcing 'no climbing here'
Difficulty with fine motor skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fine motor play opportunities • Encourage play with tactile manipulative toys, eg squishy balls

Sound

Difficulty identified	Suggested activities/strategies
Distressed by loud, sudden noises eg balloon popping, child screaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying noise through visual and verbal labelling can reassure, eg 'wow it's the balloon, look!' • Encourage child to play with object or watch others play with it • Create fun games, eg blowing up balloon and letting it go, releasing small squeaky bursts of air, etc.
Becomes over excited from repetitive sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sand timer to show that activity is going to finish • Limit access to sound before it over-stimulates the child
Distressed by everyday noises eg hand dryer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage child to stay at distance but in same room, so they can see it but feel protected • Visually identify sound source to ease anxiety.

	<p>Eventually encourage child to move near it... touch it...turn it on</p>
<p>Places hand over others mouth when they sing/talk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the child by providing explanation if group are going to sing • Try to ensure that one adult talks to child at once • Use soft, calm voice. Speak in short, simple sentences
<p>Doesn't respond when spoken to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate hearing difficulty • Provide structured teaching in distraction free area for short periods • Use child's name at start of any interaction • Use animation in voice to help child pay attention • Basic work on identity/name recognition using photographs and labelling tray, chair, etc to support with recognition