

Sensory Integration Therapy

Sensory Integration is the process through which the brain organizes and interprets external stimuli such as movement, touch, smell, sight and sound. Autistic children often exhibit symptoms of Sensory Integration Dysfunction (SID) making it difficult for them to process information brought in through the senses. Children can have mild, moderate or severe SID deficits manifesting in either increased (hypersensitivity)or decreased (hyposensitivity) to touch, sound, movement, etc. For example, a hypersensitive child may avoid being touched whereas a hyposensitive child will seek the stimulation of feeling objects and may enjoy being in tight places.

The goal of Sensory Integration Therapy is to facilitate the development of the nervous system's ability to process sensory input in a more typical way. Through integration the brain pulls together sensory messages and forms coherent information upon which to act . SIT uses neurosensory and neuromotor exercises to improve the brain's ability to repair itself. When successful, it can improve attention, concentration, listening, comprehension, balance, coordination and impulsivity control in some children.

The evaluation and treatment of basic sensory integrative processes in the autistic child are usually performed by an occupational and/or physical therapist. A specific program will be planned to provide sensory stimulation to the child, often in conjunction with purposeful muscle activities, to improve how the brain processes and organizes sensory information. The therapy often requires activities that consist of full body movements utilizing different types of equipment. It is believed that SIT does not teach higher-level skills, but enhances the sensory processing abilities thus allowing the child to acquire them