

Transcript



Welcome to our video in our mini-series Meeting Your Child's Sensory Needs. In this video we shall look at some of the sensory behaviour your child may be displaying during bathing, showering and hair washing and provide strategies for you to try, helping you to meet their needs.

As explained in our video series on sensory integration and modulation, too much sensory feedback impacts on how your child feels, thinks, behave and responds. You may have noticed that your child becomes distressed at the thought of bathing or showering.

They may feel the experience provides them with too much sensory feedback that moves them from the “Just Right” zone. You may have noticed behaviours such as fear of the whole process, distress, or a freeze response, all of which may be their reaction to sensory input.

It's important to try to work out how you can help to reduce/replace this feedback with a more positive sensory experience. In this presentation we shall look at some of the sensory difficulties they may be experiencing when bathing and provide some strategies for you to try with your child. Remember we all have different sensory likes and dislikes and your child will likely have different preferences to you and their siblings.



You know your child best and will already know a lot about what they like and dislike so use your existing knowledge to work with your child to try out different strategies.

Don't expect big changes overnight. It can take several months for sensory strategies to be used effectively. You are likely to need to use the strategies you think work best, for you and your child, consistently for around 3 months before knowing for certain that they work. Be prepared for them not to work each and every time so have a few sensory strategies that can be used in these situations.

Please remember that your child should be supervised at all times when taking part in the activities suggested in this video.

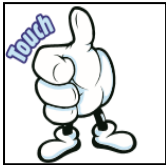
Use A SECRET (Lucy Jane Miller 2006)

We introduced "A SECRET" by Lucy Jane Miller in our video "meeting your child's needs". This is a problem-solving tool for parents, teenagers and even for children themselves to think about the seven elements in sensory and motor challenges and to come up with some ideas of things to change to lead to smoother functioning for the child.

A SECRET" is an acronym for these seven elements: attention, sensation, emotional regulation, culture, relationship, environment and task. A SECRET is not a rigid formula for what to do, but a flexible format helping you to consider each of these important elements in turn.

The sensation element is only one part of "A SECRET". Think about how each of these elements could be influencing the behaviour and how or if these could be manipulated to allow your child to function smoothly. For example, it may be that the child just doesn't like bathing with siblings so consider bathing alone, or the child may be annoyed that it is bath time as they were in the middle of doing something exciting, so consider having a more predictable bath time or give advanced warning.

The first step when considering S for sensation, is to closely observe your child's reactions, looking for consistencies in their sensory response and ask yourself which sensory system is being over stimulated? We will look at each sensory system which may be involved, giving you some questions to ask yourself and practical suggestions for things to try. It may take a few attempts before you notice any change. If there is no change, go back and look at the other elements in A SECRET. You may need to try a combination of strategies and elements to help meet your child's needs by reducing or replacing the feedback with a more positive sensory experience.



Touch

When considering the touch sensory system ask yourself these questions.

- Does your child dislike taking clothes off, water, soap, bubbles, hair washing or towel?
- Does your child dislike change in temperature from other rooms in the house?

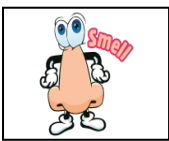


Now try these practical suggestions:

- A massage beforehand can help your child prepare for bathing or showering - Always touch on the child's terms. Ensure they are as calm as possible and ready to accept touch. A firm pressure massage can help the child to feel calm and more able to cope with sensations.
- Ensure the bathroom temperature is comfortable. Do they like to be warm and cosy or do they prefer a cooler room.
- For hair washing try rinsing their hair using a sports bottle or cover their eyes using a cloth or hair washing shield. Hair washing shields are available from various retailers.
- Encourage them to wash themselves so they are in control of any touch input. Demonstrate and give some instructions on how to move body parts and what you need to do to get washed, then encourage them to do as much as they can for themselves. This will not only promote independence but will also give them control. It will reduce the change of them being touched unexpectedly which can feel uncomfortable.
- Use a firm sponge to decrease sensitivities. Using lighter or more gentle things to wash with may feel tickly.
- Use firm pressure when assisting with washing whether this is with a sponge/cloth or just with hands. Firm pressure can have a calming effect and the child may actually enjoy this sensation. Firm pressure can reduce sensitivities and therefore splashing water, skin being touched, head being touched, and the sensation of soapy skin may be easier for the child to tolerate.
- In the shower allow the child to use a handheld nozzle so they are in control. Handheld nozzle's that attach to bath taps are also available from various retailers and sometimes in the bath a child may prefer to rinse using this.



