

Sensory processing: impact on daily life function & participation

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- “The experience of being human is embedded in the sensory events of our daily lives” (Dunn, 2001)
- ***Sensory processing: the method the nervous system uses to receive, organise and understand sensory information from within the body and the outside world***

The Senses

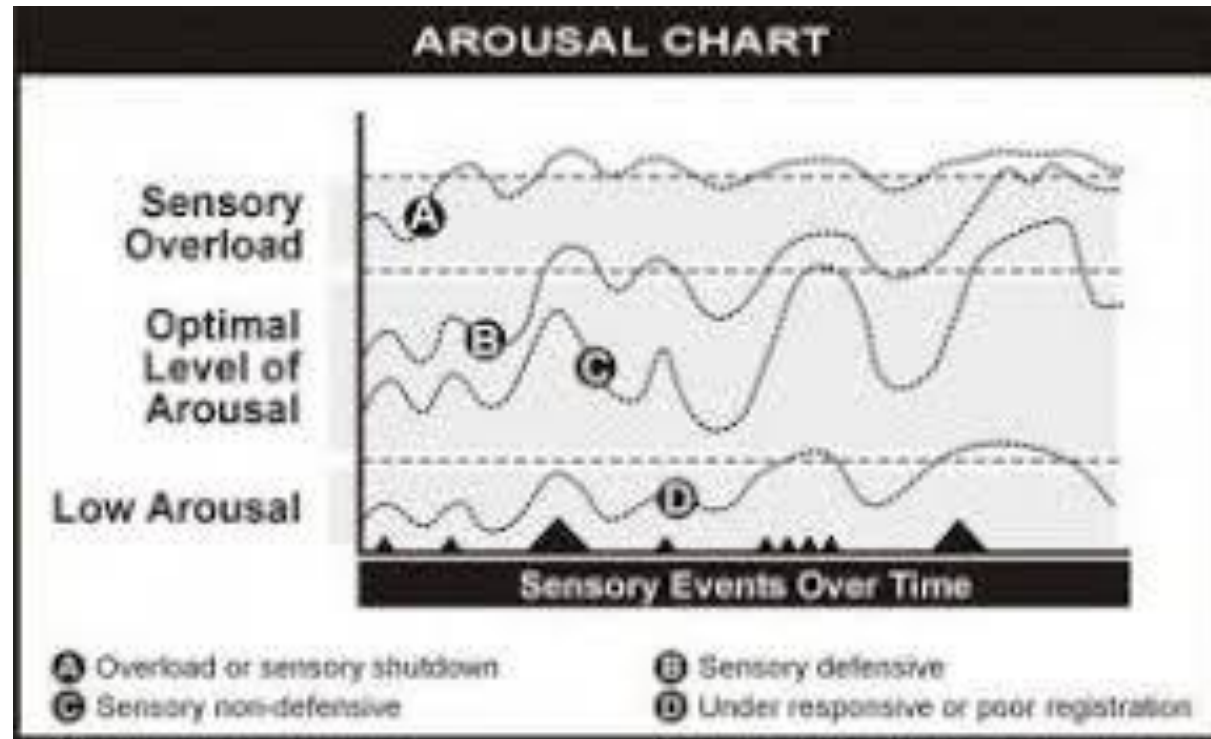
- Auditory - what we hear
- Visual – what we see
- Tactile – touch
- Olfactory – what we smell
- Gustatory – what we taste
- Vestibular – related to balance and senses from the inner ear
- Proprioception – relates to sense from receptors within our muscles and joints to tell the brain where the body is in space

Calming or Alerting?

We all have a “sensory profile” or preferences for sensations we enjoy and those we do not like.

People who do NOT have difficulty with sensory processing generally will not realise how much they do on a daily basis to regulate or adjust their responses to sensory information in order to function effectively or operate at their best

Optimal
arousal or
“alertness” to
function at our
best



Goals of sensory interventions in daily life

- There are many specialist sensory interventions that have specific clinical purposes e.g. therapeutic listening, sensory gym programs with a trained therapist, Wilbarger brushing protocol.
- Big picture goal of a “sensory intervention” is to support improvement in a person’s ability to function – to do the things they want and need to be able to do or to participate and interact with others effectively

Strategies for daily life

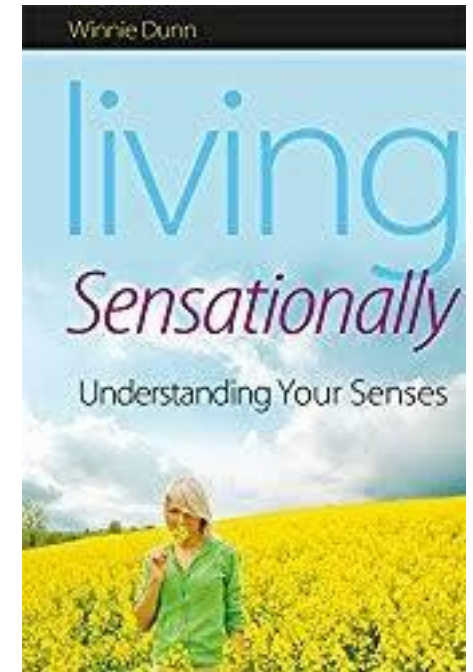
- Remember the aim is to support function and operating at your best for what you need to do
- “Sensory diet”
- Self soothing or calming
- Energizing for the day ahead
- “Preparation” or “recovery” activities

When to refer to Occupational Therapy

- Hunch that difficulties with a particular task or activity are related to sensory processing difficulties
- Difficulty regulating states of arousal to a level that impacts on function or leads to avoidance of essential activities, may have “meltdowns”
- As part of a behaviour support approach

Some useful resources

- Winnie Dunn – Living Sensationally
- sensorytools.net “The traffic Jam in my brain”



Questions?

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