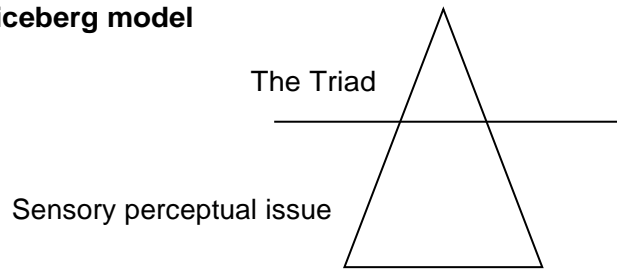


Sensory Issues and ASD

Leading researchers are now thinking that the sensory issues experienced by people with ASD are the underlying causes of all the difficulties in ASD (Olga Bogdashina)

The iceberg model



"Learning how each individual autistic person's sense's function is one crucial key to understanding that person"
(O'Neill)

Like ASD in general sensory needs vary between different individuals. All people with ASD are affected in differing degrees. An increasing number of differences in the way people with ASD perceive the world are being identified.

The types of sensory difference identified

1. Gestalt perception

Inability to distinguish between foreground and background information i.e., take in all sensory information rather than tuning out irrelevant information.

Gestalt perception can result in:

- Fragmented perception (not put together perception to make a whole i.e., see a mouth eye etc. but not a face)
- Delayed processing
- Hyper/hypo sensitivity
- Inconsistent perception (fluctuating) (mono input) sensory overload and shut down

2. Bilateral integration problems

- difficulties co-ordinating left and right sides

3. Prosopagnosia (Face blindness)

4. Scotopic Sensitivity/ Irlen Syndrome

5. Sensory agnosia

- difficulties interpreting a sense i.e., hearing a smell etc.

What can we do to help?

- ✓ Assess a child's sensory needs. (This does not have to be formal, but you can use a sensory profile if you feel the needs will be significant)
- ✓ Try to keep things as predictable as possible. Structure and routine helps in a confusing world.
- ✓ Help children with face blindness or fragmented perception by wearing the same type of clothes keeping, your hair the same or always wearing the same perfume.
- ✓ Give people with ASD longer to process information (not just verbal information)
- ✓ Warn people of stimuli that may cause problems i.e. "I am going to shout at do you want to cover your ears?"
- ✓ Use pleasant stimuli as rewards i.e., music textures etc.
- ✓ Use desensitisation techniques to help overcome problems with stimuli.
- ✓ Look for the first signs of overload and try to prevent it. i.e., remove from situation and provide time and space to recover.
- ✓ Teach individuals to recognise their own early warning signs of overload and what to do about it.
- ✓ Try to present information to the child through their preferred sense in most cases this is visual but not all. (Young children often use smell taste etc. for much longer)
- ✓ Be aware that the child can not know they are perceiving the world differently to anyone else so can't understand how others know things it may help to explain what you're perceiving.