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A SENSORY APPROACH TO POTTY TRAINING

Britt Collins M.S., OTR/L

continued

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Identify what sensory systems play a role in potty training
- 2) List sensory strategies to create a potty training plan for a child with special needs
- 3) Determine which approach is appropriate for each child

2

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Sensory Processing

- Sensory processing describes the interface between a person's neurological function and the environment. Interactions between the environment and person are at the heart of modern conceptualizations of health and can affect participation (World Health Organization, 2007).
- Differences in sensory processing can affect a child's meaningful tasks such as; play, social skills, developmental growth and yes even potty training!

3

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8 Sensory Systems

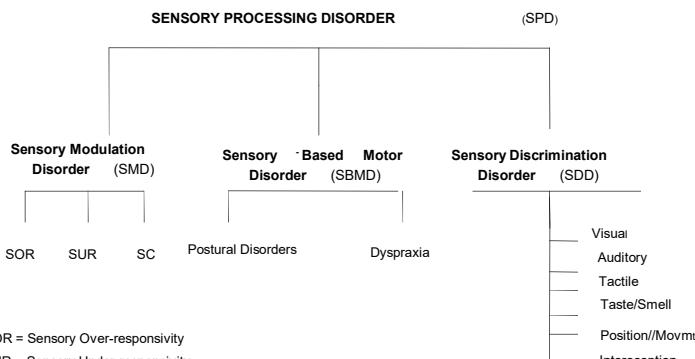
- Taste – oral motor
- Touch- tactile processing
- Sight – visual motor/perceptual
- Sound- auditory processing
- Smell – olfactory
- Vestibular – governs balance, where your head is in space, how fast you are moving
- Proprioception- input to the muscles and joints that tells us where our bodies are in space
- Interoception- sense of internal organs this plays a huge part of Potty Training

4

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SPD Subtypes



L.J. Miller 2012

5

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Ways to Evaluate Sensory Processing

- SPM: Sensory Processing Measure (Home and School forms): Parham, Ecker, Henry et al.
- SPM: Preschool (Home and School forms)
- SP-3D Assessment (in the works): Out of the SPD Foundation with Lucy Miller, Schoen, et al.
- Sensory Profile: Winnie Dunn

6

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Sensory Modulation Disorder

- 3 subtypes
 - SOR
 - SUR
 - SC – also has been called Sensory Seeking

7

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Sensory Over-Responsive

- SOR- these kids have responses that are too quick, too big or last too long than typical kids
- It is hypothesized that their threshold is too low and the therapist is working to raise that threshold
 - Examples: scared to swing or be in high places
 - Tactile defensive touching-sticky or gooey, being dirty
 - Covering their ears or saying things are too loud

8

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Sensory Under-Responsive

- SUR: this kid feels things too late and too little.
He is low and slow almost lethargic.
- It is hypothesized that these kids have a high threshold and therapists want to lower this
 - Examples: delayed response to name being called
 - She falls down and doesn't cry or notice she hurt herself.
 - Lethargic or avoid movement, choose sedentary activities

9

continued

Sensory Cravers

- SC –Even if a child seems to be seeking deep pressure or input, we don't want to give them too much as this will disorganize them.
 - Examples: always on the go, constantly moving
 - Crashing, giving hard high fives
 - Spins a lot, jumps a lot
 - Over stuffs their mouth with food

10

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SBMD: Sensory Based Motor Disorder

- Dyspraxia – difficulties with ideation, sequencing, motor planning and/or execution
- Postural Disorder – difficulties with overall tone, trunk strength

11

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Dyspraxia/Motor Planning Problems

- Individuals with Dyspraxia have trouble processing sensory information properly, resulting in problems planning and carrying out new motor actions. They struggle with initiating a multi-step tasks.
- These individuals are clumsy, awkward, and accident prone. They may break toys, have poor skill in ball activities or other sports, or have trouble with fine motor activities.
- They may prefer sedentary activities or try to hide their motor planning problem with verbalization or with fantasy play.

12

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Motor Planning/Praxis

- Praxis is the ability to self-organize
 - Starting with an idea (ideation)
 - Sequencing how to carry out the idea (organization)
 - Making your body complete the activity (execution)
- Examples –
 - 4 point crawling
 - Cutting, writing, creating a multi-sequenced craft project
 - Getting dressed, going to the bathroom

13

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Postural Control Disorder

- Individuals with postural disorder have difficulty stabilizing his/her body during movement or at rest in order to meet the demands of the environment or of a motor task, e.g. poor “core strength”.
- When postural control is good, the person can reach, push, pull, etc. and has good resistance against force.
- Individuals with poor postural control often do not have the body control to maintain a good standing or sitting position, especially when attempting functional tasks.

