Living sensationaingly with dementia – understanding how we use our senses.

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Problems experienced by people with dementia

- Poor concentration
- Restlessness / wandering
- Shouting out
- Aggressive behaviour
- Lost and disorientated
- Unable to do everyday activities or hobbies they used to enjoy
- Unhappy / depressed
- Anxious
- Difficulty following simple instructions
- Memory loss
- Loss of ability to interact socially
- Physically frail
Sensory challenges

Person

Taking sensory information

Environmental demand

Just right challenge
Environmental demand

Dementia

- High-levels Of stimulation
  - Stress threshold exceeded
  - Difficulty processing
  - Agitation
  - Decline in activities of daily living
  - Decline in social functioning

- Low-levels Of stimulation
  - Sensory deprivation

Sensory imbalance

Brain

Behavioural

Low-levels of sensory deprivation can lead to difficulty processing, which can result in behavioral changes, such as agitation and decline in daily activities and social functioning. High levels of sensory stimulation can exceed the stress threshold, leading to sensory deprivation and decline in daily activities and social function.
Interpreting sensory information

Attention

Feedback – from others

Using past experience and memory

Brain figures out what it means

Brain works out what to do

Using your senses

Motivation and drive

Arousal
How we respond to sensory information
Dunn, 2002

Sensory processing patterns are based on how our brains react to sensory stimulation and how we respond to that input.

**Nervous system thresholds** – thresholds for responding to stimulation based on sensory preference

**Self regulation strategies** - what we do to actively manage that sensory input
# Patterns of sensory processing assessed by the Sensory Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold / reactivity</th>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Active</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High threshold with low reactivity</strong></td>
<td>Low registration (Bystander)</td>
<td>Sensory seeking (Seeker)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not notice sensory events or is slow to respond</td>
<td>Looks for sensory experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low threshold with high reactivity</strong></td>
<td>Sensory sensitivity (Sensor)</td>
<td>Sensory avoider (Avoider)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readily notices sensory stimuli, may be distracted by them</td>
<td>Deliberately acts to reduce or prevent exposure to sensory stimuli</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Strategies - Sensory seeker

- **Sight** – Bright lights, coloured objects to draw attention
- **Sound** – Have the radio / TV, faster tempo music
- **Touch** – Rummage boxes, things to interact with
- **Taste** – Spicy foods, hot and cold, sweet/ sour / bitter/ salt
- **Smell** – Citrus / peppermint
- **Movement** – walks, active activities
Think about how we respond to each of our senses

• Sight - visual
• Sound - Auditory
• Touch - Somatosensory / vibration
• Taste - Gustatory and texture
• Smell - Olfactory
• Movement - Vestibular / proprioception
Strategies - Low registration

- **Sight** – Bright lights, coloured objects to draw attention BUT use judiciously to draw attention
- **Sound** – Alarms, bleepers to alert
- **Touch** – Rummage boxes, things to interact with
- **Taste** – Spicy foods, hot and cold, sweet/ sour / bitter/ salt
- **Smell** – Citrus / peppermint
- **Movement** – walks, active activities
Strategies - Sensory avoider / sensitivity

- Sight – Low level lighting
- Sound – Quiet or self selecting especially when doing something
- Touch – Avoid random stimulation (labels / tags)
- Taste – Familiar, be aware of textures
- Smell – Floral, sandlewood, familiar, orientating
- Movement – gentle, linear activities
Thank you for listening