

What is Sensory Modulation Disorder?

Sensory Modulation Disorder (SMD) also known as Sensory Processing Disorder is a complex disorder of the brain that affects children and adults.

Most children learn easily to hug, jump, run and play. They can rev up and calm down, make smooth transitions between activities, recover from momentary stress, try new games and use their senses to explore their world. They develop these skills naturally.

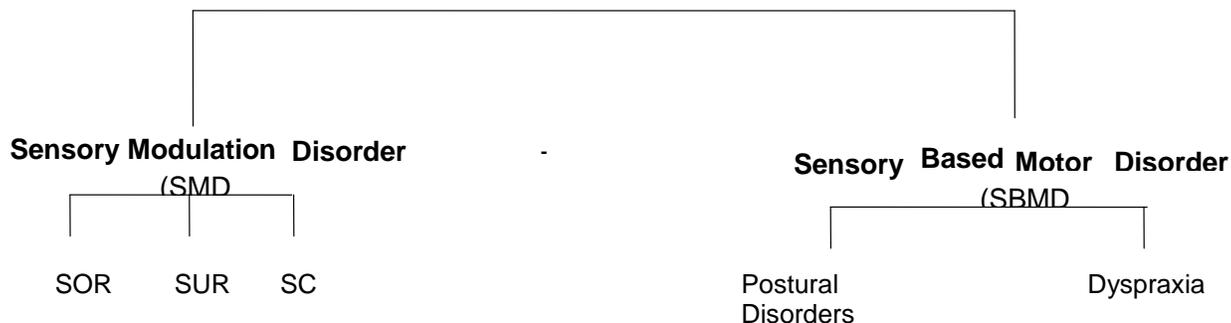
People with SMD misinterpret everyday sensory information, such as touch, sound, and movement. They may feel bombarded by information, they may seek out intense sensory experiences, or they may be unaware of sensations that others feel. They may also have sensory-motor symptoms such as a weak body, clumsiness, awkwardness or delayed motor skills.

The term "sensory processing" includes:

1. Our ability to take in information through our eight senses: the basic five: (touch, smell, taste, vision, hearing) plus the "hidden three": proprioception (sensations of body parts in relation to each other), vestibular (sense of where body is in space relative to the earth's gravity), and interoception (sense of internal organs)
2. Our ability to organize and interpret the sensory information we perceive, and
3. Our ability to make a meaningful response to the sensory information coming into our brains.

For most people, this process is automatic. Children and adults who have a Sensory Modulation Disorder (SMD), however, don't experience this process in the same way. SMD affects the way their brains interpret the sensory information they perceive. SMD also affects how people react to sensory information. Whatever the particular pattern, Sensory Modulation Disorder causes children to be out of sync. It hampers their motor skills, social skills and can dampen self-esteem.

SENSORY MODULATION DISORDER (SMD)



Sensory Over-Responsivity SOR

Individuals with sensory over-responsivity are more sensitive to sensory stimulation than most people. Their bodies feel sensation too easily or too intensely. They might feel as if they are being constantly bombarded with information. Consequently, these people often have a fight, flight or freeze response to sensation (e.g. being touched unexpectedly, or a loud noise). They often try to avoid these sensations (e.g. withdraw from being touched, cover their ears to avoid the loud sounds).

Sensory Under-Responsive SUR

People with SUR tend to look like they disregard or do not respond to sensory stimuli in their environments. In reality they are easily overwhelmed by the stimulation in their environment and often react by a “flight” response. This intense “flight” response may lead to apathy, lethargy and seeming lack of inner drive to initiate socialization and exploration. Behavior with people with SUR is often described as withdrawn, difficult to engage, inattentive or self-absorbed. These children often find toys or games like video games, leggos or books to help them tune out an overwhelming environment.

Sensory Seeking/Craving SC

Individuals with this pattern have an almost insatiable desire for sensory input. They tend to be constantly moving, crashing, bumping, and/or jumping. They may “need” to touch everything and everyone and be overly “affectionate” not understanding what is “their space” vs. “other’s space”. The more these kids seek/crave input, the more disorganized they become.

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.

Dyspraxia/Motor Planning Problems

Individuals with Dyspraxia have trouble processing sensory information properly, resulting in problems planning and carrying out new motor actions. They may have difficulty in one or more of the following: 1) forming a goal or idea, 2) planning a sequence of actions or 3) performing new motor 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.