- After a bath or shower quickly wrap your child in a warm towel. Once dried, a firm massage using body lotion can help prepare for bedtime. As previously mentioned, temperature can affect a child's ability to cope with bath or shower time. Having a cosy towel ready as soon as they get out will help them to feel comfortable. Deep pressure again can help at this stage so wrapping the towel tightly round the child may be good. If the child is still feeling uncomfortable with all of the sensory experiences they have been exposed to during bathing or showering, it may help to give them a massage after to help reduce discomfort and to help with calming before bed.



Smell

Can your child feel uncomfortable with different smells? What appears pleasant to you may be unpleasant and difficult for your child to tolerate.

Some strategies that you could try are:

- Use fragrance free soap/non-perfumed cleaning products or toiletries or identify cleaning products that your child likes the smell of. It may be a good idea to stick to the same smells and only one smell so that this is predictable and easier for your child to cope with.
- Flush toilet (so no unpleasant toilet smells)
- Allow child to bring something they like the smell of into the bathroom, this could be a toy that they sleep with, a freshly washed gentle smelling cloth or something that is lightly fragranced with a smell that they have already stated that they like.



Noise

Does your child sometimes appear distressed at different sounds? (Bathrooms can sometimes echo and feel louder). Be aware of your voice, the sound of water being poured from a tap and splashing in the bath, the sound of the shower, the sound of a toilet flushing, closing cabinet doors and sounds from outside if there is a window open.

- Listening to music whilst in the bath can help keep your child calm (Mozart's classical music for children can be calming but you will know your child best and would know the type of music they respond calmly and positively to).



Vision

Does your child find lighting and other visual inputs in the bathroom overstimulating?

- Reduce the lighting in the bathroom. Consider a dimmer switch or close the blinds/curtains if a lot of light is coming through the window.
- Think about lighting that they like and consider having that in the bathroom during bath time (their own night light, flickering fake candle, projector light)



Vestibular

- Do they sit comfortably in the bath or are they fearful of losing their balance in the water? You may have noticed that your child feels uncomfortable generally with movement such as roundabouts, slides, swings at the play park. They may be reluctant to try things like going on a ride-on toy or a bike or walking/sitting on anything that is unstable. They may frequently fall or lose balance for no apparent reason and therefore they may worry that this will happen in the bath.
- Do they dislike their head being in different positions (going from upright to lying down to rinse shampoo)

Here are some strategies to try:

- Begin with filling the bath with less water so they will feel more stable and gradually increase level of water. You may feel that they are able to cope with slowly increasing the water level while they are in the bath, or it may be that the next bath the child has you are able to slightly increase the water level.
- Give them a feeling of security through your touch. Apply pressure/massage their shoulders/back/head when sitting in the bath.
- Use a good non-slip mat.
- Use less bubble bath as this can make the bath more slippery.
- Rinse hair with jug rather than asking child to lie back in the water.

Other practical strategies

- Before bath or shower time talk to your child to help them understand what to expect: a sequencing story or a visual chart can be useful. This can be pictures or pictures and words giving step-by-step guidance as to what they are doing. This helps them to learn what to do now and next and helps to keep the routine of bath or shower time consistent and predictable.
- Before bath or shower time carry out an activity your child enjoys so they feel happy, safe and calm. This could be a game, drawing or watching something nice on TV.
- Keep bath or shower time predictable. If it is always for example after tea and before bedtime, they will get to know that this is what happens and it will come as less of a surprise.
- Have the bath water ready before starting the routine. This way there is no waiting around and the process can be carried out quickly with less chance of anything unpredictable or unexpected happening that may cause discomfort. It would also feel more calming for the child if they are not in the bathroom whilst the bath is being poured as there is less noise and less waiting around.

