

# DIFFERENT DYNAMICS

## An Introduction to Neurodiversity



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# Why?

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1 in 6 children in the United States are diagnosed with a developmental disability according to the CDC.

# Objectives

- Develop a greater understanding of and empathy for your students who are neurodivergent
- Gain confidence in or a willingness to try to make your teaching practice more inclusive of all learners

# Neurodiversity

**The idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.**

--Nicole Baumer, MD, Med and Julia Frueh, MD, Harvard Medical School

<b>Neurodiversity</b> Noun: The diversity of variation of cognitive functioning in people.	<b>Neurodiverse</b> Adjective: Describes the diversity and variation of cognitive functioning in people.	<b>Neurodivergence</b> Noun: Cognitive functioning which is not considered "typical".	<b>Neurodivergent</b> Adjective: Describes people who have a neurodivergence.
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# What is ASD?

- Category 1: a deficit in either social communication or social interaction AND/OR
- Category 2: display of restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities

cognitive		
severely impaired		very advanced
language		
nonverbal		pragmatic deficits
social		
aloof		socially unskilled
interests		
unusual		limited
repetitive behavior		
hand flapping		elaborate rituals

“If you have met one person with autism, then you have met one person with autism.”

# The Three Functional Levels of Autism

## ASD Level 1 Requiring Support



difficulty initiating social interactions

organization and planning problems can hamper independence

## ASD Level 2 Requiring Substantial Support



social interactions limited to narrow special interests

frequent restricted/repetitive behaviors

## ASD Level 3 Requiring Very Substantial Support



severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal social communication skills

great distress/difficulty changing actions or focus



# Identity-First Language Verse Person-First Language

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Disabled child



Child with a disability

Emotionally disturbed child



Child with an emotional disability

Autistic person



Person with autism



When a flower  
doesn't bloom,  
you fix the  
**environment** in  
which it grows,  
**not the flower.**

Alexander Den Heijer





# Everyone is a sensory being...

## Everything we do is ruled by our senses.

### 5 MOST COMMON SENSES

- Sight
- Smell
- Taste
- Sound
- Touch

### 2 LESSER-KNOWN SENSES

- Vestibular – Balance, Movement
- Proprioceptive – Body Awareness (Muscle & Joints)



# Sensory Processing Disorder

**A condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses.**

\*\*\*SPD is not a diagnosed disability; however, the symptoms can become severe enough to affect normal functioning and disrupt everyday life.





# Two Types of Sensory Processing Challenges

## Hyper-Sensitivity

Over sensitive/responsive

“Sensory Overload”

## Hypo-Sensitivity

Under sensitive/responsive

“Sensory Seeker”

# Examples of Hyper-Sensitivity



Unable to tolerate bright lights and extremely loud noises

Distracted by background noises that others don't seem to hear

Fearful of surprise touch, avoids hugs and cuddling

Overly fearful of swings and playground equipment

Bumps into things and appears clumsy

Has trouble understanding where their body is in relation to other objects or people

Feels uncomfortable in certain clothing due to fabric feeling "scratchy" or "itchy"

Irritated by textures of food, furniture, clothing, etc.

# Examples of Hypo-Sensitivity



Constant need to touch  
people & textures, even  
when it's not socially  
acceptable

Very high  
tolerance for pain

Invades others  
personal space

Doesn't  
understand their  
own strength

Unable to sit still,  
often very fidgety

Enjoys deep  
pressure, like tight  
bear hugs

Craves fast  
spinning and/or  
intense movement

Loves any kind  
movement

Makes loud noises  
vocally and/or  
physically

# Experiencing Sensory Overload





# Additional Facts About SPD



**SPD is not a diagnosed disability.**



**It's not uncommon for those with SPD to experience both hyper and hypo sensitivities.**



**SPD often occurs with Autism and ADHD, although kids don't have to have Autism or ADHD to have SPD.**



**There are no medications for SPD.**



**There are strategies that can be taught to help children cope with sensory challenges.**



**Occupational therapists work with kids with SPD. Sensory integration therapy or "sensory diet" is a common treatment.**

# Examples of Sensory Tools For Sensory Regulation

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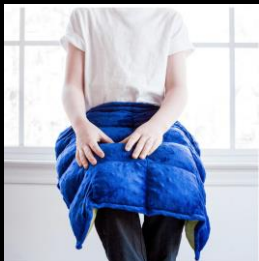
***NOISE CANCELLING HEADPHONES*** – reduces the noise level that the ear processes but doesn't eliminate sound altogether.



