

Proud to be part of

The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service

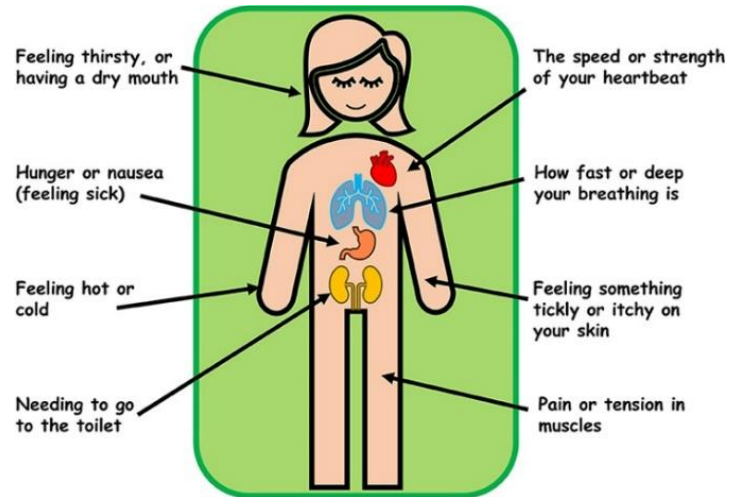
## Sensory Differences

### The Seven Senses:

1. Touch (Skin) Tactile
2. Taste (Tongue) Gustatory
3. Smell (Nose) Olfactory
4. Sound (Ears) Auditory
5. Sight (Eyes) Vision
6. Movement and balance (Inner ear) Vestibular
7. Body awareness (muscles, joints and tendons) Proprioception

### And...

Self-awareness (hunger etc) Interception



Sight (Visual)



Smell (Olfactory)



Hearing (Auditory)



Taste (Gustatory)



Touch (Tactile)



Balance & Movement (Vestibular)



Body Awareness (Proprioception)



When walking into a room, a child with sensory difficulties might see all the information in that room at once, from the plug sockets, the ceiling fan, the food, the music playing, the amount of people etc.

Whilst processing all of this information, the people who are there and what they are saying may be completely missed; the child may become overwhelmed and experience sensory overload.

Find out more at  
[mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service

### SENSORY SEEKING

- I could bounce on a trampoline & spin in circles on the tyre swing all day long
- I like to smell things
- I love to play with the lights and turn them on and off
- I enjoy making lots of noise - the louder the better
- I don't notice if my clothing is disheveled or not on right
- Tackle me, roll on the floor with me, give me bear hugs
- I love taking risks, jumping from high up and crashing into things
- I love having my hair brushed or played with
- I chew on everything in sight. I love crunchy foods
- I love being tickled and massaged
- I hate wearing shoes



The way that our children experience the senses is unique

They could be:

**Sensory avoiding** – over sensitive to sensation.

**Sensory seeking** – under-responsive to sensation. **Passive** – don't register sensation

**Difficulty filtering** -cannot separate the important sensory information from the less important sensory information

### SENSORY SENSITIVE

- I am scared of trampolines, monkey bars or to swing high
- I dislike having my hair brushed
- I hate certain food textures so I'm a picky eater
- I close my eyes in bright lights
- I cover my ears to loud noise
- I'm very sensitive to smells
- I don't like being tickled
- I take out the tags in my clothes and there's some fabrics I won't wear
- Don't touch me
- I'm really cautious with every step I take
- I hate being barefoot



It could also be a combination of all of these!

Remember: Fluctuations and mixed patterns are the norm!

Things that may affect their ability to cope with sensory stimuli, are: illness, energy levels, experiences that day, anxiety levels and upcoming events.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWPL3QPD4p0>

Find out more at [mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)











Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service



Sense	Under sensitive	Over sensitive
 <p>Taste</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers strongly flavoured foods</li> <li>• Smells objects obsessively</li> <li>• Licks non-edible objects</li> <li>• Eat everything – e.g. soil, grass, play dough – known as 'pica'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrictive diet due to sensitive taste buds</li> <li>• May prefer bland tastes</li> <li>• Doesn't like toothpaste.</li> </ul>
 <p>Touch</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not respond to touch</li> <li>• Constantly touch, push, lean</li> <li>• Unaware of personal space</li> <li>• Fidgeting</li> <li>• Responds well to tight cuddles, or deep massage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdraws</li> <li>• Avoids messy play</li> <li>• Food avoidant</li> <li>• Need personal space</li> <li>• Sensitive to certain materials and/or clothes labels.</li> </ul>
 <p>Smell</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little or no sense of smell</li> <li>• Does not notice very strong smells</li> <li>• Licks things to help get a better understanding of what is around them</li> <li>• May seek out smells – sniffs objects or people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finds smells intense and offensive</li> <li>• Notices smells that others don't.</li> <li>• Dislikes particular soaps, shampoos, washing powders, perfumes on self or others</li> <li>• Gags easily</li> <li>• Limits diet to natural smelling foods</li> <li>• Recognises others by their smell.</li> </ul>
 <p>Sound</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not acknowledge sound, incl. comments / instructions</li> <li>• May enjoy noisy places, loud music/TV</li> <li>• May bang doors/objects</li> <li>• May speak very loudly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May fear loud noises</li> <li>• Unable to filter out background noise</li> <li>• May be able to hear conversations in the distance</li> <li>• Finds noisy environments such as shops distressing</li> <li>• May make a lot of noise themselves!</li> </ul>
 <p>Sight</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixates / stares at visual stimuli (e.g. spinning objects)</li> <li>• Strongly drawn to flashing / bright lights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May find bright/fluorescent lights disturbing</li> <li>• May focus on detail rather than the bigger picture</li> <li>• May not look at you directly</li> <li>• May be sensitive to sunlight.</li> </ul>
 <p>Vestibular</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constantly moving/on the go</li> <li>• Restless, unable to sit still</li> <li>• Rocks/swings/spins self</li> <li>• Doesn't get dizzy</li> <li>• Often falls, has poor saving reactions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids feet leaving the floor</li> <li>• Difficulty tolerating activities that require movement</li> <li>• 'Locks' joints on unstable surfaces</li> <li>• Car sickness</li> <li>• Doesn't like head being tipped back e.g. during hair washing or nappy change</li> </ul>
 <p>Proprioception</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stands too close, unaware of personal space</li> <li>• Difficulty avoiding obstructions, bumping into things</li> <li>• Leans on people/objects for support</li> <li>• Difficulty judging how much force to use</li> <li>• Needs to look at their body to move accurately</li> <li>• Difficulty with fine motor skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This may include having a larger personal space</li> <li>• May be over -sensitive to self and how it works</li> </ul>
 <p>Interoception</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not recognise the urge to use the bathroom</li> <li>• High pain threshold</li> <li>• May not recognise thirst or hunger</li> <li>• May be unaware of temperature</li> <li>• Tiredness goes unnoticed until exhausted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel more hungry or thirsty than in reality</li> <li>• Think they have the urge to use the bathroom very frequently</li> <li>• Feels pain more intensely and/or for longer</li> <li>• Feel more ill / more symptoms.</li> </ul>

Things that could affect their ability to cope with sensory stimuli, are illness, energy levels, experiences that day, anxiety levels and upcoming events.

Find out more at [mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of

The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service

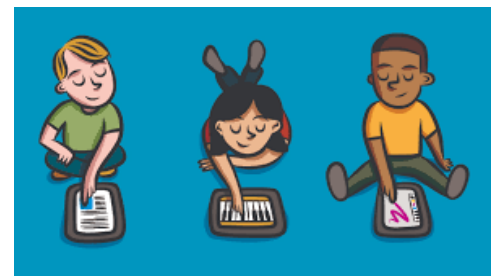
## What can we do to help?

- We may need to adapt the environment to meet the child's needs
- To cope they may use behaviours such as spinning, rocking, crying, hiding or hitting as strategies to communicate or to help address their sensory need
- We can try to identify the sensory need through observation, analysis and reflections.
- We can use a sensory check list to focus our ideas.
- We can look at how we can adapt the environment both at home, school or college.
- Where possible, avoid situations that you know might distress your child.
- Avoiding the supermarket at busy times
- Avoiding touching your child unexpectedly
- Ask to drop off and pick up your child from school 10 minutes early to avoid the crowds
- Prepare your child
- Give coping tools/strategies
- Reduce exposure
- Use visual aids and social stories to support your child's understanding.
- Let them initiate i.e. follow their lead for what they can tolerate



Remember: Allow them to withdraw and enable opportunities for positive sensory input.

Reduce stimulation in the environment, find alternatives that are more acceptable to your child.



