**Sensory differences examples and suggested strategies (taken from National Autistic Society).**

**Sight**

**UNDER-SENSITIVE:**

* objects appear quite dark, or lose some of their features
* central vision is blurred but peripheral vision quite sharp
* a central object is magnified but things on the periphery are blurred
* Poor depth perception, difficulties with throwing and catching, clumsiness.

**OVER-SENSITIVE**

* distorted vision - objects and bright lights can appear to jump around
* images may fragment
* easier and more pleasurable to focus on a detail rather than the whole object
* Has difficulty getting to sleep as sensitive to the light.

**Suggested strategies:** You could make changes to the environment,  such reducing fluorescent lighting, providing sunglasses, using blackout curtains and/or creating a workstation in the classroom - a space or desk with high walls or divides on both sides to block out visual distractions.

**Sound**

**UNDER-SENSITIVE**

* may only hear sounds in one ear, the other ear having only partial hearing or none at all
* may not acknowledge particular sounds
* might enjoy crowded, noisy places or bang doors and objects.

**Suggested strategies**: You could help by using visual supports to back up verbal information, and ensuring that other people are aware of the under-sensitivity so that they can communicate effectively. To meet the person’s individual sensory need, include experiences they enjoy in their daily timetable.

**OVER-SENSITIVE**

* noise can be magnified and sounds become distorted and muddled
* may be able to hear conversations in the distance
* inability to cut out sounds – notably background noise - leading to difficulties concentrating

**Suggested strategies:**

* shutting doors and windows to reduce external sounds
* preparing the person before going to noisy or crowded places
* providing ear plugs and music to listen to
* creating a screened workstation in the classroom or office, positioning the person away from doors and windows.

**Smell**

**UNDER-SENSITIVE**

* some people have no sense of smell and fail to notice extreme odours (this can include their own body odour).
* some people may lick things to get a better sense of what they are.

**Suggested strategies**: You could help by creating a routine around regular washing and using strong-smelling products to distract people from inappropriate strong-smelling stimuli (like faeces).

**OVER-SENSITIVE**

* smells can be intense and overpowering. This can cause toileting problems
* dislikes people with distinctive perfumes, shampoos, etc.

**Suggested strategies**: You could help by using unscented detergents or shampoos, avoiding wearing perfume, and making the environment as fragrance-free as possible.

**Body awareness (proprioception)**

Our body awareness system tells us where our bodies are in space, and how different body parts are moving.

**UNDER-SENSITIVE**

* stands too close to others, because they cannot measure their proximity to other people and judge personal space
* finds it hard to navigate rooms and avoid obstructions
* may bump into people.

**Suggested strategies:**

* positioning furniture around the edge of a room to make navigation easier
* using weighted blankets to provide deep pressure
* putting coloured tape on the floor to indicate boundaries
* using the 'arm's-length rule' to judge personal space - this means standing an arm's length away from other people.

**OVER-SENSITIVE**

* difficulties with fine motor skills, eg manipulating small objects like buttons or shoe laces
* moves whole body to look at something.

**Suggested strategies:** You could help by offering 'fine motor' activities like lacing boards.