SENSORY INTEGRATION DYSFUNCTION: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? (PART I)
Kathleen Trumbull

Have you worked with difficult, picky, oversensitive, clumsy or inattentive kids who have no specific diagnosis that explains their significant behavior, social, emotional or movement problems? When children seem to be healthy, intelligent and dearly loved, yet they struggle with the basic skills of tolerating ordinary sensations; of planning and organizing their actions; and of regulating their attention and activity levels, their common problem may be “Sensory Integration Dysfunction”. Sensory Integration Dysfunction is the inability to process information received through the senses. It is called SI Dysfunction for short. The child with SI Dysfunction often has enormous difficulty in the classroom. Not because of a lack of intelligence or willingness to learn, but because of her/his inability to process, integrate and adapt to environmental stimuli.

Our senses give us the information we need to function in the world. We have many senses. There are the five senses of hearing, seeing, taste, smell, and touch which most of us are familiar with and over which we have some control. Sometimes, these are called the “far senses”. Less familiar are the “near senses” – sometimes called the “hidden senses” because we are not aware of them and cannot directly observe them or control them. The near senses respond to what is happening within our bodies. Three body-centered sensory systems that are related to SI Dysfunction include: (1) the tactile sense which the body receives primarily through the skin; (2) the vestibular sense which the body receives through the inner ear and processes information about body position and body parts.

Sensory integration is the process of organizing the information we get from our bodies and from the world around us for use in our daily lives. It occurs in the central nervous system whose main task is to integrate the senses. By the time a typically developing child is ready for preschool, the important building blocks for complex skill development should be in place. These important foundations include: (1) the ability to modulate touch sensations through the skin; (2) the ability to adjust to body changes in gravity and position and to feel comfortable moving through space; (3) the ability to be aware of one’s body parts and move in a coordinated way; (4) the ability to use the two sides of the body in a cooperative manner; and (5) the ability to interact successfully with the physical environment by planning, organizing and carrying out a sequence of unfamiliar actions.

In our next issue I will describe reasons for pursuing further evaluation, treatment goals for SI Dysfunction, and intervention strategies.

Information for this article was adapted from Carol Stock Kranowitz’s book, *The Out-of-Sync Child*. Because this article is a very cursory overview of SI Dysfunction, the reader is encouraged to explore the topic further by reading Kranowitz’s book. Other resources are available at LINC, the CDD Resource Center.
RESOURCES! RESOURCES! RESOURCES!
The Library and Information Network for the Community (LINC) is a specialized library and resource center located within the Center for Development and Disability (CDD) at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Our services are available to all persons in our service areas, including those served by ICOP, this CSPD project. There is no charge for borrowing materials from the LINC, and materials can be mailed to you.

Persons with disabilities, family members and advocates, teachers, therapists, students and the concerned public are all regular LINC users. We have over 7,000 items including books, periodicals, information kits, assistive technology devices for clinician use, videocassettes and audiotapes. Our librarians are on-hand to help locate the resources you are looking for. We can also borrow resources for you located at other libraries, including full text journal articles.

If in Albuquerque, come use our public access computer that has Internet access and is equipped with state-of-the-art assistive technology devices.

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7. Call us so we can assist you with any questions and set aside materials for you (1-800-827-6380; or 1-505-272-0281).

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SUPPORTING PARAPROFESSIONALS TO BETTER SUPPORT STUDENTS
Mette Pedersen
Current training provided through our CSPD efforts is frequently focused on paraprofessionals, including educational assistants and home living staff. A recent article in the Fall edition of Exceptional Children, “Schoolwide Planning to Improve Paraprofessional Supports” (Giandreco, Edelman & Broer, 2003), questions the adequacy of training by itself and suggests that a stronger school-wide effort to support paraderoctors will help realize better outcomes for students.

In a 13 state study, the authors employed a schoolwide planning process with 46 schools. The results indicated that thoughtfull support of paraprofessionals with pre-planning, on-going support, and orientation for these staff members, directly impacts student outcomes. In addition, there was improved morale among paraprofessionals and an increased awareness of the value of paraprofessionals to the school community. Retention of staff, improved instruction, and increased home-school collaboration were all positively affected by the schoolwide planning process.

The Guide to Schoolwide Planning for Paraprofessional Supports, used with the schools mentioned above is available at no charge online at: http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parapro
It provides a plan for school-based decision-making about how paraprofessionals can be supported in individual schools.

If your school is in corrective action and would like help in facilitating this process, contact us. For a copy of the full text article, please see Exceptional Children, Fall 2003, pp. 63-79, or contact Dawn at 505-272-6988 or by email at dggerich@salud.unm.edu to have a copy sent to you.

GROWING IN BEAUTY
A Navajo Program for Families and Professionals
In 1992, the Diné Division of Education launched Growing in Beauty, an Interim Service Coordination program for young children with disabilities living on the Navajo Nation. With offices at every Indian Health Service Agency on or bordering the Reservation, Growing in Beauty provides support for families of children up through the age of five. What this means to Bureau-funded schools is transition services, education, and information for children with disabilities who may be coming to Bureau-funded schools in Kindergarten.

"Transition is a key responsibility of Growing in Beauty," says Paula Seanez, Assistant Director of the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and coordinator of the Growing in Beauty program.

Growing in Beauty represents a unique relationship with the Office of Indian Education Programs in supporting services for young children with disabilities on Indian lands. The Growing in Beauty program is considered one of the strongest of the tribal programs in the country and is described as a national model. Growing in Beauty can provide parent training, or training on parent rights and disability issues to families and to Bureau-funded school faculty and staff. There are two parent trainers employed through the program. Parent trainers and Interim Service Coordinators are all Navajo speakers. They also have materials and information available, the recently disseminated Parents’ Rights video is an example. There is no charge to schools for this service.

Parent training, staff training, or support for transition of young children to Bureau-funded schools can be accessed by calling Growing in Beauty at their toll free number: 1-866-341-9918. This effort is one way the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services supports those working with children with disabilities on the Navajo Nation.