Find out more at  
[mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PS3plUtdbaA>



### Peoples thoughts on their sensory needs



"Every time I am touched it hurts; it feels like fire running through my body." – Gillingham G. (1995)

"In a noise place I can't understand speech, because I cannot screen out the background noise." Temple Grandin



"Smells like dogs, cats, deodorant and aftershave lotion are so strong to me I can't stand it, and perfume drives me nuts." Gillingham G (1995)



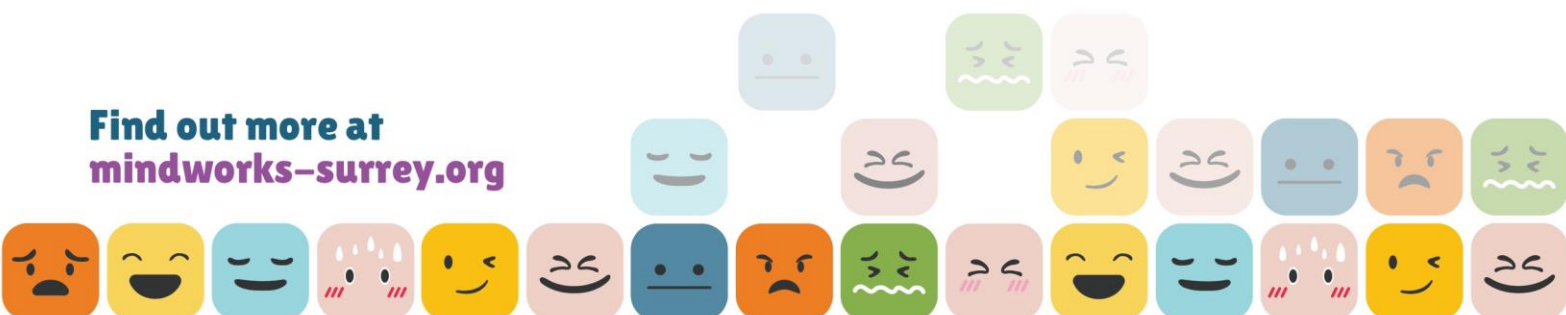
"I can't filter out background conversations and I find it very distracting." Rebecca (2021)

"smells: they can be so overpowering and totally debilitate you." Unknown



"It's as if my brain is too crowded – and about to explode." Holly (2017)

Find out more at [mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of

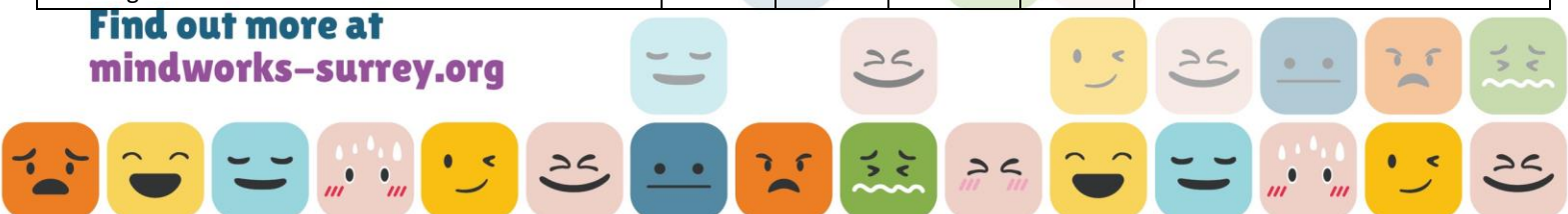


The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service

**Sensory Checklist** – This is not a diagnostic tool, simply designed to help you explore your child's sensory profile.

Sight (vision)					
Behaviour	Seeks	Avoids	Neutral	Mixed	Comments
Learning to read or reading for more than a few minutes					
Looking at shiny, spinning or moving objects					
Activities that require hand-eye coordination such as bat and racquet sports, catching, threading beads, writing, tracing					
Tasks that require visual analysis like puzzles, mazes and hidden pictures					
Activities that require discrimination of colours, shapes or sizes					
Visually 'busy' places such as shops and crowded playgrounds					
Finding objects such as socks in a draw or a particular book on a shelf					
Very bright light or sunshine, being photographed with a flash					
Dim lighting, shade or the dark					
Action packed colourful TV programmes, movies or computer/video games					
New visual experiences such as looking through a kaleidoscope or coloured glass or cellophane					
Touch (Tactile)					
	Seeks	Avoids	Neutral	Mixed	Comments
Being touched on some body parts, hugs and cuddles					
Certain clothing fabrics, labels, seams, tags, waistbands, cuffs etc.					
Clothing, shoes or accessories that are very tight or very loose					
Getting hands, face, other body parts 'messy' with paint, glue, sand, food, lotion, etc.					
Grooming activities such as face and hair washing, brushing, cutting and nail trimming					
Taking a bath, shower or swimming					
Getting towelled dry					
Trying new foods					
Feeling particular foods and temperatures inside the mouth, e.g. mushy or smooth, hot or cold					
Standing close to other people					
Walking barefoot					

