

Help for the Overly Sensitive Child

Did you realize we are in a constant state of communication?

More often than not, adults use words to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and needs. And for many valid reasons, we want children to “use their words” to communicate, as well. However, communication takes place in many other forms too- through tone, inflection, body language, facial expression, and behavior. **In fact, sometimes the “loudest” communication of all is actually behavior.**

Even when children or teens are verbal, they cannot always identify or articulate their needs with words. This often causes acting-out behavior which we then quickly try to curtail instead of decode. The result? **Their voice as well as their need gets overlooked when we do not readily “hear” what the behavior is communicating.** We have been taught that the only goal is to stop the misconduct because we do not understand that behavior is actually a message!

Your child is overly sensitive for a reason.

There are ways to “hear” your child’s needs and read his behavior clearly. As you find tools to decode what is being communicated, you will also be able to communicate back and find solutions to his need. **The unwanted behavior will significantly diminish and perhaps disappear all together when the acting-out behavior is heard, understood, and the need is addressed.** Sometimes it no longer surfaces at all since the out-of-bounds communication is not needed anymore.

One reason might be Sensory Processing Disorder

If your child has been labeled difficult, picky, oversensitive, clumsy, or inattentive, and often has “melt downs” they might suffer from Sensory Process Disorder. God designed our sensory processing system to be the foundation for all development. The way the senses signal and are processed by the brain determine how we interact with the environment. This process which is typically automatic breaks down in one out of twenty children due to an immature system where sensory overload or under-stimulation occurs.

If sensory input is not properly organized in the brain, interacting with the everyday environment becomes very difficult. “Simple” tasks such as putting on clothes, being around bright lights or loud sounds, handling academics, eating, going outside, bathing, even interacting with people can be almost impossible to handle. Then, because sensations are not processed as they should be the child quickly falls behind socially, emotionally, physically and even cognitively. Sometimes symptoms are so severe that they are misinterpreted as emotional or psychological problems, or seen strictly as bad behavior.

Everyone has seven sensory systems

These systems are Vision, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch, Proprioception (detecting the motion or position of the body) and Vestibular (balance and spatial orientation). You can think of each of your sensory systems as being a tea cup and water coming from a faucet as the sensory input. If you are under-responsive to a certain sensory input, it is as if the sensory system is a very large tea cup which never feels full. If your sensory system is over-responsive, it’s as if the system is a very tiny tea cup that can only hold a small amount of input before it overflows. Some systems can be under-responsive at the same time others are over-responsive. Each individual is unique.

There is help and hope! The brain CAN be trained to handle the senses in a more balanced way.

Unlocking the mystery of your child’s SENSITIVITY could be a piece to your Parenting Puzzle!

To learn about parent coaching or for more training on this topic,
contact Erin Blain at erin@solvingparentingpuzzles.com