

Sensational OT Tip of the Month

Tactile Defensiveness

Do you know children that ...

1. Over react when touched – push back or withdraw?
2. Avoid messy materials like glue or clay?
3. Over or under dress for the weather?
4. Over react to small scrapes or bumps?

These children might have tactile defensiveness.

They perceive some touch or tactile sensations as threatening or uncomfortable. Their nervous system triggers a fight/flight reaction increasing stress levels. Increased stress decreases ability to cope even in situations where a child is often successful such as working on a group project or riding the bus.

Sensational ideas for tactile defensiveness

1. Acknowledge that you are aware that they are uncomfortable or that a sensation is bothering them. Do not try to convince them that it is not.
2. Approach the child from the front to avoid unexpected touch. Use firm, gentle touch whenever possible.
3. Give designated space or a preferential spot when in line or during circle time to decrease accidental contact.
4. Allow use of paint brush or sponge to complete a project. Have a wet towel ready to clean hands.
5. Understand that clothing can be a distraction if not comfortable. For some, wearing long sleeves or hood is a protection from unexpected touch. For others, wearing a hat or gloves can be difficult.

Go to http://www.zoemalloux.com/uploads/1/6/0/8/16088620/tactile_defensiveness-some_people_are_more_sensitive.pdf for more on tactile defensiveness.

Go to www.cintiOTinstitute.com/privateschools and scroll to the bottom left corner for more tip sheets. Go to www.cintiOTinstitute.com for information about COTI services.

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