Sensory Diet Handout for Tactile Defensiveness

Your child’s sensory system (in their brain) is telling them that a normal sensation is painful. This might be touching something with their hands, feet, body, etc. This involves things touching the skin. Children with tactile defensiveness or touch defensiveness tend to avoid getting messy and dislike tasks that require them to have lots of things or people touching them (dressing, bath, eating).

Introducing normal textures DAILY can help your child’s sensory system to learn that these normal textures are not harmful. All of these activities should be done while playing with your child. (Examples Hide pieces/toys in the textures, writing or drawing in textures, add colors or water to make it fun!)

- Start with a dry texture (uncooked beans, uncooked macaroni)
  - Complete for at least 1-2 weeks (it may take longer for your child but keep doing this EVERY day)
  - Have child build up to just touching the items and perhaps pulling things out of these textures
  - You want them to eventually dig in these textures without getting upset

- Progress to another dry texture (uncooked rice – will leave residue on hands)
  - Complete for at least 1-2 weeks (it may take longer for your child but keep doing this EVERY day)
  - Have child build up to just touching the items and perhaps pulling things out of these textures
  - You want them to eventually dig in these textures without getting upset

- Progress to a more wet texture (playdoh – will feel squishy but not leave wet residue)
  - Complete for at least 1-2 weeks (it may take longer for your child but keep doing this EVERY day)
  - Have child build up to just touching the items and perhaps pulling things out of these textures
  - You want them to eventually dig in these textures without getting upset

- Progress to wet texture (shaving cream, pudding, yogurt, finger pain – will leave wet residue on hands)
  - Complete for at least 1-2 weeks (it may take longer for your child but keep doing this EVERY day)
  - Have child build up to just touching the items and perhaps pulling things out of these textures
  - You want them to eventually dig in these textures without getting upset
Sensory Diet Handout for Oral Defensiveness

Your child’s sensory system (in their brain) is telling them that a normal sensation is painful. This might be putting something to their lips, tongue or inside their mouth to chew and swallow. This involves things touching the mouth (oral cavity). Children with oral defensiveness tend to avoid certain textures, mixed foods, or temperatures of food. This will greatly impact meal and tooth brushing routines.

Introducing normal textures DAILY can help your child’s sensory system to learn that these normal textures are not harmful. This routine talks about progression for eating foods – but DO NOT FORGET TO PLAY with your child in food! 😊 Playing with foods, both desire and undesired will help with overcoming some of the stress associated with trying an item their body is telling them is painful or might make them gag.

- Start with a food the like (example might be chips or cookies) on their plate with one item that is not their favorite (example: carrots).
  - Have them tolerate the item being on their plate – if a child won’t allow food to even be seen on their plate, they won’t put it in their mouth.
  - Continue this until child tolerates item on plate without getting upset for several consecutive days.
- Progress to touching undesired food item with finger and wiping off before getting desired food item. (touch carrot, then bite of cookie).
  - Have them tolerate touching with hand first – if a child won’t touch an item with their hands they won’t put it in their mouth.
  - Continue until child will do willingly without getting upset several consecutive days.
- Progress to touching to lips following same routine – touch carrot to lips, then bite of cookie.
  - Continue until child will do willingly without getting upset several consecutive days.
- Progress to touching to tongue following same routine – touch carrot to tongue, then bite of cookie.
  - Continue until child will do willingly without getting upset several consecutive days.
- Progress taking bite following same routine – take bite of carrot, then bite of cookie.
- Continue until child will do willingly without getting upset several consecutive days.

**Another approach includes mixing the item they desire with undesired textures. So if they won’t eat items that are wet textures (pudding) then dip a cookie in this texture have the child eat it. If they are motivated enough for the cookie, they will be more willing to try the undesired item and help their sensory system grow/learn that wet textures are not painful.

**In addition, due to oral defensiveness, your child may also be gagging. Try some oral sensory input before meals including z-vibe, vibrating tooth brush or Nuk brush and make the letter ‘c’ in the child’s cheek. You can also have the child chew on chewy tube before meals. Introducing this sensory input BEFORE meals will help them become less defensive and help them learn to control their gag reflex.

**A child with oral defensiveness may also dislike brushing his/her teeth. Make sure you have a routine established for completing this task 2x a day. Have child start by holding tooth brush and work toward bringing to mouth. Incorporate play with this. Have them brush teeth on their toys, watch siblings or watch you brush teeth. Talk about it frequently to help them overcome some of the ‘stress’ associated with feeling something their body is telling them is painful.