



# THERAPY NEWS

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## Play Therapy and Sensory Processing Disorders

September 2010  
Volume VIII, Issue III

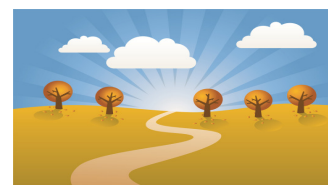
Sensory processing disorder (SPD) is a neurological disorder causing difficulties with processing information from one or several of the five senses and/or the positional sense (sense of body in space). SPD exists when sensory signals are not organized into appropriate responses and a child's daily routines and various activities are disrupted as a result. These disorders can

be in relation to other issues such as, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Mental Retardation and Cognitive Deficits, Cerebral Palsy, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, etc. Causes of SPD include genetic anomalies such as Fragile X Syndrome, birth injuries, prematurity or vague constitutional difficulties.

SPD produces three symptom clusters that may appear in combination with one another and range in severity from mild to severe in nature.



"Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times." -- unknown



### Three primary diagnostic groups of SPD:

Type I - Sensory Modulation Disorder. The child over- or under-responds to sensory stimuli or seeks sensory stimulation. This group has an anxious or fearful pattern, negative or stubborn behaviors. The child may be difficult to engage.

Type II-Sensory Based Motor Disorder. Motor output is disorganized, which affects postural control and motor planning abilities.

Type III-Sensory Discrimination Disorder.

The child incorrectly processes sensory information. For example, the child's problems with visual or auditory input may be seen in their inattentiveness, disorganization and poor school performance.

### Why is Play Important to Children with SPD Challenges?

Because of the way SPD children take in, process and react to outside information from others, they may not be able to respond in a normal way to parents and

caregivers. The connective bonding that should occur to create a vital relationship is disrupted. Play, a natural mode of communication for children, is used to

recreate that link. Parent-child interactions are *the key* for promoting growth of emotional milestones that are the basis of intelligence, sense of self, as well as the

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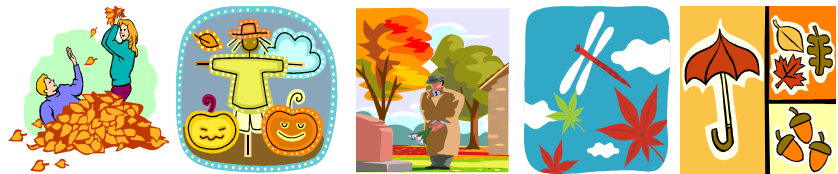
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Children and Families through  
the Power of Play



Looking forward to cooler weather.. .



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traditional cognitive skills of identifying shapes, letters and counting. The bonding process underlies advanced thinking, problem solving and coping. There are many forms of play therapy, but only a few that integrate in working with SPD children. A parent can bring a child to a play therapist or OT with these skills or learn to play with the child at home. Here are just a few examples of home play:

- 1) Try to join the child in what they are already doing instead of introducing an idea of your own.
- 2) Use their repetitive motions (perseverations) as a way to engage your child in interactions. Be playfully obstructive. For example, if the child is rolling a car back and forth repeatedly, put your hand in the way; make him interact with you. If you're playful, you can turn his repetitions into two-person games.
- 3) Playfully negotiate by not giving the child what they want too quickly (but kindly).

Instead of pouring juice right way, stall them with questions. "What kind? How much? Which glass?" If the child wants a particular toy, play dumb and repeatedly bring the wrong one until they communicate in numerous ways which one they want. This helps the child move towards words or gestures to tell you what is wrong increasing verbal proficiency. Letting them grapple with problems spurs development. 4) Help your child to problem solve. If a toy falls under a table, instead of getting the items for the child, talk him through the process. Show him he can do it himself. 5) Pretend play and visualization are so important. Where their imagination grows, the capacity for creating new ideas will also flower. Play make-believe as often as possible!

## Recommended Books on SPD:

The Child with Special Needs by S. Greenspan and Serena Wieder.

Sensational Kids by L. J. Miller