**Sensory Symptoms Checklist: Adolescent Version**

This checklist is not a diagnostic tool; rather, it is an indicator of sensory over- or under-responsiveness. The purpose of this tool is to assist in developing an appropriate treatment plan and/or sensory diet for an individual with sensory modulation difficulties.

Remember: It is normal for all people to be sensitive to certain sensations. Sensory modulation becomes a disorder only when it negatively impacts a person’s life (e.g., ability to pay attention, learn, socialize, relax).

The asterisk (\*) indicates sensory-seeking behavior. Sensory Seeking is a form of under-responsiveness, but these individuals seek intense sensation to compensate for the under-responsiveness of their nervous systems. In general, under-responders tend to be more passive and sedentary than the sensory cravers, but they still share many symptoms.

**TACTILE (TOUCH)**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  avoids affectionate touch  startles with unexpected touch  becomes distressed when others invade personal space  requires the use of soft pencil grips  dislikes putting on deodorant  dislikes wearing makeup  dislikes the feeling of sweat  is bothered by tags and seams in clothes  clothing does not match the weather (e.g., won’t wear pants in winter)  overly ticklish  is uncomfortable being dirty  becomes distressed by air blowing on skin (e.g., wind, fan)  becomes distressed by needles and shots  cannot tolerate lotion/sunscreen  dislikes self-care tasks (brushing teeth, cutting nails, combing hair)  difficulty with fine motor tasks | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  applies layers of makeup\*  enjoys being dirty\*  is unaware of dirt/food on skin  doesn’t mind needles/shots  difficulty playing instruments  difficulty with fine motor tasks  does not notice light touch or scratches  craves intense food textures\*  needs to touch something that is textured to focus on a task\*  prefers contact sports\*  wears clothes of intense textures (e.g., velvet, sequins, tights, lace)\*  enjoys messy crafting (pottery, painting)  unaware of runny nose, watery eyes  is always touching other people/invading personal space\* |

**PROPRIOCEPTIVE (PRESSURE ON MUSCLES AND JOINTS; BODY AWARENESS)**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  Since proprioceptive input is always helpful to the nervous system, we do not see ***over-responsivity*** in this category.  \*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  self-injurious behaviors\*  heavy walking or toe-walking\*  grinds teeth and/or cracks knuckles\*  participates in rough play or sports (football, hockey, wrestling, etc.)\*  participates in sports requiring high flexibility (gymnastics, skating, etc.)  demonstrates poor hand-eye coordination  falls out of chairs or walks into walls/people  writes hard or types forcefully\*  writing is too faint to read  poor fine motor coordination  clicks pen to focus\*  is seen as “aggressive”  pets animals too hard\*  enjoys hugs and physical contact\*  wraps up in blankets\*  cannot sleep without a weighted blanket\*  prefers when clothes fit tightly\*  stuffs food into mouth/eats quickly\*  breaks items unintentionally  cannot identify objects by touch alone  difficulty typing or writing without looking  cannot identify location without using clues from surroundings  gets lost easily when driving  has difficulty giving directions  needs to chew gum or eat crunchy snacks to focus\*  has poor balance and/or posture |

**VESTIBULAR (MOVEMENT)**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  gets dizzy easily  experiences motion sickness  does not enjoy driving  is afraid of heights  doesn’t like feet to leave the ground  avoids going to amusement parks/riding rollercoasters  dislikes high energy sports involving a lot of movement (roller blading, ice skating, skateboarding, dance, gymnastics, cheerleading, etc.)  becomes distressed when head is tilted out of the upright, vertical position  is unmotivated to change positions/can be described as lazy  difficulty with tipping head back in the shower to wash hair | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  loves rollercoasters and swinging\*  is constantly in motion\*  can jump on a trampoline for hours\*  loves high energy sports with a lot of movement  loves to spin\*  does not get dizzy when spinning  has abnormal tone (low/high)  cannot fall asleep without moving enough throughout the day  needs alternative seating within the classroom  requires a fidget to focus\*  fidgets a lot\*  is described to be in constant motion or on-the-go  \*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. |

