

# Helping My Sensory Needs: How can I Help My Child



Children can often feel confused and overwhelmed or upset, when they have sensory difficulties and don't know how to overcome them.

They might get scared of sensory feelings they don't like, like textures to touch.

They might get overloaded by too many sensory feelings at once, like noises and crowds in the shops.

They might not know how to stop an uncomfortable sensory feeling, or know how to get away, like scratchy clothing.

As a parent or carer, understanding your child's sensory preferences can help you to take care of their sensory needs.

**Key Tips:**

- Never force a child to touch, smell or eat a particular item, as this can create fear and anxiety.
- Sensory feelings create memories: avoid stress or distress by staying calm yourself.
- Offer choice wherever you can, e.g. type of clothing, bring a toy with them out and about.
- Be an advocate: Help people in your child's life to understand their sensory needs, like grandparents.
- Help the child discover what they enjoy, by offering options and observing what they enjoy most.
- Help the child meet their own sensory needs in productive and safe ways, like instead of jumping on the sofa, get a mini trampoline.
- Introduce new sensory experiences slowly, in a positive and playful way
- Help 'feed' their sensory needs with a regular routine of activities they enjoy.
- Use clear words to describe what they are doing e.g. 'you're smelling, biting, liking, touching, holding' to help them learn how to use their senses.

**Be a Behaviour Detective:**

**ask 'what does my child's behaviour tell me?'**



Sometimes sensory behaviours can be a child's way of trying something to help them **FEEL BETTER**, if they're upset or if a sensory feeling bothers them.

You might see your child do a sensory behaviour, like running or biting clothing, when they are upset or overwhelmed.

Ask yourself 'why' this is happening, is it a noise that is too loud, a food they didn't like, or a task that was too hard for them.

**How does the child behave when they are upset, to try and feel better?**

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Other times, sensory behaviours are a real **NEED** like a hungry stomach, that needs to be filled up. Unless it's full, it can be *impossible* to think about anything else.



**Is there any sensory feeling your child seems to need a lot of every day?**  
For example, biting, jumping, tapping.

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**Be a Place Detective:**

**ask 'why is this place affecting my child like that?'**



The world around us sends a lot of information into the sensory system. This is why children can behave differently in different places or environments.

**What places does your child spend time in each week?**  
For example, school, grandparents.

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In each place we visit, the sensory information our body gets will be different: sights, sounds, smells.

**In what place does your child seem most happy and calm?**

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**Why do you think they might feel better there, and worse in other situations?**

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**How to identify their sensory needs:**

For some children, the activities they are best at, meet their sensory needs. For example, a child who has a sensory need to move, might be best at trampoline jumping.

**Try observing and watching, what activities your child goes towards?**

This might be a sensory need.

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**What activities do they avoid?**

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This information makes it easier for you to meet their sensory needs.