

Sensational Toddler/Preschool OT Tip of the Month Tactile Defensiveness

Do you know children that ...

1. Over react when touched – push back or withdraw?
2. Have difficulty controlling actions on the playground especially when others are close such as on the slide or climber or in playhouse?
3. Avoid messy materials like finger paint, glue or playdoh?
4. Over or under dress for the weather?
5. Are picky about textures of food they will eat or even touch?

These children might have tactile defensiveness.

They perceive some touch or tactile sensations as threatening, uncomfortable or overstimulating. Their nervous system triggers a fight/flight reaction increasing stress levels. Increased stress decreases ability to cope even in situations where a child is typically calm.

Sensational ideas for tactile defensiveness

1. Approach the child from the front to avoid unexpected touch. Use firm, gentle touch whenever possible.
2. Give designated space or a spot when in line or during circle time to decrease accidental contact. Provide a retreat area away from others.
3. Present a variety of tactile play materials and tactile food experiences but never force. Be there to encourage and help as needed. For example, allow use of paint brush or sponge to complete a project. Have a wet towel ready to clean hands.
4. 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.zoemailloux.com/uploads/1/6/0/8/16088620/tactile_defensiveness-some_people_are_more_sensitive.pdf for more information 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.

Dostal - COTI - 2016