

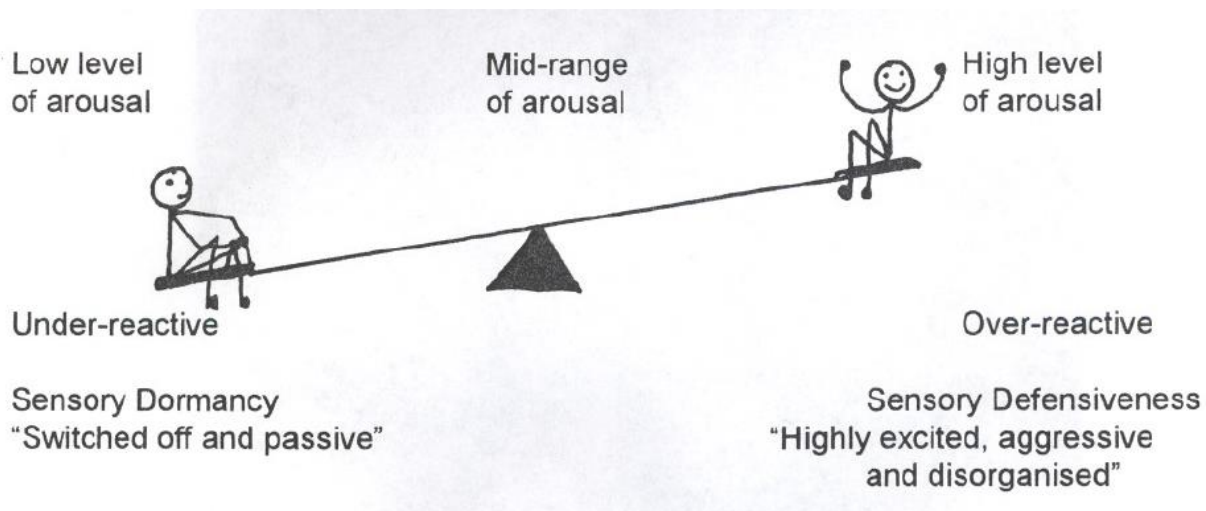
'Sensory Diet' ideas and activities**Arousal Activities**

Our sensory systems need input to keep us at our most alert and skilful in much the same way that our bodies need nutritious food. Certain types of movement and sensation help to arouse a child in order to be able to move, learn and behave normally. A child with a poor or disorganised response to sensory input may display difficulties in the following areas:

- A child swings between a passive, "switched off" state to excited over-active
- A child has difficulty switching off to get to sleep
- A child has difficulty "getting going" in the morning
- A child has difficulty making transitions from one activity to another
- A child may have an over-emotional response to changes in routines
- A child has difficulty modulating emotional responses, swinging from outburst of rage to floods of tears
- A child may flit from one activity to another, dabbling and not finishing things
- A child may have a tendency to move and talk excessively
- A child may have defensive response to certain types of sensory input i.e. light touch, certain types of movement, high pitched or loud noises

These behaviours can be affected and triggered by other factors such as:

- A child's level of tiredness
- A child's level of anxiety (anxiety also amplifies defensive behaviour)
- The amount of disruption in routines
- If a child is ill



The frequency and consistency of a child's adverse behavioural responses to sensory input in various situations determines whether he/she has a problem in this area. For example, a child can respond differently to the same input at the different times. If a child has difficulty getting organised and going in the morning and this happens consistently whether it is a school day or the holidays, then the child is likely to have a sensory modulation difficulty.

Please note that the behaviours listed above may also appear in children with other difficulties / diagnosis.

The main types of sensory input that are arousing and modulating are:

- HEAVY WORK FOR MUSCLES
- DEEP PRESSURE TOUCH / LIGHT PRESSURE TOUCH
- FAST ERRATIC MOVEMENT TECHNIQUES
- STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT

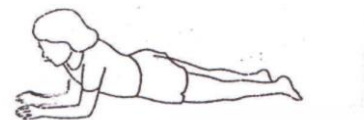
It is important to think about the sensory make-up of the everyday things at home and nursery that the child engages in, which will include play, hobbies and leisure activities. Lots of these suggested activities will also help to develop other areas such as motor co-ordination, strength and stamina and interaction.