14

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Postural Control

- May have inefficient righting and equilibrium reactions
- Poor bilateral integration
- Difficulty with ocular-motor control
- Difficulty with fine, gross, visual and oral motor control

15

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(SDD) Sensory Discrimination Disorder

- Tactile
- Visual
- Auditory
- Taste/Smell
- Vestibular (position)
- Proprioception (movement)
- Interoception

16

continued

Discrimination Disorder

- Process of identifying specific qualities of sensory stimuli and attributing meaning to them. Individuals with SDD difficulties have problems determining the characteristics of sensory stimuli.
- Poor ability to interpret or give meaning to the specific qualities of stimuli (Do I see a “p” or a “q”? Do I hear “cat” or “cap”? Do I feel a quarter or a dime in my pocket? Am I falling to the side or backwards?).
- Those with SDD have difficulty detecting similarities and differences among stimuli. Individuals with poor sensory discrimination may appear awkward in both gross and fine motor abilities and/or inattentive to people and objects in their environment. They may take extra time to process the important aspects of sensory stimuli.

17

continued

Creating a Sensory Lifestyle in the Home

- We don't use the term “Sensory Diet” anymore
- A Sensory Lifestyle is how you incorporate the sensory tools that you have into every day life
- It is not a specific “diet” for a child because every child is different
- We will talk about activities and strategies, but its best to learn through trial and error what works best for the child you are working with.

18

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When should you start potty training your child?

- Sometimes children will let us know when they are ready
- If they are waking up dry
- They are letting you know when they are wet or dirty
- They show interest in the regular toilet or a potty chair
- They begin to ask questions about it

19

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How do you know where to start?

- Developmentally children are ready to potty train between 18-36 months but children with sensory issues may take longer to train.
- All of the sensory strategies provided will work for any and all children
- If you are recognizing sensory challenges with a child, take those into consideration when working on potty training.
- Interoception plays a huge part in this skill and can a child tell when their bladder is full and they need to go potty or not

20

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The Bathroom at Home

- Think about the bathroom and all of the sensory components
- Bright lights- white walls and countertops
- Loud noises, water running, toilets flushing
- Cold floor, cold toilet seat
- Mirror to see reflections in
- Sound echos sometimes
- Am I going to fall into the swirling water in the toilet?

21

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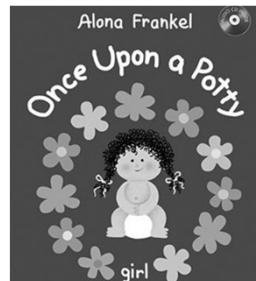
The Public Bathroom

- Yikes it's loud in here
- Other people
- Toilets flushing – sometimes automatically (you can cover this with a sticky note)
- Sinks turn on, dryers turn on with your hands underneath
- Small stalls where it's a tight fit for parent and child
- Men's bathroom has urinals – a child may not have seen this a whole lot if they are typically with their mom going in public potties

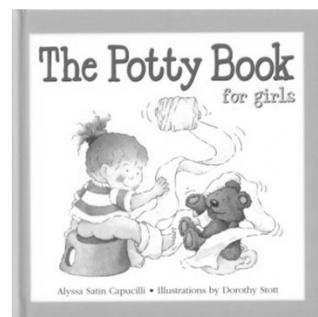
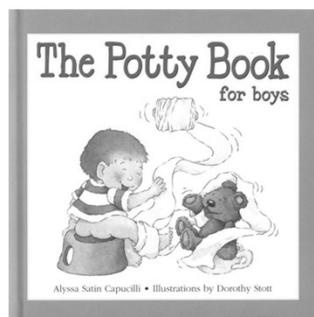
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- Definitely start at home trying to potty train
- Make sure your child is not overwhelmed just being in the bathroom for washing hands, taking a bath etc.
- Talk about Potty, read Potty books



23

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24

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- If your child is comfortable being in the bathroom, then begin to see if they want to sit on the potty
- Make sure their feet are supported and you have a potty seat on the toilet so they don't feel like they will fall in
- Maybe try a small potty chair on the floor
- Some sing, make music when you go, etc.
- Make it fun
- Reward a child for trying in the beginning

25

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Types of Potty Seats/Chairs



26

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Step up seats encourages independence



27

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Seat for regular potty



28

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Where to start pee or poop?

