

## **Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – 5th Edition (DSM-V)**

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Sensory Processing, often referred to as Sensory Integration describes the manner in which the nervous system receives and processes information from sensory systems allowing an individual to make adaptive motor or behavioral responses. When there is a problem in the process of receiving and interpreting sensory information it is referred to as a Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), or sensory integrative dysfunction. Individuals with SPD have great difficulties in performing everyday tasks and in functioning in academic, vocational, recreational and social settings. As a result many individuals with SPD exhibit anxiety, withdrawal, behavioral problems, depression, alcohol and/ or substance abuse. Based on research and collected data from the Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation, SPD affects 1 in every 20 children. These numbers are on the rise and continue to present endless frustration and difficulties for those who suffer from the disorder. The exact causes of SPD have not yet been identified, however extensive research from the SPD Foundation and collaborators are pointing to genetics, birth complications and environmental factors as potential causes. Sensory Processing Disorders can impact both children and adults. It can range from being a mild disability to a more severe disorder contingent on many variables including but not limited to the number of sensory and motor systems that are affected in the disorder, the severity of the symptoms that result as a consequence of having the disorder, age of the individual, coping mechanisms and whether or not therapy has been added to the equation. The categories within the SPD umbrella range from children who poorly modulate and/ or discriminate incoming sensory information, or have difficulties in motor planning and postural control. These individuals may be intact intellectually but have different “neural wiring.” Because many professionals have not been trained or do not understand SPD, both children and adults are often misdiagnosed and not provided with the proper treatment. They continue to suffer with emotional issues have difficulties in performing daily life tasks, maintaining jobs, persisting in their schooling and in sustaining meaningful interpersonal relationships.

With extensive research and advocacy from the Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation, the American Psychiatric Association which publishes the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual- 5<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM-5), continues to consider the addition “Sensory Processing Disorder” to the DSM-V. A final decision regarding the addition and recognition of the disorder will be made following an extensive review of the submitted evidence based research. The general public and professionals are encouraged to submit any evidence based research to the SPD Foundation until April 20, 2010. This information will be added to the ongoing research and sent to the American Psychiatric Association to support the addition of the SPD classification. The DSM-V will be published in 2013, hopefully with

the addition of Sensory Processing Disorder. This would open an array of positive changes for the individuals affected by this disorder including the possibility of additional public school classifications with modifications for SPD, available therapies, treatment and public recognition and acknowledgment. We thank the Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation for all the strides and endeavors in heightening both public and professional awareness of "Sensory Processing Disorders."

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