

## When sensory information is challenging

To identify possible sensory impacts on behaviour we need to:

- Observe the behaviour.
- Look at the possible effects of the seven senses.
- Look at possible build-up of different sensory information over time e.g. a full nursery day.
- Have a picture of individual's sensory preferences and sensitivities.
- Introduce sensory items or approaches that calm to help the situation.
- Change your approach with your new understanding.



A table pinpointing behaviour and strategies may help:

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Date/Time	Possible environmental factors	Sensory Experience before incident	Sensory calming idea
22/09 at 4.10pm	Busy room, noisy music	Home from school, long day	1. Time in room with quiet music; 2. Snack time, chewy with food



## Escalation time

- Sometimes the stress of socially interacting e.g. nursery, may mean that suddenly when a young child returns home they lose control for a time.
- Reading the signs at an early stage could prevent escalation.
- Teaching the young child to look at the escalation in terms of a visual scale with strategies to reduce anxiety at this earlier time may be helpful.
- The young child may be more able to identify how they feel using a picture or number scale.

Examples:  
If you can think in pictures -

Picture Feeling	What I do
☺ Calm	Feel positive and able to attend to tasks.
☹ Slightly anxious	Helps to play with fidget toy or Gameboy (likely if waiting in queue).
☹ Very anxious and angry	Will tell mum and get out of situation for a few minutes.

If you think in numbers -

Picture Feeling	What I do
1 Calm	Feel positive and able to attend to tasks.
2 Slightly anxious	Play with fidget toy or Gameboy (likely if waiting in queue).
3 Quite anxious, feel hot and flustered	Ask for a drink of water to calm down.
4 Anxious, angry, very fidgety	Need to tell someone I need to get out for a few minutes. Go to quiet space and use a sensory strategy that helps.

Responses to touch can cause unwanted behaviour.



## Possible Challenges

Sensory Challenges	Suggested Strategies
Young person withdraws or punches others who touch him lightly. Young person reacts negatively and emotionally when touched lightly (exhibits anxiety).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the young person when you are going to touch him/her. Always touch firmly. Assure the young person that you will touch firmly and that you will not move your hands unpredictably.</li> <li>• Ensure others touch the young person firmly. Explain that the young person feels light touch more strongly and as if he/she were being hit.</li> <li>• Approach the young person from within his/her visual field.</li> <li>• Ensure friends and relatives show affection firmly and directly.</li> </ul>
Young person may prefer firm touch. They may pull away when approached for a friendly pat or caress from a relative or friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the young person what you will do and how you will do it. ("I'm going to hug you really hard.") Respect the young person's need for control.</li> <li>• Make kisses on the cheek a form of deep-touch input. Hold the young person firmly and give a deep, firm kiss.</li> </ul>
Young person may reject touch altogether from anyone but his mother or primary carer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure people always approach the young person from the front and always make sure the young person is able to anticipate the hug or expression of affection.</li> </ul>
Self-stimulatory behaviours are often oral. e.g. hand-biting, spitting. This can deter other people from building relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide as much explanation of the situation as possible.</li> <li>• Use alternative oral stimulus e.g. chewing gum, crunchy foodstuffs, chewy tube, chewy toys.</li> <li>• Use Calmer Eating Strategies (previous section).</li> </ul>
Self-stimulating e.g. nipping, head banging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use longer lasting calming ideas.</li> </ul>

Additional visual resources

