

Sensory Processing Considerations in Toileting

Supporting older children and teens with additional needs.

Sensory Processing and Integration

'We all process sensory information differently. Sensory processing and integration is the way that our bodies unconsciously take in information through our senses, and how this information is organised and made sense of in our brain. It attributes meaning to what is experienced, contributes to motor and behavioural outputs and is fundamental to how we learn and develop.'

Ayres, J A (1972)



Social Understanding and Communication

Differences in the areas of social understanding and communication can influence how the child develops skills, interacts, plays, and develops relationships:

'Autistic children have differences in the way they communicate, understand and use language. They engage in social life from a different perspective.'

Autism Education Trust



Flexibility, Information Processing and Understanding

'Autistic children can be single-minded and single-channelled and can become so intensely focused on an area of interest of activity that they find it hard to attend to other signals.'

Lawson, Murray and Lesser refer to this as ***monotropism***.

(Murray, D. Lesser, M. Lawson, W. 2005)



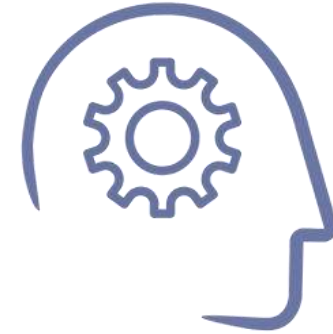
The Three Areas of Difference: Impact on Toileting



Sensory processing
and integration.



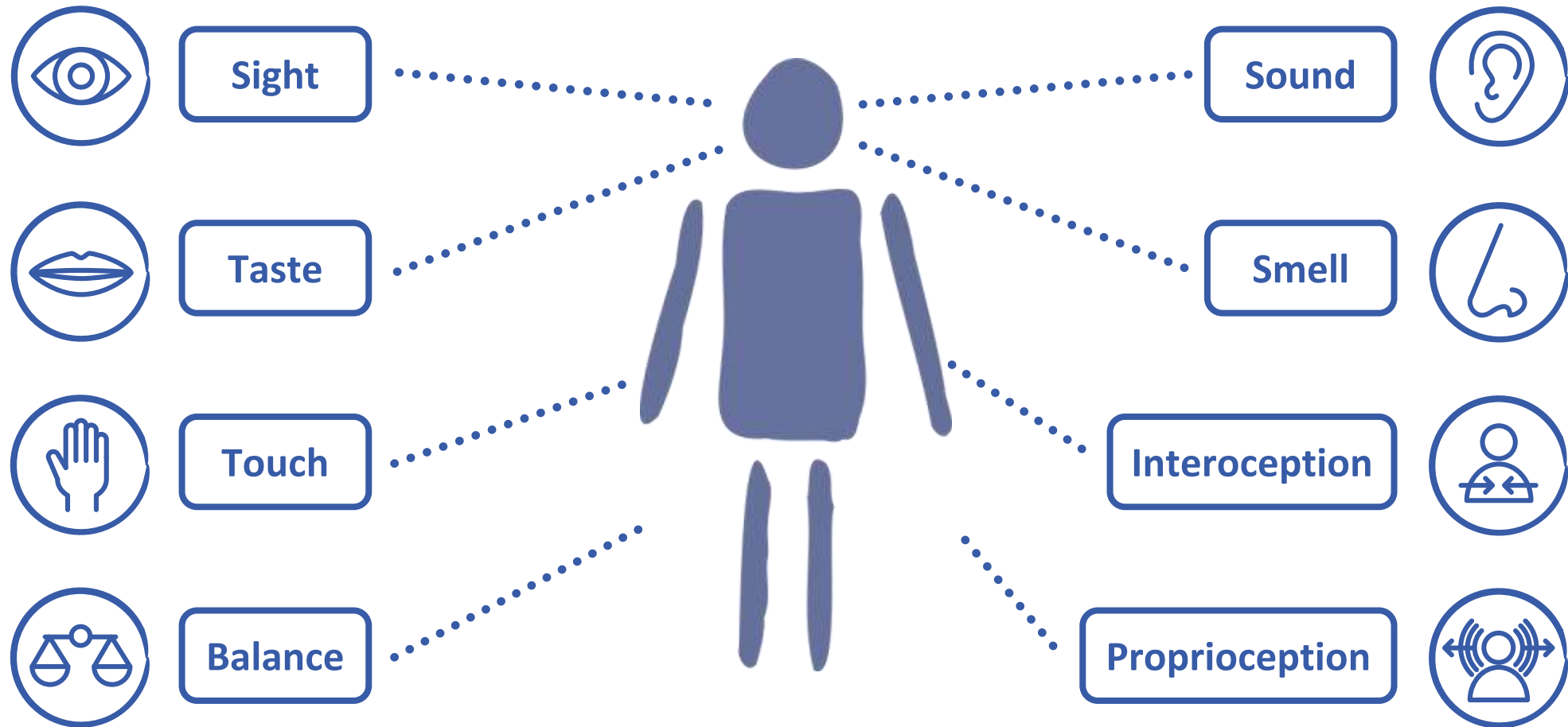
Social understanding
and communication.



