

Developing Tactile Perception

The tactile system is our sense of touch. Tactile perception function allows us to determine where we are being touched and what is touching us. Children whose tactile system is not working as well are likely to have a difficult time learning motor skills such as feeding, dressing, and writing.

Strategies for helping a child with poor tactile perception

Here are some things you can do to help enhance touch perception:

1. Play 'hide and find' games with objects hidden in dried beans or rice. Choose objects your child is familiar with and see if they can name the objects by touch alone. If your child cannot name the object, have them match simple shapes (i.e. place a coin, a block and a small ball on the table. Say "when you find one of these, show it to me").
2. Play games where you ask the child to describe an object being felt without looking at it. You can keep the ideas simple, such as "round", "cold" or "wet" or more complex such as a "long smooth pointed object". (Items can be placed in a simple drawstring bag – "feely bag".)
3. Have objects with different textures available for play and help your child discriminate between soft and hard, rough and scratchy, bumpy and smooth, etc. Talk about these differences and see if your child can distinguish them through touch.
4. Have your child identify shapes (or letters and numbers) that are drawn on their back or on their hands. You can play this in the bath and draw through soap foam so they can see the shape after they have tried to guess.
5. Have your child draw simple lines, shapes, letters or numbers with their fingers in substances such as sand, playdough, soap foam, paints, rice, sandpaper etc. The extra sensation may help them get the idea of the shape or letter.
6. Have your child blindfolded (or eyes closed); ask the child to put hands on the table. You touch the child's finger(s). Ask the child to point to the finger(s) being touched.
7. Have your child blindfolded (or eyes closed). Touch the child's two body parts simultaneously, e.g. face and hand. Ask the child to point to the body parts touched.
8. Have your child blindfolded (or eyes closed). Touch the back of the child's hands with one, two or three fingers. Ask the child to indicate the number of fingers being used.

These are just a few ideas. Try to think about your own sense of touch and incorporate tactile perception games into your child's play in a fun and non-stressful way.

References:

Mailloux, Z (1992). Explore The Sense of Touch. Sensory Integration Quarterly. Vol XX No 2
Trott, M C (1993). SenseAbilities – Understanding Sensory Integration. Tucson, Arizona : Therapy Skill Builders. Sidney Chu, SROT, OTR

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For further general health-related information, please ask the relevant department for an information prescription or contact:

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