

RAISING YOUR SPIRITED CHILD

Lesson #4 Sensitivity

Introduction

<p>Introduce Topic</p>	<p>Sensitive individuals feel emotions, see sights, hear sounds, feel textures, taste flavors, and smell odors to a greater degree than the average person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problems occur when they are overwhelmed by the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ amount of stimulation around them ✓ emotional stress around them ▪ Emotions are collected and concentrated ▪ Soaked up rather than diffused ▪ The build up pressure overpowers their control system <p>It is our job to help sensitive children learn how to recognize and manage their keen sensitivity in a positive and respectful way.</p>
<p>Activity: Testing Your Sensitivity</p> <p>When group returns, ask for observations and record on flip chart or white board.</p>	<p>Tonight we're going to take a test you can't fail. We're going to test your sensitivity. For the next five minutes, walk around the building. When you return, we'll make a list of the things you noticed.</p>

Sensitivity Triggers

<p>Discuss</p> <p>Record on flip chart or white board</p>	<p>We all experience different levels of sensitivity. Some people are much more sensitive than others. They experience sensations that many of us might miss or can easily ignore.</p> <p>Now let's consider our children. What smells, sights, tastes, sounds, touches, textures or emotions bother them? Let's record the sensations that trigger our kids.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="529 1644 1417 1793"> <thead> <tr> <th>Smells</th> <th>Sights</th> <th>Tastes</th> <th>Tactile Sensations</th> <th>Sounds</th> <th>Emotions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(See page 143 of Raising Your Spirited Child Workbook for examples.)</p>	Smells	Sights	Tastes	Tactile Sensations	Sounds	Emotions						
Smells	Sights	Tastes	Tactile Sensations	Sounds	Emotions								

Discuss	<p>It's quite common for a sensitive child to scream and object when her senses are being overwhelmed because she doesn't recognize or understand what's bothering her. The next time she begins to complain that her jeans are choking her or that she can't eat the hotdog because it touched the mashed potatoes, it's crucial that you recognize that she is not just trying to aggravate you. Believe her. As you learn to identify her areas of sensitivity, you can help her find ways to help to her manage it.</p>
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Effective Strategies for Managing Sensitivity

Discuss	<p>Identifying your child's triggers and believing him when he tells you what bothers him are the first steps to helping your sensitive child be successful.</p> <p>The next step is to teach him the <u>strategies</u> he needs to manage his sensitivity.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name the Sensations And Affirm The Feelings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Describe what you see b. Name the feeling or sensation c. Affirm the feeling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Naming feelings and sensations help him understand that they are tied to his senses. ▪ Trust him and believe him when he describes a sensation. ▪ Empathize rather than negate or ignore complaints. ▪ When ignored or told not to feel that way, intensity rises. ▪ The sensitive child will make sure he is heard. ▪ Will he be heard using the words he has been taught or will he need to escalate his requests with a tantrum or a kick in the shin?
<p>Activity (Read the following scenario)</p> <p>Ask...</p>	<p>You have volunteered to chaperone your daughter's 6th grade field trip to the Festival of Nations held in a large civic center with thousands of other students, bright lights, loud music, and a variety of odors from dozens of food vendors. After about an hour, it becomes obvious that your child is becoming overwhelmed from all the stimulation. She is becoming crabby and rude to her other classmates.</p> <p>How can you help her to manage her sensitivity by naming the sensations and affirming her feelings?</p>

Possible answers:

- a. Describe what you see
 - “It’s pretty crowded and noisy in here.”
- b. Name the feeling or sensation
 - “You’re getting very irritated. You might start to get a headache or stomach ache.”
- c. Affirm the feeling
 - “Lots of people feel that way in noisy crowds. That’s just your body telling you to find a quiet place. Take a deep breath and let me know if you want me to rub your shoulders.”

Ask participants to identify other triggers and possible ways to eliminate or avoid them.

(See pages 155 & 156, *Raising Your Spirited Child Workbook* for more examples.)

2. Eliminate Or Avoid The Triggers If Possible

Examples

	Triggers	How To Eliminate or Avoid
Smell	Perfume	Avoid wearing perfume around child
Taste	Meat or beans	Serve alternate food/puree beans
Touch	Seams in socks	Buy socks without seams
Sound	Vacuum	Vacuum when child is not present
Sights	Bright sun	Provide sunglasses
Emotions	Yelling, raised voices	Have a calm discussion

Ask participants for other ideas.

(See pages 158 & 159, *Raising Your Spirited Child Workbook* for more examples.)

3. Reduce or Make Adjustments For Triggers That Can’t Be Avoided

- There are some triggers that can’t be totally eliminated.
- When stimulation levels are too high for your child you can reduce them by:
 - taking them to a quiet room
 - taking a walk outside
 - limit the time they have to wear the itchy outfit (i.e. let them take off the outfit after holiday pictures are taken)
 - control television viewing to prevent over-stimulation; behavior will improve

4. Take A Break

- There are some situations you have no control over, but must be a part of (ie. holiday celebrations, guests).
- Effective coping skill: teach your child to take a break before stimulation levels put them over the edge.
- Under 3 – monitor situation and know when to remove him from the situation (go to rest room, outside, home).
- Older children – teach him to say, “I need a break.”
- Plan ahead for what you might do so he knows what to expect.
- Ultimately, you want your child to know when to take a break on his own.

Activity	“Who has a sensitivity issue you’d like to share?”
Record participant’s responses on a flip chart.	“How could we manage this sensitivity trigger using the strategies we just discussed?”
Summarize	As parents and caretakers of spirited children, you need to become aware of the stimulation cues and recognize the level of stimulation that pushes them beyond their ability to cope. Once you recognize the cues, you will be able to develop successful strategies to deal with any potential conflicts.

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