Flexibility, information
processing, and
understanding.

We need to look at these differences in terms of both the strengths and support needs that might arise in relation to toileting and the impact of these differences on the child's levels of anxiety.

Sensory Processing and Integration: Impact on Toileting



Sensory Processing and Integration: Impact on Toileting



Smell



The child may think:
Toilets are **smelly**
places!



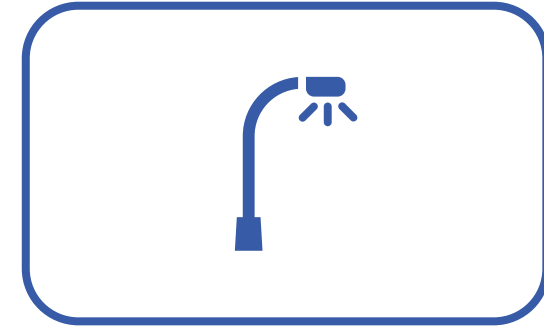
Taste



Diet may impact toileting.
The child may **like the**
taste of faeces.



Sight



Some children have
an **over/under**
sensitivity to particular
colours, patterns or light.

Sensory Processing and Integration: Impact on Toileting



Sound



The child may either like or dislike certain sounds



Touch



They may like or dislike the feel of things in the toilet area – e.g., the toilet seat; towels, splashing water

Sensory Processing and Integration: Impact on Toileting



Proprioception



Balance



The child may wonder:
Where am I?
Will I fall?

