

# SENSORY PROFILE

## What is it?

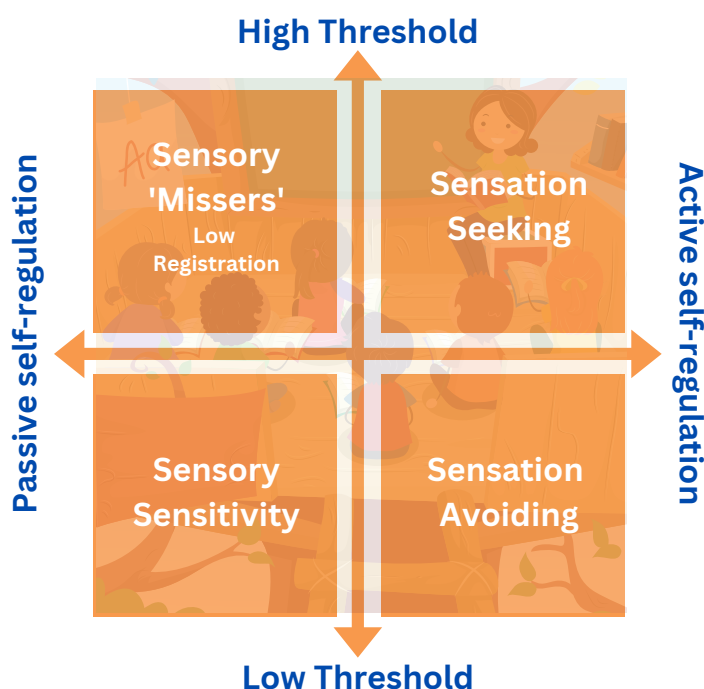
A sensory profile is a tool that helps parents and professionals understand how a child processes and responds to sensory information from their environment. Sensory information refers to what we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Every person has a unique sensory profile, which means they may have different sensitivities and preferences when it comes to sensory experiences.

## Why is it important?

A sensory profile is important because it can provide valuable insights into a child's sensory needs and challenges. By understanding how a child responds to different sensory inputs, parents and professionals can better support the child's overall development and regulation. Regulation involves children's developing the ability to self-manage their own behaviour and reactions.

For example, a child with sensory sensitivities may become easily overwhelmed by loud noises or bright lights. By identifying these sensitivities through a sensory profile, parents can make adjustments to the child's environment to create a more comfortable and supportive setting. They can provide the child with strategies to manage sensory overload or offer activities that promote sensory regulation. Likewise, a child with sensory-seeking behaviours may enjoy activities that provide intense sensory input, such as swinging or jumping.

Understanding these preferences can become a powerful tool for parents to not only support their child's growth but also increase their own window of understanding and tolerance for various behaviours.



## Dunn's Sensory Processing Model

helps us understand how children respond to sensory information by dividing their reactions into four quadrants. It's important to note that we can sit within more than just one quadrant.

## Examples in the classroom

Please note the following names have been chosen at random. Examples are simplified to demonstrate the sensory needs of each quadrant of Dunn's Sensory Processing Model.

Art is a sensory-sensitive kid and Bob is a sensory-avoidant kid. They are sitting in a classroom where the fan is quietly humming in the background. They may or may not realise that the noise bothers them. Bob is completing work independently and starts singing and humming quietly to himself. His body instinctually reacts to the problematic noise (the fan) by actively doing something to avoid it. He's making a noise to cover it up; a noise he can control.

Art is trying to do his work, but his body goes into panic mode. His body can't focus on anything but the noise of the fan, whether he's conscious/aware of this or not. He sits silently staring at the work and starts to get upset. Suddenly, he rips his workbook to shreds. He throws it across the room and attempts to run out of the classroom (fight/flight mode).

Both kids may be reported as having 'behaviour problems' or being a disruption in the class, however, we know they were triggered by the background noise of the fan, they both need a coping strategy that will work for them.

Claire is a Sensory 'Misser' and Diane is a sensory seeker. Both kids are expected to sit quietly with their hands in their laps and legs crossed while the teacher instructs the class. Both children have a high tolerance for sensory input which means their brains need to be able to attend to something, to be paying attention or to be 'getting it'. Neither child is getting anything out of the teacher's verbal instructions, it doesn't have any movement, or visuals and the audio is just the teacher droning on and on.

In an attempt to meet her needs, Diane (Sensory seeker) starts wriggling around, she starts by kneeling and then swinging her legs around she kicks another student, whispers an apology and then notices pieces of lint in the carpet, she starts collecting them and picking at the carpet.

Meanwhile, Claire, the 'sensory misser', has zoned out. Her sensory needs are not being met but her body is passive about it. She starts daydreaming and there are no external clues to show she is no longer taking anything in. She looks like she is paying attention and has a calm body and listening ears, however, she is actually missing what's being said.

Both kids get reported. Diane is the more 'obvious' problem, she kicked another kid and picked apart the carpet and was disruptive to the other students. Claire appeared to be engaged in lessons but does not get any of her work done. She might be seen as a child with a learning delay when really her sensory systems needed just a little more engagement for them to connect with the lesson.



**Upon completing the Sensory Profile Assessment we hope to gain a better understanding into an individual's sensory preferences, help parents and teachers to incorporate appropriate sensory activities or strategies into the individual's routine and give them some strategies which can have a positive impact on their behaviour and overall development.**