



# FASD Network News

FASD SUPPORT NETWORK  
OF SASKATCHEWAN INC.

July 2008 - Issue 20

## A Note to our Readers

*Hello All,*

*Summer is now in full swing. I hope you are finding time to get out and enjoy the many activities going on around the province. In just a few short weeks some of you will be heading off to buy school supplies and getting set for another school year. Hard to believe, isn't it? For some extra help in planning the next school year, visit our website, click on **Network Resources** and scroll down to the April 2006 issue of Network News. Here you will find an article on planning for the upcoming school year.*

*As September approaches, watch for information about International FASD Awareness Day. Events will be held on September 9th in several communities. If you are planning an event please let us know so we can share the information with others through our E-mail contact list. You might also want to order copies of our FASD Pictorial Tips to hand out at your event; please use the order form on page 4.*

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## Did you know?

### **FACE Research Roundtable**

Date: **September 9, 2008**  
Location: Montreal, Quebec  
Website: [http://www.motherisk.org/FAR/econtent\\_conferences.jsp](http://www.motherisk.org/FAR/econtent_conferences.jsp)

### **The 3rd International Conference on FASD**

Hosted by UBC Interprofessional Education, the theme is:  
***Integrated Research, Policy and Promising Practice Around the World: A Catalyst for Change.***  
Date: **March 11 - 14, 2009**  
Location: Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada  
Website: <http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/FASD09.htm>  
E-mail: [ipad@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipad@interchange.ubc.ca)

### HOW TO CONTACT US

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# Sensory Issues and FASD

by Lisa Brownstone

## Our Senses Work Together to Help us Learn

The five senses all work together to give us an accurate picture of our environment, who we are, and how we move and act. When the senses work well together (and this is often automatic) it is called sensory integration. We need to integrate all our senses for the complex learning and behaviours that are part of our lives. For some people, sensory integration does not automatically evolve. The process of integrating sensory information becomes disordered, leading to problems in

learning, behaviour and development. This is called **sensory integration dysfunction**.

## Some Signs of Sensory Integration Problems

- Overly sensitive, or under sensitive, to touch, movement, sights or sounds
- Physical clumsiness or apparent carelessness
- Difficulty making transitions from one situation to another
- Delays in speech, language or motor skills

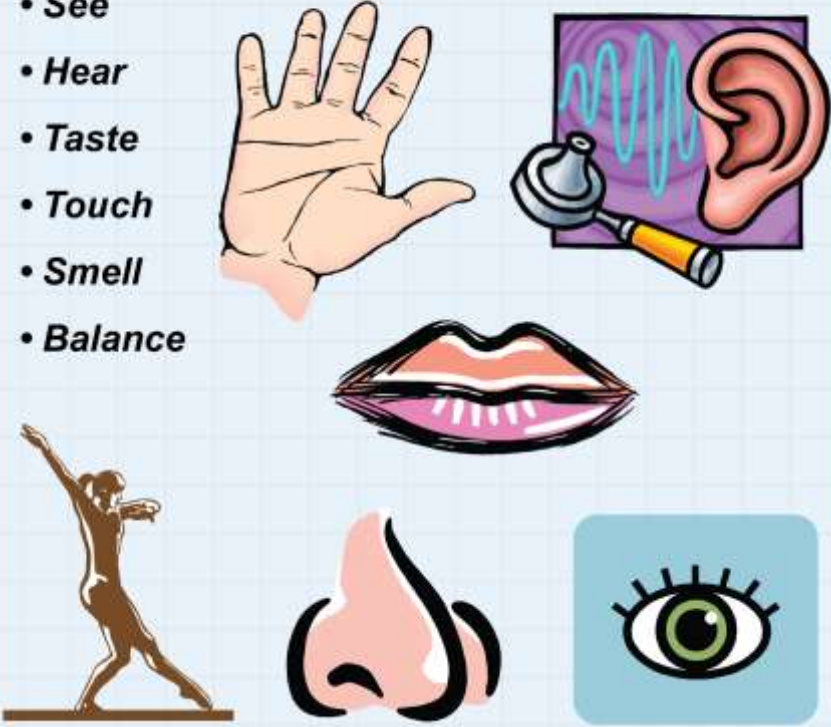
Sensory integration dysfunction can be hard to pick up. The following example shows the signs that were picked up by one family. The baby did not like being touched for any length of time, touch had to be firm, as opposed to soft touch or stroking. When she began eating solids, she separated out her food, and did not like certain textures, or food with much spice. She was always cold.

## Sensory Integration Dysfunction must be Assessed

Once the family becomes concerned, sensory integration dysfunction must be assessed, and properly evaluated by an occupational therapist. Sometimes other therapists also provide evaluations. The evaluation should consist of a thorough history, standardized testing and structured observations of the responses to sensory stimulation and balance, posture, coordination and eye movements. The results will be analyzed and the therapist will guide the child through a series of therapeutic activities. Depending on the child, results can be dramatic and well worth the attempt.

We learn about and perceive the world through sensory systems or sensory organs. Our senses allow us to:

- **See**
- **Hear**
- **Taste**
- **Touch**
- **Smell**
- **Balance**



## More Information

- Talk to your family doctor
- Ask for an Occupational Therapist assessment.
- Check your local library for books like *The Out-Of Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Processing Disorder* (2005).