- Only worry about urine to start – “pee pee” or whatever you want to call it for your child
- Right when they wake up, take them straight to potty
- There are tons of tricks to try and here are some listed
 - Pour warm water over them
 - Run the sink water
 - Make sure their feet are supported
 - Sit with them

29

continued

- Give them something to drink (maybe even a little watered juice that's a special treat to help them need to go).
- Keep them on a schedule.
- About 15-20 min after they have had food or drink, take them potty.
- Watch for the potty dance
- Have them sit and try for at least a few min while you read to them, sing etc. Make it fun not a punishment.
- Warm up the toilet seat if they are big enough to sit on it or use seat.

30

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- Use a visual schedule of what to expect.
- If they are sensitive to smells, slowly introduce them to the smells of the bathroom good and bad.
- Have them watch their same gender parent go potty.
- Talk about the science behind needing to potty if they can cognitively relate to this.
- Never punish for accidents in their pants or diaper.

31

continued

How to transition from diaper etc.

- Going from diaper, to Pullups to big girl/boy pants can be tricky for some kids.
- Some children are just going to be ready when they are ready, and we can't push them.
- Some parents have been successful with going to Pullups and then wearing big girl undies over the Pullups.
- If you are going to put them in undies, be ready to change them when they have an accident and have them help but not as a punishment.
- Some parents skip the Pullups all together.

32

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Potty Training in a Day/Weekend

- There are many books out there about this theory but here is one way to look at it
- Start on a weekend day with at least 2-3 adults to help out
- Wrap up little prizes that you have hidden away (can be little \$1 store things or treats)
- Prepare the child telling them you are going to work on this all day Sat so they know what to expect. Make it exciting

33

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- First wake up, take them to potty – give them whatever they want to eat, drink while sitting on potty until they “void” (pee).
- You can have movies in the bathroom, toys, games, books, music you name it.
- Once they actually potty – then you have a party, get them to flush, wash hands and celebrate – keep them naked all day and MOVING (because you can't pee when you are moving).

34

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- Let them open a little present – get very excited and dance around.
- Then keep them busy, playing eating, drinking as much as they want but don't let them sit down because they will pee.
- Its hard work, but its worth it.
- Then a timer goes off after 20 min and you take them back into bathroom and sit until they void again.
- This time it will take longer, but pump them full of fluids.

35

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- After they pee again – have another present for them, praise them, celebrate and then keep them up and moving and playing
- They can stand still, or squat a little to play but you HAVE TO WATCH them to make sure they aren't peeing on your carpet, and if they do, take them straight to the toilet and say "this is where we potty" or something to that effect (again stress to parents not a punishment).

36

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- This goes on until nap time and you put on a Pullup and allow them to nap and when they wake up start all over with the fun again.
- Sometimes they may sit on the potty for an hour or so but since the bathroom is so entertaining, they will like it.
- This method doesn't work for everyone, but it may work for your child that you are working with.
- If there are more sensory issues going on with interoception, then you may need to take a different approach.

37

continued

What if my child won't go in the bathroom?

- Take the potty chair and put on down on a mat and create a quiet environment for the child to feel comfortable.
- Have them practice sitting or even "voiding" on the little potty chair outside of the bathroom and then slowly start to move it in the bathroom.
- Master the home potty before going out in public.

38

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Other Tips

- Talk about how the body works
- Play pretend potty with baby doll or animals
- Talk about pushing the body to release the potty (pee or poop)
- Get the potty baby that talks and pretend pees
- Use visuals (again have them watch a parent use the bathroom)
- Write a social story or watch a cartoon like Daniel Tiger who shows little kids how to use potty

39

continued

- You can try the intense 3 day in a weekend potty training.
- You can try to allow the child to just show when they are ready but expect a lot of accidents.
- You can help use a schedule and take them daily and encourage them with stickers, prizes and treats and once you accomplish urine, then try for poop.
- Every family is going to need a different approach depending on the level of commitment and child's needs.

40

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OH NO THE POOP

- This starts a whole new ballgame
- Kids can get upset about watching poop come out of them and then flushing it down the toilet can be traumatic
- Maybe start flushing the poop out of their diaper down the toilet to show them
- Talk to them about how we eat food, all the good stuff goes into our bellies and then we poop the rest of it out and this is healthy
- There are some books that talk about poop that can be helpful

41

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Poop Cont'd

- If they are constipated, you need to consult with your Dr. about the foods they are eating, maybe they have a vitamin deficiency maybe they just need a little apple or prune juice
- If they have diarrhea all the time, again consult your Dr. it could be what they are eating
- Make sure you pay attention to what you are feeding your child.

