

Sensory Integration Reading

Sensory integration refers to how people use the information provided by all the sensations coming from within the body and from the external environment. We usually think of the senses as separate channels of information, but they actually work together to give us a reliable picture of the world and our place in it. Your senses integrate to form a complete understanding of who you are, where you are and what is happening around you. Because your brain uses information about sights, sounds, textures, smells, tastes and movement in an organized way, you assign meaning to your sensory experiences and you know how to respond and behave accordingly. Walking through a shopping mall, if you smell a powerful, sweet scent, you are able to identify it as a candle or essential oil and realize that you are walking past an aromatherapy store. You may linger a moment to enjoy it or hurry by to escape it.

For most kids, sensory integration skills develop naturally. As children learn about new sensations, they become more confident about their skills, refine their abilities to respond to sensory experiences and are thus able to accomplish more and more. An infant startles and cries when a fire engine whizzes past blaring a siren, but years later as a teenager, the same noise might cause him to simply cover his ears as he watches the fire engine go down the street. As an adult, this person may merely stop talking with a friend until the fire engine passes. As sensory processing skills mature, vital pathways in the nervous system are refined and strengthened, and children get better at handling life's challenges.



For some children, sensory integration does not develop smoothly. Because they cannot rely on their senses to give them accurate pictures of the world, they do not know how to behave in response, and they may have trouble learning and behaving appropriately.



Adapted from <http://school.familyeducation.com/sensory-integration/parenting/56288.html>

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