**INTEROCEPTION (INTERNAL SENSATIONS)**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  has a low pain tolerance  describes sensations that should not be painful as painful  is distressed by temperature changes  frequent complaints of “growing pains” or general aches/pains  suffers from headaches  frequently complains of nausea  experiences menstrual symptoms disruptive to everyday life  has poor tolerance of hunger/gets ‘hangry’  constantly feels the need to urinate  is resistant to medical procedures  shows disordered eating behaviors | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  has a high pain tolerance  burns mouth easily  has difficulty distinguishing between temperatures  has difficulty recognizing hunger cues  over-eats and/or has difficulty recognizing fullness/satiety\*  requires food to include a lot of spices\*  does not recognize the need to go to the bathroom until it is urgent  experiences sleep difficulties  dresses inappropriately for the weather/temperature  has difficulty recognizing signs of sickness  \*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. |

**AUDITORY (SOUND)**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  plays music at a very low volume  cannot listen to more than one sound at once/gets distracted by competing noises  cannot filter out sounds from different environments  cannot focus with the A/C, radio or other quiet background noises  startles easily with unexpected sounds  dislikes noisy environments  frequently asks others to be quiet/lower their voices  becomes distressed by the sound of someone chewing or making excessive noise  does not like common household sounds  prefers quiet environments and spending time with smaller groups of people  watches television on mute  prefers watching and playing quieter sports and activities  focuses best when seated at the front of the classroom  has difficulty refocusing when loud noises occur when driving (horns, sirens, etc.)  benefits from using noise-canceling headphones | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  blasts music\*  focuses best when listening to music or other noises\*  has difficulty hearing others who speak quietly  watches television with the volume turned up\*  does not consistently respond when spoken to  requires others to repeat themselves when speaking  has difficulty locating sounds  may appear oblivious to some sounds  talks out loud to complete a task\*  doesn’t notice background noises  frequently makes noises within their environment  enjoys loud environments\*  likes to make sounds echo\*  prefers watching and playing louder sports\*  spending time with larger groups of people\*  requires preferential seating in the classroom to pay attention  benefits from a microphone to enhance the teacher’s voice  makes loud noises happen repeatedly\*  \*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. |

**VISUAL**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  bothered by bright lights  always needs to wear sunglasses  is affected by blue light from electronic devices/needs to wear blue light blocking glasses  dislikes video games  dislikes visually busy places (e.g., grocery store, sporting events)  becomes distressed by disorganized spaces  avoids making eye contact  prefers working in dim light  cannot fall asleep unless bedroom is in total darkness (e.g., blackout curtains)  rubs eyes a lot  gets headaches from visual tasks  has difficulty sorting through all the written information on walls in public places  tilts head or rests head on arm during writing tasks | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  loves looking at bright/shiny objects\*  prefers colorful items\*  demonstrates poor hand-eye coordination and visual perception  has difficulty visually tracking items moving throughout the environment  has difficult keeping place when reading  has difficulty sorting through competing visual input  enjoys fast paced video games\*  loves spending time in visually busy environments\*  difficulty locating an item in a busy visual environment  does not need to wear sunglasses  is not affected by stimulating blue light  has difficulty playing EyeSpy games  has difficulty recognizing road signs when driving  \*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. |

**GUSTATORY AND OLFACTORY (TASTE AND SMELL)**

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| **Symptoms of Over-Responsiveness**  talks about smells often  notices odors that others don’t  is sensitive to perfume/cologne  cannot tolerate conventional cleaning products  doesn’t like candles or air fresheners  avoids places with strong smells  cannot tolerate playing ‘smelly’ sports (e.g., hockey)  has a limited food repertoire and does not like the taste/smell of certain foods  becomes distressed by being around others who might smell  is considered a picky eater  sensitive to new food textures | **Symptoms of Under-Responsiveness**  is unaware of some smells  prefers strong flavors of foods\*  does not recognize body odor  wears a lot of perfume/cologne\*  prefers when others wear perfume/cologne  likes the smell of strong smells (e.g., soaps, gasoline, cleaning products)\*  loves candles and air fresheners\*  enjoys places with strong smells  needs to smell things before tasting them\*  prefers chewy, crunchy, and/or hard to chew foods  \*Indicates sensory-seeking behavior. |