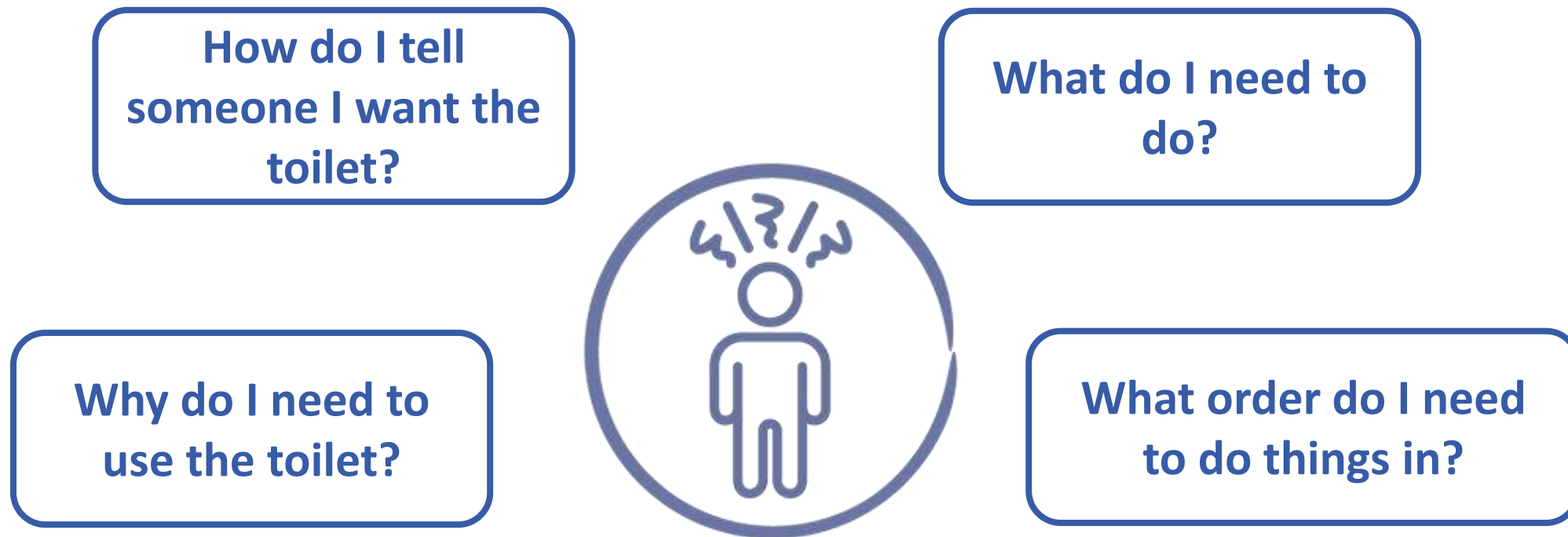


Interoception



Not recognising internal
physical sensations: thirst,
hunger, need to use the toilet.

Social Understanding and Communication: Impact on Toileting



Flexibility, Information Processing and Understanding: Impact on Toileting

I am engrossed in
an activity.

I do not see the
purpose in going to
the toilet.

I do not like change.



I am not in control.

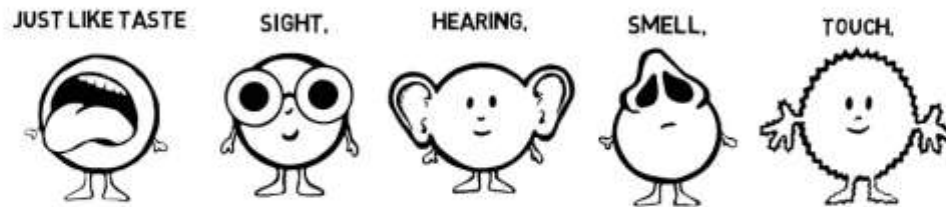
Interoception

- **Older children and teenagers**
- Body awareness can cause problem for older children. It is never too late to help children tune into their body sensations.
- Ways to do this include:
 - Talking to your child and helping them practice noticing how their body is feeling.
 - Some children enjoy the 'be a scientist' approach to keep a record of their wee and poo and their sensations, which may help their understanding.
 - Help may be needed for some such as with timers or visual cues, and reminders linked to day time routines.
 - Body awareness signals may be more difficult to notice as social and educational demands increase as young people grow older. Increased internal body signals can also occur with anxiety, especially about toilets and be linked to holding in the wee and poo, or sometimes going to the toilet more often. Understanding this can be helpful to work out solutions.
 - Research has found that children don't receive as many sensations from neurological receptor stimuli in the brain when they are absorbed in activities, such as when playing on computer games.
 - This may be linked to the body awareness sensations being more subtle. Sensations from inside our bodies may not be as intense as other sensations and may be more difficult to notice.

Video explaining Interoception

- [Interoception](#)

INTEROCEPTION IS A SENSE.



PROPRIOCEPTION



AND VESTIBULAR.



INTEROCEPTION IS
THE 8TH SENSE



Recognise and Respond to the Child's Attempts to Communicate

Do adults recognise the signs the child gives that they need the toilet?

How can the child communicate their toileting needs?



Are communication aids accessible e.g. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)?

Are all adults responding consistently to the child's communication?