Heavy Work for Muscles

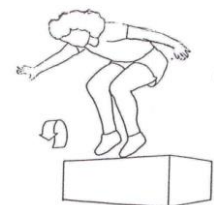
- Incorporate as much lifting, carrying and pushing into everyday activities and routines.
- Going shopping – lifting things off the shelf and out of the trolley
- Pushing the trolley (or a friend in a “trolley”)



- Carrying some of the shopping home in a backpack
- Take every opportunity to push open doors, the heavier the better!
- Lots of gardening such as digging, raking and carrying the watering can or pushing the wheelbarrow
- Using a plant spray to water the plants
- Helping to carry the washing basket and pegging the washing onto the line
- Lifting books and toys back onto shelves
- Lying on tummy on the floor to watch TV – this is a good anti-gravity position and gives heavy work to a lot of muscles!



- Helping in the kitchen – stirring cake mix, bread making, pressing down on the pastry cutter when making pastry cases and biscuits
- Taking bags of rubbish to the dustbin
- Taking the dog for a walk
- Holding onto climbing bars on climbing frame
- Jumping up and down on a mattress or trampoline
- Hitting a punch bag
- Walking on hands as in ‘wheelbarrows’
- Tug-of-war
- Leapfrog
- Jumping on large bubble wrap paper or jumping from an elevated surface



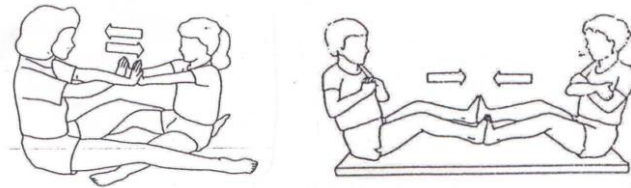
Deep Pressure Touch / Light Pressure Touch

Both deep and light pressure touch can be arousing and modulating. It can be slow and firm or light and tickly. Sudden changes in touch can be arousing.

It is important that these activities are introduced with an element of choice and not forced on the child.

There are plenty to choose from, the main thing is to keep them fun and they should be self-motivating. Start with those activities, which a child would like the most.

- Massage – especially on the back and feet that finishes with light tickly movements
- A coolish shower
- Rough and tumble play
- Holding stress balls, hand toys, playdough and certain rough and prickly textured objects
- Vibrating toys
- A child might prefer tighter fitting clothes e.g. Lycra
- Pressing hands/feet together or pushing with hands against the wall (arms straight)



- Activities in bare feet i.e. walking on sand, grass or any textured surface
- Use small bubble wrap paper, pop the bubbles with thumb and fingers

Fast Erratic Movement

- Swing
- Sitting on a therapy ball and bouncing up and down fast and erratically



- Swinging on climbing frame
- Jumping, running fast and changing directions

Oral Motor

Eating foods that are sharp in taste and crunchy are alerting

- Chewing: Sour sweets, crunchy foods like apples, raw carrot, celery etc.
- Sucking: Have a range of straws such as curly straws, thick bore and thin bore. For heavy resistance, drink thick milkshake or yoghurt through a thin bore straw lollies and ice pops



Environments (Stimulating)

- Brightly coloured walls
- Bright lights / well lit room
- Frequent movement breaks to alert the body
- Move “n” sit cushion may help children to attend for longer table top activities
- Temperature: cool room is better than a warm room

How to Start a Successful Sensory Diet

Offer a child-centred approach to establishing a child's **sensory** preferences and dislikes.

- Suggest just right challenges.
- **Make** it a part of the child's everyday routine.

Complete a different activity every hour for no more than 2 minutes

Keep the activity the same at the same time so you can find out which activities the child likes- you may also see a pattern, over the day as to when he/she needs or wants certain activities.

This sensory routine may take some time to make a difference ... and also for the child to accept as it is all new to them.

E.g. 9am?	Heavy work	No more than 2 minutes to start so we have room to move when he/she needs more
10am	Oral	
11am	Stimulation	
12pm	Oral	
1pm	Heavy work	
2pm	Calming activity	
3pm	Stimulation	
4pm	Heavy work	
5pm	Oral	
6pm	Calming activity	
7pm	Organising activity	

8pm	Bath time / calming	E.g. When drying deep pressure massage through the towel in a calm darkened room Without talking maybe hum a calming song or play some soft music quietly.
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These activity times might need to change depending on your routine but try and keep them the same each day.

If this doesn't work after a period of consistent implementation, then you can change it if you need too.