



Parental Guidance: Supporting Sensory Needs

Some young people experience the world around them more intensely, particularly in relation to noise, light, touch, movement or transitions. Sensory differences can affect how comfortable, regulated and able to cope a young person feels in everyday situations. When these needs are not recognised, they can sometimes lead to distress, avoidance or behaviour that appears out of character.

This guide offers practical ways for parents and carers to recognise sensory sensitivities and make small adjustments at home that can reduce overwhelm and support emotional wellbeing.

Recognising sensory sensitivity

Sensory needs can present in different ways and may change depending on the environment or level of stress. Some young people may:

- Become overwhelmed by noise, busy spaces or bright lights
- React strongly to certain clothing textures, smells or food types
- Find transitions or unexpected changes particularly difficult
- Need more movement, pressure or sensory input to feel settled

Recognising these patterns can help families understand what may be contributing to distress.

Practical adjustments at home

Small changes to the environment can make everyday routines feel more manageable:

- Reduce background noise where possible during homework or quiet time
- Consider lighting, clothing and sensory triggers during daily routines
- Give advance warning before transitions such as leaving the house or changing activities
- Keep routines as predictable as possible

These adjustments can help reduce stress and support a sense of safety.



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Creating calm spaces and routines

A calm, predictable environment can help young people regulate more easily:

- Provide a quiet space where your child can go to reset
- Use consistent routines for mornings, homework and bedtime
- Keep instructions clear and simple during stressful moments

When routines are familiar, young people often feel more confident and less overwhelmed.

Supporting regulation

Some young people benefit from opportunities to regulate through movement or sensory input:

- Allow movement breaks when needed
- Encourage calming strategies such as stretching, walking or quiet sensory activities
- Use sensory tools where appropriate, such as fidget items or weighted objects if these are helpful

Supporting regulation proactively can reduce the likelihood of overload.

Understanding behaviour and emotional responses

Sensory overload can sometimes look like frustration, withdrawal, refusal or emotional outbursts. These responses are often linked to discomfort or overwhelm rather than deliberate behaviour.

Considering sensory needs alongside behaviour can help families respond more calmly and effectively.

Working in partnership with the Academy

If certain strategies are helpful at home, families are encouraged to share these with the Academy. Consistency between home and school can help reduce stress, improve regulation and ensure that young people feel better understood across different environments.