I Can Take a Bath		
	Take off Clothes	
	Get in Bathtub	
	Wash Your Body	
	Play Time	
	Dry Off	
	Get Dressed	
Great Job!		

Games are a good way to make bathing and showering fun.

- Ask your child to help you to get organised for example, getting pyjamas, choose bath bubbles and toys to play with. The child may enjoy making decisions and feeling like they are in charge of themselves by getting things that they need. It may be good to have a selection of toys available that you are happy for them to take into the bath and ask them to choose a few each time. Remember that too many toys may be overwhelming!
- Bath paints or crayons can be used in the bath to draw pictures.
- Foam letters/shapes can be fun.
- Use foam soap or shaving foam on body and spread it out on tiles and then use fingers to draw.



Make it fun!



- Use shampoo or bubbles to create crazy hairstyles, during this time you could also include a gentle but firm head massage.
- Have a bath party; for example, play with a beach ball, bucket, watering can.
- Blow bubbles.
- Singing songs for example, Row, Row, Row Your Boat, 5 Little Ducks went Swimming One Day, Down in the Jungle, 5 Little Speckled Frogs or 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Once I Caught A Fish Alive!

Remember!

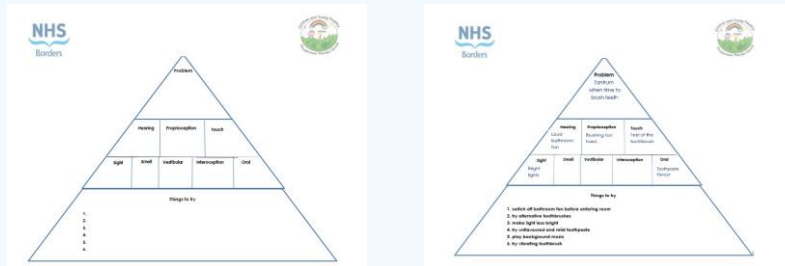
- Everyone has different sensory responses to stimuli. By thinking of your child's sensory systems and observing how they react to small changes, you can gain a better understanding why your child may be feeling, thinking or behaving differently to sensory feedback.
- There will likely be times when your strategy doesn't work so have a toolbox full of strategies to dip into as needed.
- Give time for strategies to work. Through consistently implementing the strategies they respond well to; you will help them to find a more positive sensory experience and meet their sensory needs.

We have hopefully suggested some strategies throughout this video you may wish to try.

We have a pyramid problem solving tool on our website that you can download which may be useful for you. This problem-solving tool helps us to think about the behaviour and the possible underlying sensory causes. By putting the problem at the very top of the triangle then starting to think about each of the sensory systems below, you may be able to identify if there is a sensory reason for the problem. At the bottom of the pyramid, you list the strategies you wish to try.

In this example for toothbrushing, using the problem of tantrums when it's time to brush teeth, we have given examples of the sensory systems that might be receiving too much feedback and strategies you can use to change that, such as trying alternative toothpaste and a vibrating toothbrush.

Pyramid Problem Solving Tool



Thank you for watching this video. We hope you have discovered some strategies that you may like to try with your child. If you have tried our suggestions for a while and feel you want to talk through strategies or need support to help implement.



How To Contact Us...




Prior to contacting the service, we suggest you explore our resources online and on Facebook;

 www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/cypot

 @CYPOTNHSBorders
www.facebook.com/CYPOTNHSBorders

Advice and support can be sought from the service by contacting the team directly using our Enquiry Line or via our Enquiry Email Inbox.

 01896 826033 (voicemail)

 Paediatric.OTEnquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk

We will aim to contact you within 5 working days to discuss your enquiry