

Vision, Hearing, Smell and Taste

CYP may also experience over and under-responsive reactions within any of their other senses, hearing, vision, taste, and smell. Generally, if the foundation sensory systems of proprioception, interoception, vestibular and tactile, are in a calm 'just right' state, the presentation of issues within the other sensory systems is likely to be much less significant. However, if a CYP is experiencing sensory needs within these sensory foundation systems, they are more likely to present with and experience difficulties within the other systems.

If you are seeing a CYP who is displaying anxiety or fear around smells or sounds within the environment some of the core strategies associated with the tactile and proprioceptive systems will help to alleviate these difficulties. Refer to the [‘Activities to help balance the sensory systems’](#) table.

If you are seeing behaviours representing needs with the other sensory systems, the first consideration should be **environment or place**. Check that all the strategies recommended in the Environmental audit have been considered and reasonable adjustments made to support the CYP.

Vision

CYP may demonstrate unusual head postures or eye positions when looking at information. It is important to check with parents when the CYP last had an eye test and if this is more than a year ago and the head/eye postures are new habits for the CYP, suggest to the parents that they get their CYP's eyes tested again.

Some CYP will have visual perceptual disorders this is when the brain interprets visual information in an atypical way, this is **not** a visual acuity difficulty and is not a sensory problem. If a CYP has visual perceptual disorder they will have to learn how to use specific behaviour strategies to support their visual learning. These CYP will need to learn new strategies with all unfamiliar activities that they come across in their learning life.

What you Might See

As described in the 'What you might see' overview

If a CYP is **seeking** more visual stimulus they may:

- Finger flick or flap hands in front of their eyes
- Poke their eyes
- Enjoy busy books/screens/displays/ apps etc.
- Join in with very busy activities/places
- Place screens/pages close to their face
- Love to spend time looking at bubble tubes, flashing lights etc. in the sensory room
- Stare out of the window, at a computer screen or at people


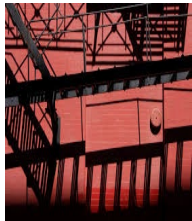



If a CYP is **under responsive** to visual stimuli, they may:

- Find it difficult to see detail in and discriminate between pictures and symbols
- Have difficulties with eye hand coordination tasks
- Have difficulties with depth perception
- Feel anxiety around not being able to interpret their environment appropriately
- Not get enough from visual instructions in order to be able to complete a task

If a CYP is **over responsive** to visual stimuli, they may:

- Be distracted by visual details within the environment such as colours, patterns and movement
- See things that others might not notice
- Feel unsafe/unsure within their environments due to over stimulation
- Appear to over-react to change, for example, a new seating plan

You can support these **visual** sensory processing needs by using some of the following activities:

What you see	Initial activities	When? /How long for? /Techniques	What to be aware of!	Image
<p>CYP becomes distracted in the environment and is unable to focus and attend</p> <p>Over responsive</p>	<p>Think environment. Reduce the clutter. Avoid sitting where the visual field includes varying and unpredictable visual stimulation</p>	<p>Think about the CYP's position within the classroom. Their normal seat needs to be positioned to meet this need</p>	<p>If the CYP has a diagnosis of ADHD follow the guidance and recommendations of professionals involved with the CYP</p>	
<p>Bright light or shadows and light cause disturbance for the CYP</p> <p>Over responsive</p>	<p>Try to avoid the CYP sitting in a position where this is a frequent occurrence</p>		<p>If the CYP demonstrates an anxiety where the boundary between light and shade is a step or change of depth, this might indicate a visual perceptual difficulty and would benefit from a referral in the first instance to an optician and maybe to an Occupational Therapist for assessment</p>	
<p>CYP may seek to push a finger in to the corner of their eye</p> <p>Seeking</p>	<p>Offer light toys as a choice activity but ensure that this does not de-regulate them</p>	<p>Should be short periods of engagement with light toys</p>	<p>If CYP is epileptic check with parents that there is medical agreement that the type of toy and stimulation is not likely to trigger an epileptic seizure</p> <p>An autistic CYP might become stuck in this play and be unable to refocus on the directed class-based activity</p>	
<p>CYP might become over stimulated in high light environments</p> <p>Over responsive</p>	<p>Try using sunglasses and or visors to reduce the impact of the light</p>	<p>When outside in the summer or when artificial lights are strong</p>		
<p>CYP might be fearful in dark spaces (this is more likely a behaviour than a sensory issue)</p>	<p>Social stories about darkness and provide opportunities to practice being in darker and darker spaces</p>		<p>If there are potential safeguarding issues associated with this response. Follow safeguarding procedures if this is the case</p>	

Vision additional activities sheet

These lists are by no means definitive but a good starting point to discover what does and does not work for individuals. It is important to bear in mind age and appropriateness to setting when choosing activities from the lists. Some activities will be more appropriate for younger children and others for young adults whereas some will be more appropriate for home, nursery, school, outdoors etc.

Sensory Seeking

- Sensory room equipment such as bubble tube, fibre optic lights, flashing lights, disco ball etc.
- Colour changing resources
- Dark den and torch play
- Torches and shiny surfaces such as space blanket, tin foil, metal bowls and trays and glitter balls
- Where's wally or similar 'find the...' books
- Spot the difference games
- Access to resources with repetitive moving parts such as Newton's cradle
- Play with sand/water/rice etc. in trays with water wheels and pouring resources
- Bubbles play
- Ribbons and fabrics tied to casing of a desk fan
- Backing visual cues on bright card to attract attention and focus
- Colour coding instructions/visual timetables

Under Responsive

- Sensory room equipment such as bubble tube, fibre optic lights, flashing lights, disco ball etc.
- Colour changing resources
- Dark den and torch play
- Torches and shiny surfaces such as space blanket, tin foil, metal bowls/trays and glitter balls
- White or ultraviolet gloves to focus attention on actions and signs
- Dark den and ultraviolet lamp with ultraviolet resources
- Projector lights/images on walls and ceilings
- Switch/voice activated lights in sensory room
- Mirror play
- Light box activities
- Torch chase game. Adult moves torch light across wall in darkened room and stops, encourage matching the spot on the wall with his/her torch. Later move torch light in a pattern to be followed

Over Responsive

- Dark den/pop up tent for focussed activities
- Screen off area of room for focussed work
- Workstation for focussed work
- Darken room lighting initially and increase as able to cope
- Use black out blinds to reduce day light in dark den/calm down spaces
- Provide items which are of low contrast colours such as blue and black
- Use matt laminating pouches to reduce glare of shiny laminates
- Print work on low contrast coloured paper such as pastel green/blue to reduce glare of black print on white paper
- Provide single picture/word visual cues, increasing with ability to cope
- Provide visual instructions/templates etc. on desk not the wall to reduce visual stimulation involved in shifting gaze
- Reduce brightness on white board/screen settings
- Declutter and organise environment
- Paint walls a single neutral colour such as pastel blues and greens
- Reduce table/soft furniture coverings in environments where focus and attention are required
- Draw thick boxes around pictures/text/number puzzles that require focusing on
- Place a large mat/board over work area to avoid distraction