

# Sensory Preferences Checklist for Adults

## Introduction

Because everyone's sensory system is unique, we all have **Sensory Preferences**. This means:

- There are certain sensations that we like.
- There are sensations that we don't like, or might prefer to avoid.
- There are some sensations that we may feel pretty neutral about.

Some of us have stronger sensory preferences than other people do.

Getting to know your own sensory preferences is a great way to train yourself as a "sensory investigator". When you become aware of what your sensory preferences are, you can begin to understand:

- How your sensory preferences affect your reactions to many common situations.
- What sensory preferences you have in common with your child (or children you work with).
- How your sensory preferences may be *different* from your child's (or children you work with).

## How to Use this Checklist

Read through the list on the following page. For each item, ask yourself:

- How do I react to this sensation? For example, does it make me more or less:
  - Calm?
  - Energetic?
  - Stressed?
  - Distracted?
- Is this sensory situation something that I personally
  - Seek out?
  - Avoid?
  - Feel neutral about?
  - Does it depend? If so, what does it depend on?
- How do I react to this sensory situation when I'm:
  - Just waking up?
  - At the end of a long day?
  - Feeling my best?

Once you've done that, you can start to think about how *your* preferences are the same or different as those of important people in your life.

1. Look at the list again, thinking about your **child**. For each item (or similar, age appropriate ones), does your child react the same as you or in a similar way? React differently from you?
2. Think about some of the most challenging situations you experience with your child. Do your sensory preferences play into these situations? Do theirs? Are you not sure? *This can be a great topic to talk about with your occupational therapist!*
3. Ask a close friend or family member to fill out the checklist. After you each fill it out, compare answers. How are your answers the same? Different? Do your different sensory reactions affect how you react to challenging situations with children?

# Sensory Preferences Self Check Checklist for Adults

## Sense of Hearing (Audition, or Auditory Sense):

- Working with a television on in the background
- Nails on a blackboard
- Metal on Metal (e.g.: cutlery in a sink)
- A neighbour's lawnmower or power tools
- Different kinds of music
- A crowded public place
- A baby crying
- Children yelling during play (happy)

## Sense of Sight (Vision or Visual Sense)

- Bright Sunlight:
  - when you've just woken up
  - other times of day
- Working with a television on in the room.
- A cluttered or messy desk or room
- A crowded mall or store
- A neatly made bed in a neat room
- Fluorescent light

## Sense of Smell (Olfaction, or Olfactory Sense):

- Coffee
- Onions and Garlic cooking
- Unfamiliar cooking smells
- Familiar cooking smells
- Newly cut grass
- Something burning on the stove
- A large department or grocery store
- Cologne or Perfume

## Sense of Touch (Tactile Sense)

- Scratchy tag on the back of a shirt.
- Soft fleece blanket
- A polished stone in your hand
- Digging in wet mud with your fingers.
- A bug walking across your skin
- Being tickled
- Standing in a large crowd or line
- A hot shower (how about a cold shower?)
- Swimming in cool water.
- Ice on your skin

## Sense of Taste (Gustatory Sense):

- Sucking a lemon or lime
- Coffee
- Dark Chocolate
- Olives
- Plain potato
- Tonic water
- Orange juice
- Milk
- Salted snacks
- Fresh baked cookies

## Sense of Proprioception (Proprioceptive Sense)\*:

- Stretching
- Lifting weights
- Carrying heavy groceries
- Digging the garden, shoveling snow
- Washing the floor
- Chewing gum
- Clenching your fists tight.
- Yoga

## Vestibular Sense\*:

- Swinging on a swing
- Spinning
- Taking an elevator
- Riding in a car
- Rocking in a rocking chair
- Riding a bicycle
- Downhill skiing
- Going on rides (eg: Rollercoaster)
- Bungee jumping
- Sliding (playground slide, toboggan slide or hill)
- Rolling down a hill.

\*To learn what these words mean, and for more information about all of the senses, please watch **A Review of the 7 Senses.**