

## What is Sensory Processing?

Sensory Processing is the way that our bodies take in information of our environment through our senses, and how this information is organised in our central nervous system, in order for us to be able to understand, react and interact appropriately with the world around us. Sensory Processing occurs throughout our life, as we engage with our environment and have new experiences.



## The senses

There are 7 primary senses. The 5 commonly referred senses are:

- **Smell (Olfactory), Vision, Hearing (Auditory), Taste (Gustatory) Touch (tactile):**

We have 2 less commonly referred to internal senses, these are:

- **Movement and Balance (vestibular):** information is received from the inner ear, and relates to movement, gravity and balance.
- **Body awareness (proprioception):** where information is received from the muscles, tendons and joints, and provides us with an awareness of our bodies position in relation to our environment, gravity and space.

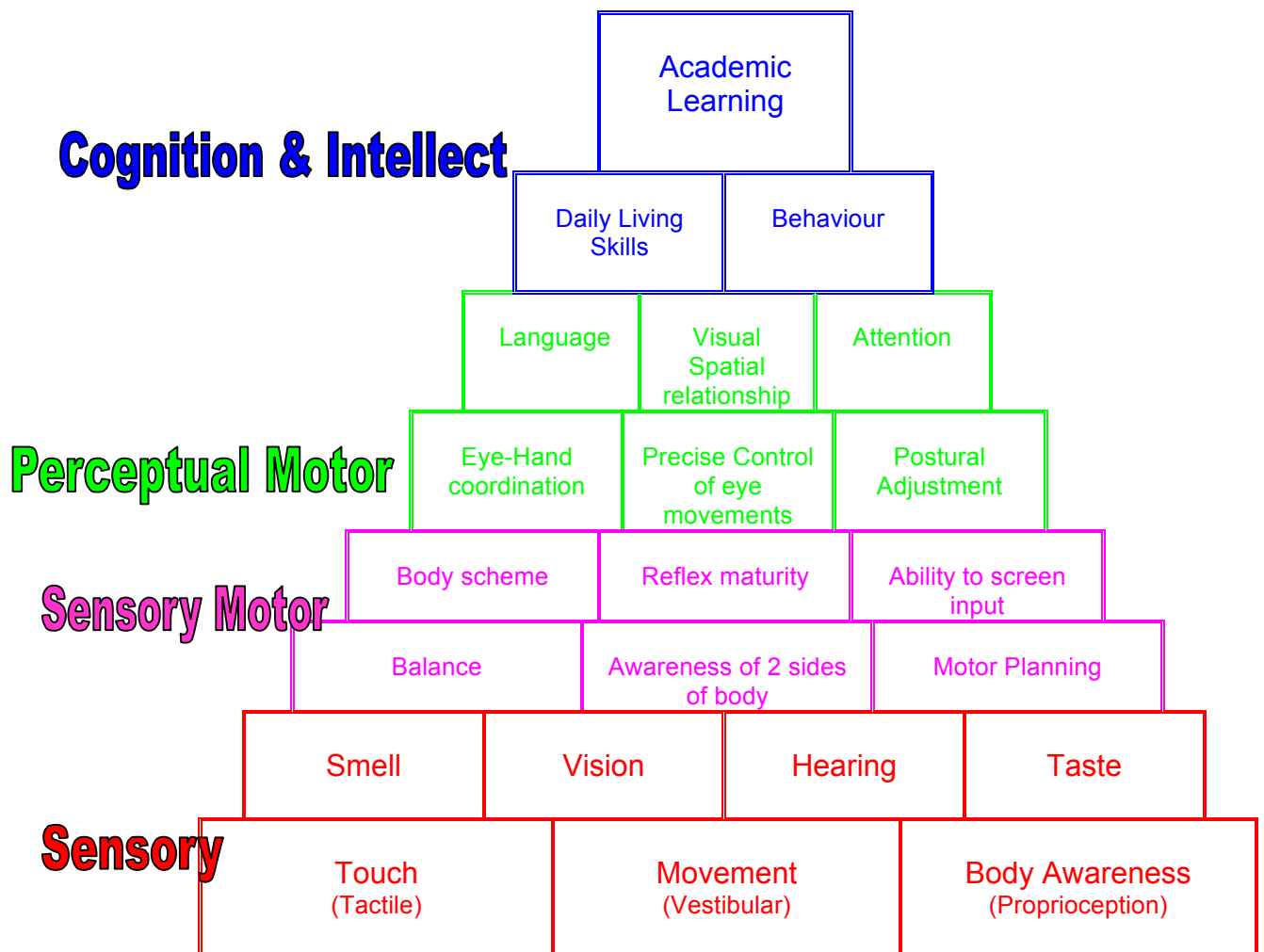
## Why is it important?

Infants develop through processing of their sensations and it directs the way we understand and interact with our environment. How we process sensations and our understanding of it is critical to participation in all areas of life.

## What about when it doesn't all go according to plan?

Some children experience sensations too intensely, and may be described as **over sensitive**. These children may become irritated, annoyed, or even threatened by certain sensations. Because of their decreased ability to tolerate certain sensations, they may react negatively or attempt to avoid those experiences, this is reflected in their behaviour. Children that experience sensations less intensely than 'normal', may be described as **under sensitive**. Their sensory needs are higher than the average child, and they require a lot of stimulation.

In order for children to focus their attention, their bodies need to be in an appropriate state of alertness in relation to the demands of the environment. This is determined by whether the child is over sensitive or undersensitive to the particular sensory stimulation. Children may find it difficult to self regulate their sensory processing and adults may need to assist these children to find the right type of activities to attain the appropriate level of alertness for their situation



### The impact of sensory processing difficulties

If a child is not in the appropriate state of alertness their attention may be directed towards the wrong cues or may fail to alert at all. This may limit key learning opportunities, or potentially limit the child’s engagement in social play activities, sport or family time.

### Sensory Diet

A sensory diet is one strategy that can be used to assist a child to regulate the processing of their sensations. It is similar to a food diet for adequate nutrition. This diet is providing adequate and appropriate sensory stimulation at regular intervals throughout the day. A balanced sensory diet containing both calming and alerting activities will help children maintain appropriate levels of alertness.

Once you are aware of your child’s particular sensory processing patterns (usually assessed through a Sensory Profile (Dunn) a targeted and individualised diet can be developed.

### Further Information

If you feel your child may have difficulty processing their sensations, or for further information please contact Berry at Lil’ Peeps.