# Thinking about Sensory Sensitive Spaces

by Beverly Palibroda

Children, youth and adults affected by FASD experience a range of difficulties due to prenatal alcohol exposure. Problems with sensory integration are commonly experienced. As explained in the previous article, it is important to know about the signs of sensory problems and if concerned, seek out professional help and assessment. With valuable input from parents, the occupational therapist can create a plan designed just for that person to help with sensory issues. One idea used is to create **Sensory Sensitive Spaces**. The idea is that various spaces are modified to help with sensory problems. The changes to the environment help the individual function better, feel safe, comfortable and less confused by the huge amount of sensory information encountered in daily life.

Every individual is affected differently and experiences sensory problems differently. But, it seems that most individuals with FASD tend to become over stimulated or anxious when faced with too much sensory information. They often overreact, under-react or respond in unexpected ways to the sensory information. You might see individuals react with anger, fear, anxiety or they may “shutdown” as a way to cope. To help these individuals we can change the environment by managing the type and amount of sensory information and our expectations for them. A calm and soothing atmosphere in the home, school or workplace along with fair expectations will help them to function, learn and make sense of the world.

Sensory issues are complicated, and it is wise to seek professional help, but here are a few ideas to start you thinking about changing spaces to reduce sensory problems:

**Reduce Clutter**—use storage boxes and covered shelves to create a clutter free space.

**Remove Distractions**—fewer posters, pictures, mirrors and decorative items will create a more soothing room.

**Use Curtains**—to reduce distractions, eliminate harsh light or block outside objects that catch attention.

**Consider Calm Colours**—Soothing wall and furniture colours like pastel blue, light green and neutral beige create a calming space. Avoid bright busy patterns and contrasts.

**Be Organized**—plan and organize spaces so they make sense. Use labels, coat hooks and colour coded items to keep things organized. Avoid the desire to change and rearrange.

**Clear Boundaries**—spaces can be divided to create a distinct work area, play area, sitting area or sleeping space. Some families have used tape on the floor or an area rug to show very specific spaces.

**Think about Light and Sound**—harsh light and too much noise can be irritating, fatiguing and overwhelming. Try lower watt bulbs, dimmer switches, frosted glass or blinds that block light. To block out troublesome sounds headphones, relaxation tapes or ear plugs can help. Avoid or limit things like video games and blinking lights.

**Textures, Clothing and Furnishings**—things like the feel of fabrics (types of clothing or bedding) or the type of chair (rocking chair, stability ball or recliner) can improve ability to learn and function or can be irritating and distracting. Individuals may be able to tell you the kinds of textures and furnishings they find bothersome or helpful.

**Odor**—common household cleaners, perfumes and hair products that many of us overlook can be really irritating to those with sensory issues. On the other hand certain odors like those used in aroma therapy might be very calming.

**Interactions with Others**—the tone and volume of voices, the amount of space or the number of people in a group, along with many words and ideas can be over stimulating. Learn to use key phrases that capture a clear meaning and think about things like eye contact and physical distance. Be alert to what works best for each individual.

**Pay Special Attention to the Bedroom**—our bedroom is a most personal space. It should be restful and calming. For those who have sleep problems this is especially true.

## More Information

The July 2007 issue of Network News highlights the topic of health and wellness and we also have an FASD Tip #7 on the topic of sensory issues. Visit our website and click on **Network Resources** to download these items.



## Order Pictorial FASD Tips for Upcoming Events

Number and Name of Pictorial FASD Tip		Number of Copies Requested
Tip #1	How You can Help Children with FASD Make Decisions	
Tip #2	How You can Help your Child Make and Keep Friends	
Tip #3	How You can Help Teens with FASD Manage Money	
Tip #4	How You can Help Adults with FASD Manage Money	
Tip #5	How You can Help Teens and Adults Make Decisions	
Tip #6	How You can Help your Child Figure out Reality and Fantasy	
Tip #7	How You can Help your Child Learn to Cope with their Senses	
Tip #8	How You can Help Children and Teens Learn about Ownership	
Tip #9	Making Changes with Children and Youth with FASD	
Tip #10	Help your Child or Teen Take Part in Sports and Activities	
Tip #11	How to Take Care of Yourself	
Tip #12	What Group Leaders, Coaches and Teachers Should Know	
Tip #13	Does your Child Need Help Understanding Time	
Tip #14	How to Help Your Child Understand Structure	
Tip #15	Does Your Child Need Help Getting Organized?	
Tip #16	How to Help a Child be Successful at Camp	
Tip #17	<b>**NEW**</b> Healthy and Safe Sexuality for Youth and Adults	
Tip #18	<b>**NEW**</b> How to Teach about Drugs and Alcohol	
Tip #19	<b>**NEW**</b> How to Help Avoid Trouble with the Law	
Tip #20	<b>**NEW**</b> Tips for Parenting Children, Youth or Adults	

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Who shall we bill shipping and handling costs to? \_\_\_\_\_



Please send completed order form by email, mail or fax to:  
**FASD Support Network of SK**  
 510 Cynthia Street, Saskatoon, SK S7L 7K7  
 Email: [fasdnetwork@sasktel.net](mailto:fasdnetwork@sasktel.net) or [fasdcommunications@sasktel.net](mailto:fasdcommunications@sasktel.net)  
 or FAX to: 306-242-8007

