

Tactile Differences - things to try for Parents, Carers, Teachers and Young people

Scan the QR Code to watch our videos on sensory processing differences before trying any of these suggestions.



We get tactile information from touch to our body; many people have things they do and don't like the feel of. Here are some things to think about if touch is a difficulty for children and young people.

Understanding:

- Try to understand and think about what the child or young person finds difficult with touch. Talk with them, play activities where they have to touch different things
- If hugs are difficult then explain this to family and friends and with the older child talk about boundaries for hugs.
- Try giving a high 5 or a fist bump instead of a hug.

Choosing clothes to wear:

- Think about the clothes fabric. Cut out labels and wash a few times before wearing with lots of fabric softener
- Consider wear second hand clothes as these are often softer
- Turn socks inside out or try seam free sock
- Consider underwear,
 - can pants be soft and frill or detail free,
 - think about the style of pant
 - Can bras be soft fabric without fiddly fastenings and non-wired
- Wearing sports base layers under clothes can really help as they are soft and breathable.

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Things to do before touch or dressing:

- Gentle but firm massage can be helpful in preparing the skin for tactile experiences eg a foot massage before putting on socks.
- Pre warn and talk through before any tactile experiences e.g., I need to put sunscreen on you, we will start with your arms. Always approach from the front where your child can see you.
- Use a long mirror so that they can see what you are doing

Other helpful suggestions for home or setting

- Can the child or young person stand at the front or end of a queue or be first or last to enter or leave a lesson to avoid being brushed past by other pupils in school
- When carrying out messy play or craft activities, don't pressure a child to take part. Allow them to observe without pressure. Allow use of long handled tools and brushes to avoid getting textures directly on the hands. All activities should be fun and not pressured. Gradually build up exposure and tolerance.
- Use wipes instead of washing hands after an activity or visiting the bathroom
- Talk about different textures with your child, how they look and feel.
- Introduce new touches on the back of the hand rather than the palm, as this is less sensitive.
- Try some of the calming strategies we suggest in our videos or on the webpage

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