

Sensory Processing

What Is Sensory Processing?

Sensory processing is the way that individuals experience and respond to sensory input. Neurodivergent people may process sensory information in different ways.

There are **eight senses**:

- **Sight**
- **Hearing**
- **Taste**
- **Smell**
- **Touch**
- **Balance (Vestibular)**
- **Body Awareness (Proprioception)**
- **Internal Sensations (Interoception)**



Auditory
(Hearing)



Gustatory
(Taste)



Tactile
(Touch)



Visual
(Sight)



Olfactory
(Smell)



Proprioception
(Body Position)



Vestibular
(Balance)



Interoception
(Internal Senses)

Someone may be **over-responsive** (sensory avoiding) or **under-responsive** (sensory seeking) in one or more of these senses at various times. These differences can affect the way someone behaves and interacts, their emotional regulation, and their engagement in tasks and activities.

Why Sensory Processing Matters

- Sensory overload can lead to **dysregulation**, **anxiety**, or **shutdown**.
- If a child finds it difficult to regulate their senses, they may struggle to stay within their **window of tolerance**, the optimal state for learning and interaction.
- For many neurodivergent children unmet sensory needs can significantly impact their school experience.



Be a sensory detective - explore your child's sensory world

A good way to start to understand the way that your child processes sensory information is to be curious about their sensory world, and help them to do the same. There are several tools available on the Neurodivergence Wales website that you can use to do this:

Sensory checklist - This is a simple resource to help you to start to understand your child's sensory world. It contains a few simple examples of the ways that someone may respond to input in the various sensory realms. These are clues that you can use to understand the different way that your child might process sensory information.

Sensory ladder - a tool to help you and your child to start to recognise and name how they are experiencing the world through their senses.

ABC chart - If your child is having difficulty with their sensory processing, this can result in distress behaviours. You can use this tool to record your child's behaviours, which can help you to identify their sensory triggers.

Sensory diary - Filling this in for a few weeks should help you to identify your child's sensory needs. You can then use this to create a sensory diet for them and keep track of any strategies you put in place.

