



Understanding our senses

Visual

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"My husband and I used to have a soft bed that would bounce every time he rolled over or moved a leg. I couldn't stand it and would scream at him about an hour into the night. I would wake up every time he moved!"

Susan

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Daily living and visual processing.

Many daily living activities may be difficult relating to visual processing but ones in particular are bathroom and kitchen related activities.

Bathrooms and Kitchens tend to have a lot of light and reflective surfaces.

These reflections and intense visual information can mean someone feels disorientated, misses visual information or finds it difficult to piece a whole image together.

Research can link similar visual experiences for some people with the experiences that people with migraines feel. Extreme pain can also be our body's natural way of responding to intense sensory input.

So much of our society focuses on our visual sense. We gain colour, form, shape and scale from our visual sense. It is an external sense which means it receives information from outside of my body.

Our eye takes in the visual information, our brain receives these messages, flips this image upside down and that is how we are seeing our environment now. Our brain merges the 2 images from each of our eyes so most of us are just seeing one picture when both of our eyes are open rather than 2 slightly different images.

One of the first ways we take in visual information is through contrasts. Things that are opposites, there are lots of baby toys which are black and white this is designed to help with this development. Once we become confident in seeing in this way we then see the colour red.

I have supported many people who's favourite colour is red, so loving red toys and objects. Until I learnt that red was our first colour we see I didn't realise this could be a reason why they interacted with red things.

Visual development

There are stages to our development with everything in our life. When we are born we slowly begin to be able to process light and translate this into visual information.

We process contrasts, red then we understand that things around us are 3D and so we may spin things or roll ourselves as this helps us to understand what we are seeing it physical and not just a 2D shape.

It's important we are able to recognise the difference between someone with a sensory processing difficulty and someone who has a delayed visual processing system.

Visual sensitivities may mean someone squints, covers their eyes, wears sunglasses, or likes hats and hoods up to reduce the intensity of light.

For people seeking visual input we might notice characteristics relating to nature like exploring shadows but we might also see people loving lights and flashing toys.

This information is based on our online training 'Understanding our senses' you can find these online via our website shop.

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