Find out more at [mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)









Proud to be part of



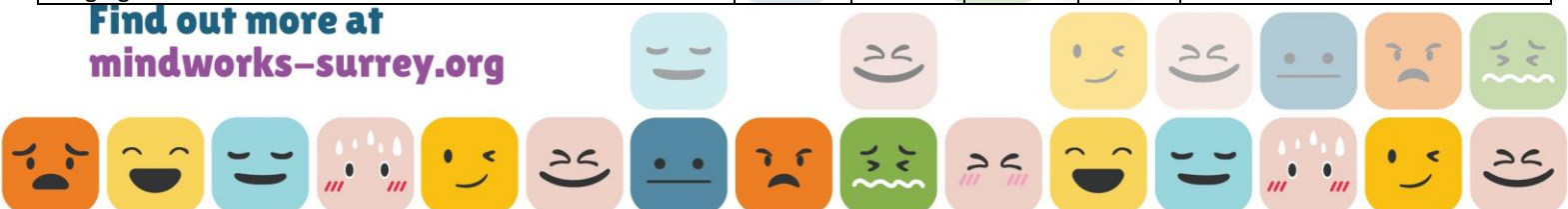
The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service

Movement sense (Vestibular)					
Behaviour	Seeks	Avoids	Neutral	Mixed	Comments
Being moved passively by another person (rocked or twirling by an adult, pushed or pulled in a cart)					
Riding equipment that moves through space (swings, seesaws, escalators and lifts)					
Spinning activities (roundabouts, spinning tops, spinning themselves around)					
Activities that require changes of head position (bending over a sink) hanging upside down (somersaults, hanging by feet)					
Challenges to balance such as skating, bicycle riding, skiing and balance beams					
Climbing and descending stairs, slides, ladders					
Being up high such as top of a slide, climbing frame, trees					
Less stable ground surfaces such as deep pile carpet, grass, sand and snow					
Riding in a car or any other type of transportation					

Taste and Smell (Olfactory and gustatory)					
Behaviour	Seeks	Avoids	Neutral	Mixed	Comments
Smelling unfamiliar scents					
Strong odours such as perfume, petrol, cleaning products					
Smelling objects that aren't food such as flowers, plastic items, playdough or rubbish					
Eating new foods					
Eating familiar foods					
Eating strongly flavoured food (very spicy, salty, sour or sweet)					

Sound (auditory)					
Behaviour	Seeks	Avoids	Neutral	Mixed	Comments
Hearing loud sounds (car horns, sirens, alarms, loud music or TV)					
Being in noisy settings such as a crowded restaurant, party or a busy shop					
Watching TV or listening to music at very high or very low volume					
Speaking or being spoken to amid other sounds or voices					
Background noise when concentrating on a task (music, dishwasher, fan etc.)					
Games with rapid verbal instructions such as Simon Says, Hokey Cokey					
Back and forth interactive conversations					
Unfamiliar sounds, foreign languages, silly voices					
Singing alone or with others					

