

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 behaviours your child may be displaying during Toothbrushing. This presentation will provide strategies for you to try at home with your child, helping you to meet their needs.

In this presentation we shall look at some of the sensory difficulties they may be experiencing when brushing teeth 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.

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

They may feel overstimulated by the sensory stimulation inside their mouth. Brushing our teeth can create lots of stimulation such as pressure, tastes, textures, smells and noises. For some children's nervous systems, this sensory stimulation can be overwhelming and difficult to tolerate.



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.



They may feel overwhelmed in the bathroom environment. It is important to note the bathroom environment itself can become an overwhelming experience for children. For example, think of the room temperature, bathroom smells and noises. These are all difficulties that children face when attempting to brush their teeth.

It's important to try to work out how you can help to reduce/replace this feedback with a more positive sensory experience.

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.

Now let's think about S (Sensation)

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.



When considering the touch sensory system ask yourself these questions:

- Does your child dislike the texture of the toothbrush & toothpaste. Are the bristles soft, or is the toothpaste foamy?
- Does your child like the sensation of the tap water, is the water too cold?
- Is your child overwhelmed in the bathroom environment? Think about the texture of the floor, is there a mat or are the tiles cold?

Now try these practical suggestions:

- Try Alternative toothbrushes or Toothpastes – Would your child prefer a toothbrush that has softer bristles or an electric toothbrush to provide them with additional vibration in their mouth. Try different brands of toothpastes – there are non-foaming and unflavoured toothpastes available.
- Try warm water – cold water may be startling or hurt sensitive teeth.
- Ensure your child is wearing suitable footwear/socks before entering the bathroom as the floor may be cold.



Smell:

Think about the:

- Type of toothpaste? Does it have a strong smell.
- Are there any Bathroom smells? Bathrooms often have many different smells such as air fresheners, toilet detergents or other bathroom

odours. What appears pleasant to you may be unpleasant and difficult for your child to tolerate.



Some strategies that you could try are:

- Try different types of toothpaste.
- Avoid strong bathroom smells for example, ensure that toilet detergent is kept at a minimum to avoid alarming your child. Use fragrance free soap. Ask your child to pick a bathroom candle/air freshener that they like. 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 the toilet! We don't want your child to smell those unpleasant bathroom odours.



Taste:

- Does your child like the flavour of the toothpaste?

Here are some strategies to try:

- Try using unflavoured and unscented toothpaste. This might help them overcome this difficulty.
- We all have our own flavours that we like. The flavour 'Mint' can even taste very differently depending on the brand of toothpaste you use.
- Try using a few different travel sized tubes of toothpaste. There are lots to choose from!!



Noise:

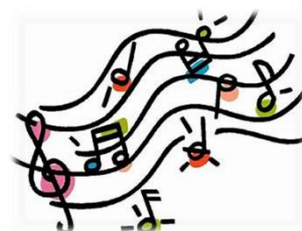
- Is your child using an electric toothbrush? If so, can they tolerate this noise?
- Are there other noises in the bathroom? Bathrooms can sometimes echo and feel louder. Is there an extractor fan on, is the window opened? Be aware of your voice, the sound of water being poured from a tap, the

sound of the shower, the sound of a toilet flushing, closing cabinet doors and sounds from outside if there is a window open. These can have a negative impact on children with sensory differences!



Here are some strategies to try:

- Alternative toothbrush – swap an electric toothbrush for a standard toothbrush.
- Ensure the bathroom environment is safe and secure before entering for example ensure the window is closed to avoid additional noise.
- Listen to music - Listening to music 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 like the look of their toothbrush?
- Consider the bathroom environment – is it cluttered? Is the lighting too bright?

Here are some strategies to try:

- Allow your child to choose a toothbrush of their choice. For example, a toothbrush with their favourite character. Is it Minnie Mouse, Frozen, Spiderman. Let them choose!
- Bathroom environment – Reduce the lighting and keep the bathroom tidy!



Vestibular:

How is your child positioned during toothbrushing? Are they standing? Would they prefer to sit? If they are standing, are they holding onto something?

- Does your child feel unsteady when brushing their teeth?
- Is the sink easy to reach?

Do they stand comfortably or are they fearful of losing their balance? 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 when brushing their teeth.

Here are strategies to try:

- Offer a chair or stool or even the toilet to sit on.
- Encourage your child to hold onto the sink.
- Place a mirror in front of them – this is so they can see themselves brushing their teeth, providing that additional comfort and reassurance that they are safe.



Proprioception:

- Is your child getting enough proprioceptive input during toothbrushing?
- Does your child use too little or too much force whilst brushing?

