

# Connections

A Newsletter For Teachers Working With Autism  
Educational Equity For All



February 2020

## Sensory Integration: Tips to Consider

By Kim Davis, M.S. and Melissa Dubie, M.S.

For some individuals, especially those with an autism spectrum disorder, there may be sensory processing dysfunctions or difficulties. This is the “inability to respond appropriately to ordinary experiences and occurs when the CNS processes sensations inefficiently” (Kranowitz, 2003). Children with ASD may often experience an inability to respond ‘appropriately’ and be seen as having challenging behaviors or obsessions. Basically the degree and intensity of the input/output don’t match.

Sensory processing challenges that can be addressed through sensory activities embedded throughout the day and in regular Occupational Therapy (OT) sessions.

A sensory diet provides the necessary combination of sensory input to ‘feed or nourish’ a child’s nervous system. When a child’s nervous system feels properly organized it is better able to achieve optimum attention to tasks and performance of activities. Some children’s nervous systems are wired so that they do not efficiently process sensory input and this can contribute to behavioral and emotional problems. A sensory diet can provide or modify sensory input to help meet the needs of these children.

Paula Aquilla (2004) says “That sensory diet can include:

- Activities scheduled at certain times during the day;
- Sensory input provided through daily routines or activities;
- Sensory input created by the environment;
- Sensory input offered through recreational or leisure activities; or
- Sensory input from interactions with others.”

[t.ly/v85zA](https://t.ly/v85zA)



**Don't miss the next Sensory Friendly Film!**



BIRDS OF PREY  
(AND THE FANTABULOUS EMANCIPATION OF ONE HARLEY QUINN)  
2/12/2020



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG  
2/15 & 2/29/2020



THE CALL OF THE WILD  
2/26/2020

## Movie Showings for Guests & Families Living with Autism or Other Special Needs

AMC is proud to partner with the Autism Society to bring you unique movie showings where you can feel free to be you! We turn the lights up, and turn the sound down, so you can get up, dance, walk, shout or sing!

We are now expanding our Sensory Friendly Film program to four showings per month.

- The second and fourth Tuesday and Saturday.
- Family-friendly movies will continue to show Saturdays, starting at 10am local time
- We've added Tuesday showings at 7pm local time that may appeal to others on the autism spectrum.

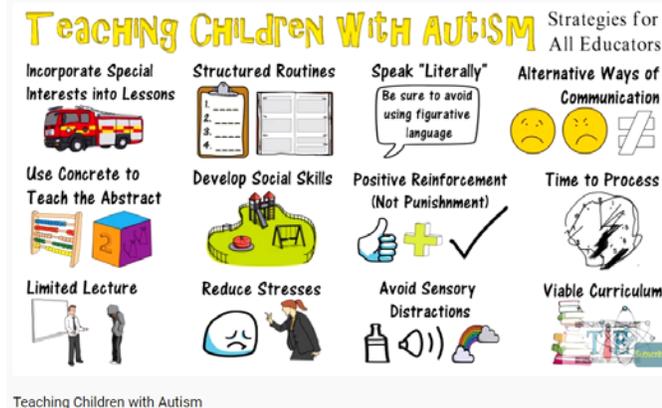
Tickets are \$4-6 depending on location and can be purchased on the day of the event. To find a participating theater:

<https://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films>

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY FOR ALL  
\*\*\*\*\* Giving kids what they need to succeed.

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## FEATURED IDEA OF THE MONTH



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnWQWa7U29s>

**Autism dilemma: Why is teen chewing on clothes, swallowing objects?** by occupational therapist Moira Pena

### Ruling out medical issues

On rare occasions, pica results from nutritional deficiencies. Pica can also produce serious medical problems such as lead poisoning. So it's important for you to alert your son's doctor to his pica and have him appropriately evaluated.

### Figuring out "why"

Any plan to address a problem behavior should begin with some detective work to figure out what's driving it. So let's consider your son's new habit from three possible angles: emotional coping, sensory stimulation and attention seeking.

### Is it anxiety?

We know that anxiety is particularly common among children and teens who have autism. Some research suggests that around 40 percent of children with autism have an anxiety disorder.

### Is it sensory stimulation?

Sensory issues are likewise very common among both children and adults on the autism spectrum. Sometimes this involves seeking out sensory experiences such as chewing on objects or clothing.

Signs that your son may be such a "sensory seeker" may include:

- having difficulty keeping his hands to himself
- having difficulty holding still (hyperactivity)
- being attracted to strong smells
- seeking constant visual stimulation (signs can include becoming excited at stimulating sights such as merry-go rounds, whirring fans and bright lights)

Another clue that his pica may be a sensory seeking would be your son's mood when he engages in pica. Does he seem happy versus anxious when he's chewing on his shirt? If so, the chewing may be something he does to calm himself.

### Is it attention seeking?

While all of us engage in attention-seeking behavior, it's important to remember that such behaviors can become a means of expressing needs for those who have trouble communicating – a core symptom of autism.

[t.ly/eMGmR](http://t.ly/eMGmR)

## WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

[t.ly/w8NO5](http://t.ly/w8NO5)

<http://www.nea.org/home/18459.htm>

[t.ly/xEWne](http://t.ly/xEWne)



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



TEACCH Online Course

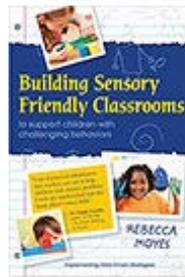
Online Course – Structured TEACCHing:

Individualized Schedules

This course will introduce you to the process of creating individualized schedules and help you to incorporate the schedule into your daily routine for students with ASD.

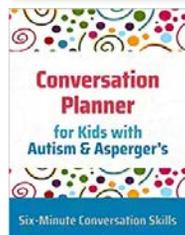
<https://www.aheconnect.com/cdetail.asp?courseid=teacch>

## RECOMMENDED READING & VIDEO



Building Sensory Friendly Classrooms to Support Children with Challenging Behaviors

By: Rebecca A. Moyes



Conversation Planner for Kids with Autism & Asperger's

by Janine Toole PhD

## AUTISM AND AGGRESSION: INTERVENTION

**STRATEGIES** [t.ly/WE](http://t.ly/WE)

Aggression is most likely a side effect of communication and/or coping issues. So when a child with autism becomes aggressive, there is a reason. For instance, many children with autism have a hard time with change, so changes to their routine can cause them to get upset. It's up to us to figure out why they are being aggressive and to teach them that 1) aggression will no longer be reinforced and 2) other things they can do instead of being aggressive. Here are some strategies to use to get your child out of the cycle of aggression:

- Teach Communication.
- Teach Alternative Behaviors.
- Another strategy is to teach your child that he has options.
- Reinforce Good Behavior.
- Change Your Behavior.
- Prevention.