

SENSITIVITY TO TOUCH



Strategies: to reduce sensitivity to touch

- Avoid approaching the child from behind and touching as this can startle the child. Approach from the front instead giving the child chance to prepare.
- Avoid light touch as this can be an irritation to the child – use firm sustained pressure.
- Allow the child to choose where they sit during carpet time or assembly. They may prefer to sit towards the side or back rather than beginning surrounded by other children.
- Allow the child to stand at the beginning or end of a line.
- Be aware of the potential impact of the child's position in the classroom i.e. if they are sitting between children this may cause unpredictable touch sensation also if they are positioned next to a popular walkway in the classroom this could result in them in being knocked / bumped into.
- Offer a quiet corner in the classroom for the child to use if they over stimulated / distressed, enabling them to calm down and refocus. Have heavy cushions available for the child to use.
- Remove tags or labels on clothing.
- Try desensitization techniques before introducing a tactile activity.
- Provide deep / heavy pressure to the area of the skin that is to be touched before introducing touch sensation.
- Introduce touch sensations gradually - start small and as the child becomes more tolerant increase the demands of the task.
- Allow the child to direct the activity and go at their own pace particularly with messy play i.e. Type of touch, how strong it is, for how long etc. Use tools first if necessary.
- Ask the child to help set up to help give them time to prepare for the activity.
- Give the child positive reinforcement for tolerating touch sensations.

Activities to encourage development of the tactile system

- Any deep pressure activity involving weight bearing, pushing, pulling etc. can help to calm and desensitise prior to an activity which may be distressing.
- Sausage rolls – rolling up in a blanket or mat, keeping the head free.
- Mat sandwich – lying between 2 mats
- Water play / Sand play
- Finger paint activities
- Sensory Buckets – Hide and find items
- Play dough activities: pinching, rolling cutting twisting

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