42

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My Personal Experience

- Attempt at potty training in a weekend
- Unexpected UTI
- Change of plans
- Patience – a lot of patience
- 2 year old SUCCESS!!



43

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Calming Breathing Exercises

- Mindful breathing - aware of current breath first, then
- 5 deep breaths using breathing ball or 5 fingers
- Ss breath (snake breath)
- Bumblebee breath
- Ha breath (Volcano Breath)
 - this is a cleansing breath



44

continued

Other daily living situations

- So many parents come to me complaining about
 - Cutting their child's nails, hair
 - Washing their hair
 - Getting them dressed
 - Getting them to eat more food variety or volume
 - Bathing them
 - Brushing their teeth
 - And more
- Here are some ideas:

45

continued

For kids who are SOR

- Remember these are the kids who go into fight or flight when their systems feel bombarded
- Take it slow, talk to them about what you are going to do
- Write a social story around getting a hair cut
- Cut their nails after the bath when they are soft
- Allow them to be in control of brushing their teeth to start and then you take a turn

46

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SOR cont'd

- Use visual pictures so they know what to expect
- Don't startle them and give them a choice
 - Do you want this toothpaste, or this toothpaste, etc.
- Help them lay out their clothes and they can see how they feel today (it may be too itchy today but don't allow them to change 5 times every morning)
- Don't allow them to wear the same clothes or eat the same foods every day
 - This is called food juggling or what I like to call clothes juggling

47

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SOR Cont'd

- Teach them calming strategies
 - Deep breath, slow music, deep pressure
- Allow them to brush teeth without toothpaste to start
- Cut their hair without a mirror where they can see every move and panic when the scissors come close
 - Distract them with a movie or game while getting their hair cut
- If you the OT are trained in the brushing protocol, I have had success with this with certain clients. Otherwise pairing vestibular with heavy work is regulating to the central nervous system and can help with overall regulation.

48

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For Kids who are SUR

- Those kiddo's who are slow to motivate, hard to get up and moving
- Find what is motivating for them
- Give them sensory input that is alerting
 - Drinking through a straw, cold or sour things
 - Jumping jacks, turn on some fun music to get them going in the morning
- Write a social story about the situation or use visual pictures
- Reward them for following directions

49

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For kids who are Cravers

- These guys sometimes don't hold still long enough for you to cut their nails
- Give them a sensory rich activity (like an obstacle course) to help organize their systems (vestibular paired with heavy work)
- Mix up the sensory input (see previous webinars for more information)
- Help them learn calming strategies so they can slow their bodies down enough to learn the task you are teaching (brushing teeth)

50

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Other Ideas from the Audience?

- Feel free to share your ideas here so everyone can use them
- Take this presentation and give to parents or use parts for whom it is applicable

51

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Britt's latest book just released
2/14/19

My Special Brother Bo

britt e. collins

illustrated by brittany
bone-roth



52

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Resources

- Sensational Kids by Lucy Jane Miller
- No Longer a Secret by Doreit Bialer and Lucy Jane Miller
- Raising a Sensory Smart Child by Lindsey Biel
- Growing an In-sync Child by Carol Kranowitz
- Parenting a Child with Sensory Processing Disorder by Christopher Auer and Susan Blumberg

53

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Resources Cont'd

- Sensory Parenting: Newborns to Toddlers by Britt Collins MS, OTR and Jackie Linder Olson
- Sensory Parenting: The Elementary Years by Britt Collins MS, OTR and Jackie Linder Olson
- Sensory Yoga for Kids by Britt Collins
- My Special Brother Bo By Britt E. Collins
- Potty Training in One Day by Harmin Parpia
- Toilet Training in Less than a Day by Nathan Azrin

54

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Research

- Dean, E. E., Little, L., Tomchek, S., & Dunn, W. (2018). Sensory processing in the general population: Adaptability, re-siliency, and challenging behavior. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 72, 7201195060.
- Reynolds, S., Glennon, T. J., Ausderau, K., Bendixen, R. M., Kuhaneck, H. M., Pfeiffer, B., Watling, R., Wilkinson, K., & Bodison, S. C. (2017). The Issue Is—Using a multifaceted approach to working with children who have differences in sensory processing and integration. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71, 7102360010.
- Miller, L., Mulligan, S., & Schoen, S. (2018) The Impact of Sensory Processing Challenges on Participation of Daily Life: A Pilot Study. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, November 2018, Vol 72, 7211500072.

55

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Thank you for
time &
consideration...

www.sensoryparenting.com
www.sensoryyogaforkids.com
www.sensoryworld.com



56

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Questions?

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57