

WHAT IS SENSORY OVERLOAD?

www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com

WHEN A CHILD'S BRAIN GETS MORE SENSORY INPUT THAN IT CAN HANDLE, IT CAN FEEL OVERWHELMING.



TOO MUCH IN, TOO FAST

Everyday sights, sounds, touches, smells, or movement can build up quickly. When there's too much, the brain struggles to process it all at once.

Examples of sensory input:

- Loud noises or background chatter
- Bright lights or busy environments
- Strong smells or certain textures
- Crowded spaces or nonstop movement
- Unexpected changes or too many things happening at once

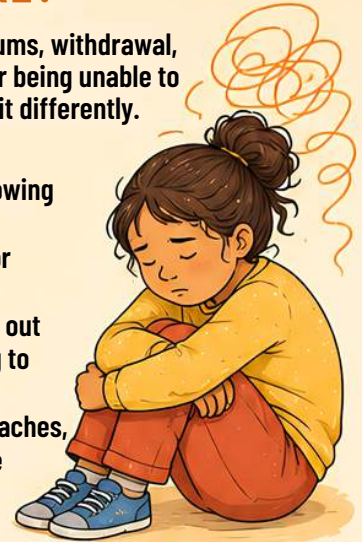


WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

It can look like crying, tantrums, withdrawal, covering ears, meltdowns, or being unable to focus. Each child shows it differently.

You might notice:

- Trouble listening or following directions
- Irritability, frustration, or sudden outbursts
- Shutting down or zoning out
- Restlessness or needing to escape
- Physical signs like headaches, tummy aches, or fatigue



THEY ARE NOT MISBEHAVING

Sensory overload is not attention-seeking or defiance. It's their nervous system saying: "I need help managing this."



WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

Some children are more sensitive to sensory information. It can be linked to:

AUTISM

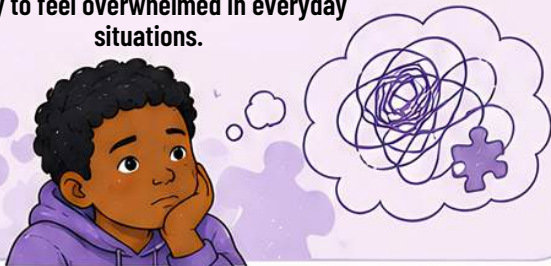
ADHD

ANXIETY

TRAUMA

SENSORY PROCESSING DIFFERENCES

Their brain and nervous system take in more information, or have a harder time filtering what isn't important. This makes them more likely to feel overwhelmed in everyday situations.



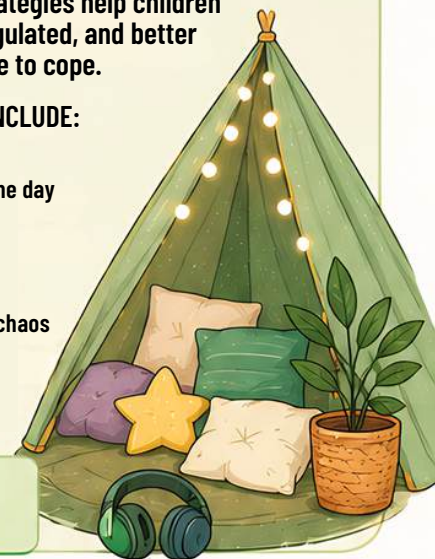
WHAT HELPS?

Supportive environments and consistent strategies help children feel safe, regulated, and better able to cope.

HELPFUL STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- Calm, predictable routines
- Sensory breaks throughout the day
- Movement and heavy-work activities
- Deep pressure or quiet time
- Limiting noise, crowds, and chaos
- Choices and preparation for transitions
- Understanding and patience

Small supports can make a big difference.



KINDNESS + UNDERSTANDING = CONNECTION

When we understand sensory overload, we can support children with compassion, patience, and the right tools to feel safe and in control again.



Every child deserves to feel safe in their world.

LET'S CREATE IT TOGETHER.

SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE **FREE** RESOURCES

WWW.SOCIALWORKERSTOOLBOX.COM

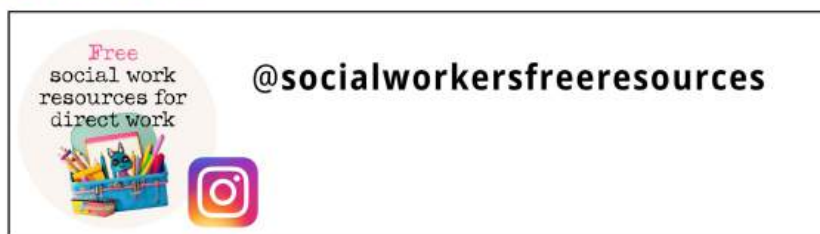


FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY UP TO DATE
WITH NEW DOWNLOADS:

1) FACEBOOK



2) INSTAGRAM



3) PINTEREST



©EDITA STIBOROVA (2026) This printable PDF document may be used free of charge by individuals and not-for-profit organisations for work with families and for training purposes, provided that no changes are made to its content.

You are not permitted to upload this resource to your own website or to social media. You may include a link from your website, social media page, or group to ours.

You may share our resources from our Facebook/Instaglam/Pinterest page using the share button.

FREE PDF DOWNLOAD

What Is Sensory Overload In Children Poster

A printable sensory overload poster for children explains what can happen when a child's brain receives more sensory input than it can manage. It covers common triggers such as noise, bright lights, crowds, textures, smells, movement and sudden changes, alongside signs like meltdowns, shutdowns, restlessness, frustration and difficulty listening.

Families, teachers, SENCOs, social workers, therapists, foster carers and early help practitioners can use it during conversations about autism, ADHD, anxiety, trauma and sensory processing differences. It can be displayed at home, in classrooms, in counselling rooms or used as a visual prompt during parent support work.

Keeping the poster nearby can help adults respond with calm, practical support rather than punishment. The suggestions, including sensory breaks, predictable routines, heavy-work activities, quiet time, deep pressure and transition preparation, give clear starting points for helping kids feel safe, regulated and understood.