Find out more at [mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of

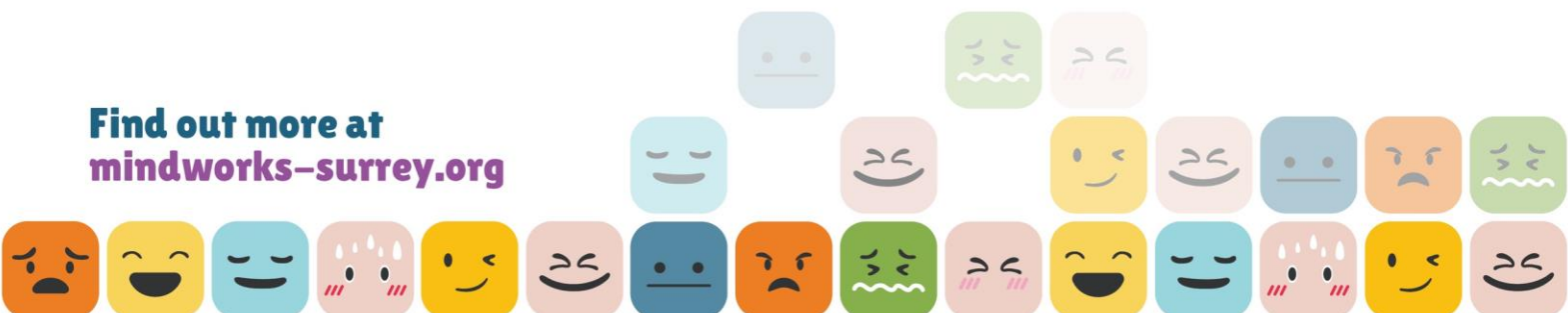


The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service

Interoception					
Behaviour	Able to	Unable to	Neutral	Mixed	Comments
Recognise the need to use the toilet					
Recognise when tired					
Recognise when hungry rather than anxious					
Recognise when anxious rather than hungry					
Recognise when thirsty					
Recognise when feeling hot					
Recognise when feeling cold					
Recognise when their heart is racing					
Recognise breathing fast/deeply					
Recognise when feeling angry					
Recognise when feeling ill/unwell					
React empathetically – putting themselves in someone else's shoes					
Identify when/where hurt if injured					

Body Awareness (Proprioception)					
Behaviour	Was true	True	False	Not sure	Comments
Clumsy, bumps into people and objects, moves stiffly					
Spills contents when opening containers, or spills juice/drink when trying to prepare a drink					
Tends to use more force than required and frequently breaks toys. Doesn't tend to know how much force to use and can unintentionally hurt others					
Runs, hops, and bounces instead of walking					
Loves rough and tumble play					
Trips/falls frequently					
Has a weak grasp. Holds objects like pencils, cutlery so loosely that it's difficult to use them					
Chews on toys, clothes and other objects more than other children					
Holds pencil so tightly it's hard to use it					
Walks on tip toes					

Find out more at [mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service



## Too Much Information

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgDR\\_gYk\\_a8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgDR_gYk_a8)

### Sensory items that could be useful for your child or young person.

Unflavoured toothpaste:

<https://oranurse.co.uk/unflavoured-toothpaste/>

A wider range with other toiletries:

<https://autismsuppliesanddevelopments.com/personal-hygiene-recommended/>

<https://www.sensorydirect.com/> is a great place to look at different items and get some ideas. They are great quality products however some can be found cheaper elsewhere.

[www.sensoryhugs.co.uk](http://www.sensoryhugs.co.uk) is also a good site to look at available products.

There are many options out there so we have only included a few common ones below.

#### Weighted blankets

Should be no more than 10% of a child's body weight. These can be brought from sensory direct (above) and some places like Argos, the Range, B&M and Dunelm are now stocking them. They can sometimes be found on 2<sup>nd</sup> hand sites and some areas have a library borrowing system which means you can try before you buy.



#### Wobble cushions

The cushions can be great for children always on the move or find sitting still hard, they can be a discreet extra for the classroom to support them to be ready to learn.

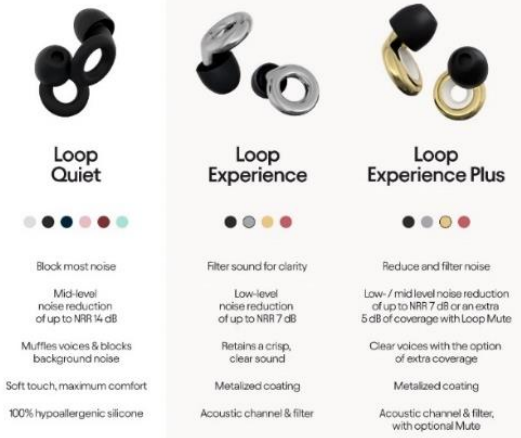
Find out more at  
[mindworks-surrey.org](http://mindworks-surrey.org)



Proud to be part of



The children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health service



<https://www.loopearplugs.com>

### Headphones, and noise cancelling ear pieces.

Flare Audio earplugs, Loop earplugs, or standard over the head ear phones can all be helpful for those that are oversensitive to noise, or just to use in busy loud places – such as the classroom, shopping centres or during a meal out.



Children's Ear Defenders <https://amzn.eu/d/3NSaG9L>

<https://www.flareaudio.com>



<https://www.sensorydirect.com/chewbuddy-sensory-chew>

For more information on this topic, please use the following link

<https://autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/sensory-differences/sensory-differences>



NAS Out of Hours Advice Line is open 365 days a year  
5-11pm, 0300 222 5755 – option 3



For more information about Family Support events  
and news: [facebook.com/NasSurreyResourceCentre](https://facebook.com/NasSurreyResourceCentre)



Surrey parent branch – The NAS Surrey Branch is volunteer-run support group founded by parents to support other parents. <https://nassurreybranch.org/>

Find out more at  
[mindworks-surrey.org](https://mindworks-surrey.org)