Strategies to try:

- Try an electric toothbrush - The vibration from an electric toothbrush will provide your child with tactile and proprioceptive input.
- "Warm – up" their body before toothbrushing. For example, provide deep touch or big squeezes to their arms, legs, shoulders or with big 'bear hugs'.
- Practice circular motions on their cheeks and around their mouth. You can also try using a soft, clean washcloth near their lips or even along their gums to help desensitize the area.

Other Strategies to Try:

- Trial Toothbrushing in an environment where your child feels comfortable. For example, perhaps with a distraction in front of the TV watching a programme they enjoy. This may help reduce anxiety around tooth brushing.

- Allow your child to hold the toothbrush themselves - holding it close to the bristles can give your child more control.
- Try getting your child to use their finger to brush their teeth.
- Use a timer as a visual cue for how long tooth brushing will last for, this adds predictability to the task, which can be very reassuring.
- Use a chewy tube before tooth brushing - this can build up an awareness of the different teeth in the mouth and where to brush.



Types of Toothbrushes

In this slide we will talk about the different types of toothbrushes that can be used for sensitive mouths. These can be found on the Fledglings website. For more information, please see the website link in the description box.

www.fledglings.org.uk

For some people having their teeth brushed can be uncomfortable, especially if they have a sensory need or doesn't understand why they need to brush their teeth in the first place.



First up, we have the **Collis Curve Toothbrush**. This toothbrush has curved bristles that arch over the head of the brush and meet in the middle. The bristles' part when the brush is used, allowing both sides of the teeth to be cleaned. At the same time, short bristles at the base of the head, brush the top of the teeth.



Next is the **Dr. Barman's Superbrush's Multi-Angled Toothbrush**. This head allows the sides and tops of teeth to be brushed at the same time and means fewer brushes are needed to clean your child's teeth effectively.



Lastly, we have this soft silicone **2 Pack Finger Toothbrush**. This is gentle and removes plaque from the teeth. The double-sided silicone brush is perfect for softly cleansing first teeth whilst the dimpled side offers soothing relief to delicate teething gums.

Games to Support:

Games are a good way to support skills. Try to include some of these when exploring your child's sensory likes and dislikes.

- Try some 'Brush your Teeth' songs. Have a look at the website link in the description box below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCio_xVlgQ0

- Try games such as “Fighting the Germs” and role play with dolls, animal toys and toothbrush charts. Show your child how to brush a baby doll’s teeth. Draw on a mouth on a whiteboard with “dirt” on the teeth. Then, have them use the toothbrush to clean the dirt off.
- Incorporate tooth brushing into imaginative play. For example, let your child pretend they are the dentist and use the toothbrush to clean your teeth.
- Have a look for App’s online that encourage children to brush their teeth.
- Use “Reward Charts” as a motivational tool for your child.



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.

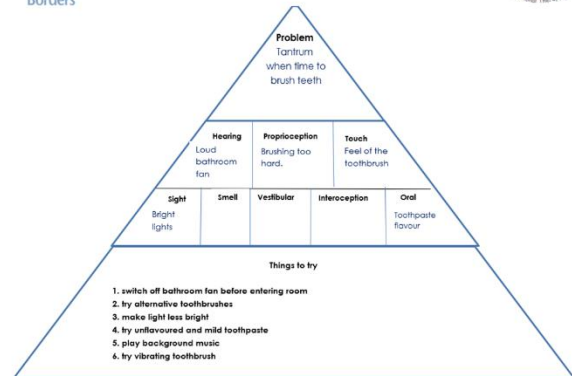
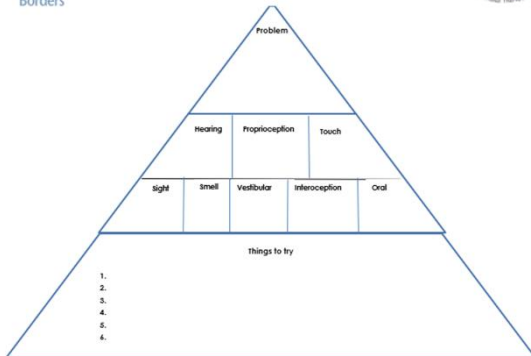
Pyramid Problem Solving Tool

Thank you for watching. 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.



For further information on toothbrushing for you child look at Childsmile <https://www.child-smile.org.uk/index.aspx> . Please see the website link in the description box below.

If you have tried our suggestions for a while and feel you want to talk through strategies or need support to help implement these, please contact us.

Thank you for listening.



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](https://www.facebook.com/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