***WEIGHTED VEST*** – provides proprioceptive input applying deep pressure to muscles and joints sending message to brain to help calm, focus, or cope.



***ORAL SENSORY CHEWS (CHEWLRY/CHEWIES)*** – a variety of options to meet the need for oral sensory input, and a safe and hygienic way to practice biting/chewing skills for those who have an aversion to certain food textures.



***WEIGHTED LAP PAD/BLANKET*** – a sensory tool to help student feel calm and organized. Also helps prevent restlessness and elicits feelings of calmness.



***FIDGETS*** – can be used to help with calming, focus, attention, and listening. Also used to promote tactile input for those who are hypo-sensitive.

# Examples of Coping and Sensory Regulation Strategies

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**Giving needed breaks**

**Establishing an exit strategy (i.e. hand signal, nod of head, other visual sign)**

**Visual cues like picture schedules and checklists**

**Preferential seating location**

**Flexible/alternative seating (i.e. bean bag, rocking chair, therapy ball)**

**Peer coaching (have an older student with them, helping them through)**

# Adaptations and Modifications

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Start with what the child  
CAN do. Then adapt or  
modify as needed.



*Student explores their adapted bucket drum.*

# Adaptions

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Changes in the educational environment which allows the student equal opportunity for success.

# Modifications

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Changes to or lowered expectations of standards

# Adaptations

Changes in the educational environment which allows the student equal opportunity for success.

Using kinesthetic, tactile, auditory, and visual learning

Color coding

Using non-traditional materials/object representation

Using icons or pictures

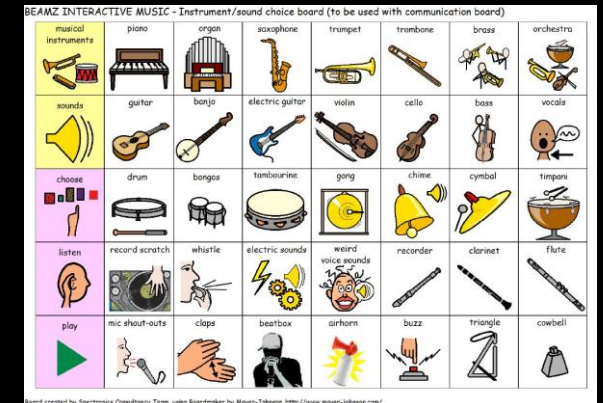
Allowing for breaks

Using timers

Creating predictable classroom routines

Providing lots of lead up and warning before transition times

Visual schedules including to-do and completed schedules



Learn more about PCS (Picture Communication Symbol) Resources at Lesson Pix [lessonpix.com](http://lessonpix.com) and Boardmaker: [goboardmaker.com](http://goboardmaker.com).



# Adaptations

**Increase the amount  
of personal  
assistance provided**

**Small group work or  
work buddy**

**Include parents,  
therapists, and or  
paraprofessionals**

**Increase the amount  
of time given on a  
task**

**Provide different  
ways for students to  
respond**

**AAC (Augmentative  
and Assistive  
Communication)  
Devices**



*Student participates in a song writing activity using his ACC Device.*

# Adaptations

**Seating assignment  
flexibility**

**Furniture**

**Lighting**

**Noise level**



**When making adaptations your  
only limit is your imagination.**

# Modifications

Changes to or lowered expectations of standards.

**Modify goals or  
outcomes for the  
student**

**Redefine student  
involvement in the task**

**Modify the skill level  
required to perform the  
task**



*Student records original lyrics to a music track he created.*



# Resources

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- Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
  - Present Level of Performance (PLOP)
  - Adaptations and modifications
- Special Education Teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- Intervention Specialists



- ✓ Meet your students where they are
- ✓ Set realistic goals
- ✓ Figure out the student's learning style
- ✓ Make adaptations to help them achieve success







**DON'T BE AFRAID TO FAIL.  
It's only failure if you don't try!**

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# Questions

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# Find us Online



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