

Tactile Sensitivities: LD and AD/HD



Tactile Sensitivities



- “*Tactile perception* is obtained through the sense of touch via the fingers and skin surfaces. The ability to recognize an object by touching it, to identify a numeral that is drawn on one’s back or arm, to discriminate between smooth and rough surfaces, and to identify which finger is being touched (with eyes closed or while blind folded-sic) are all examples of tactile perception” (Lerner, 1997, p. 337).

Lerner, J. (1997). Learning Disabilities: Theories, Diagnosis and Teaching Strategies, 7th Edition. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Tactile Defensiveness



- Silver wrote of LD and/or AD/HD individuals who have problems with tactile defensiveness. From early childhood many of these people do not like to be touched. They did not cuddle as a child, may complain about labels in clothing and only respond to deep touch. In some light touch may cause feeling of fear or anger.

Silver, L. (1992). The Misunderstood Child: Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities, 2nd Edition. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Tab books.

Tactile Defensiveness



- Roffman wrote, “ Individuals with problems in this area may use either too light or too tight a grip when they shake hands with others. They may also be hypersensitive to touch (p. 16). Roffman continued that such problems in a child can lead to problems in parental bonding, problems in getting a haircut and workplace problems in adulthood.

Roffman, A.J. (2000). Meeting The Challenge of Learning Disabilities In Adulthood. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

Tactile Defensiveness

- Poll Of 65 AD/HD adults:
 - 67% sensitive skin
 - 56% sensitivity to heat and cold
 - 44% sensitivity to clothing (tags, elastic, etc.)
 - 22% sensitivity to being touched



Johnson, M.J. (1998) Having ADD and Being Hypersensitive: Is There A Connection?. From website:<http://www.add.org/articles/hypersen.html>

Tactile Defensiveness



“Asperger reported primarily on hypersensitive behaviors. Those who are hypersensitive feel actual physical discomfort when coming into contact with someone or something the rest of us are barely aware of” (p. 23).

Myles, B.M., Tapscott-Cook, K., Miller, N.E., Rinner, L., and Robbins, L. (2000). Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues: Practical Solutions for Making Sense of the World. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing

Tactile Defensiveness



“Particular parts of the body appear to be more sensitive, namely the scalp, upper arm and palms...The child may hate handling certain textures, such as finger paints or playdough. There can also be reluctance to wear a variety of clothing...” (p. 134).

Attwood, T. (1998). Asperger Syndrome: A Guide for Parents and Professionals. Philadelphia, P.A.: Jessica Kingsley.

Tactile Defensiveness



“Children who suffer from touch deprivation need more body contact. Methods of sensory motor therapy used by Occupational therapists for tactile defensiveness include touching and rubbing the skin surfaces, using lotions, and brushing skin surfaces” (p. 325).

Lerner, J. (1997). Learning Disabilities: Theories, Diagnosis and Teaching Strategies, 7th Edition. Boston, MA: Houghton Mofflin.

Tactile Defensiveness



“Despite frequent anecdotal accounts from both professionals and parents that SI (sic. Sensory Integration Therapy) therapy can improve behavior and functioning, there is little scientific validation for this technique as yet. In fact, some studies have shown that SI interventions are no better than more traditional therapies...You may want to try them out, but as with all treatments...especially those for which there is little research support...”

Tactile Defensiveness (Continued)

“...be skeptical and carefully assess the benefits you see” (p. 102).

Ozonoff, S., Dawson, G., and McPartland, J. (2002). A Parent's Guide to Asperger Syndrome & High Functioning Autism. New York, NY: Guilford.



Temple Grandin, Ph.D.'s Squeeze Machine

- Therafin Corporation
19747 Wolf Road
Mokena, IL 60448

www.therafin.com/squeezemachine.htm

Info@therafin.com

800-843-7234

- ***More research is needed!***

Grandin, T (1992). Calming Effects of Deep Touch Pressure in Patients with Autism, College Students, and Animals. Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology, 1 (2). From website: www.grandin.com/inc/squeeze.html



Adult Physical Intimacy and Tactile Defensiveness

- Sensate Focus (Masters and Johnson, 1970)
- Poor knowledge of human sexuality (Cruickshank, 1984)
- American Association of Sex Educators Counselors and Therapists (AASECT): www.aasect.org



Masters, W. H. and Johnson, V.E. (1970). Human Sexual Intimacy. Boston, MA: Brown Little and Company.

Cruickshank, W.M. (1984). LD and the Lifespan. Seminar presented at the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) conference, New Orleans, LA.

Adult Physical Intimacy and Tactile Defensiveness



Newport, J., and Newport, M. (2002). Autism-Asperger's & Sexuality: Puberty and Beyond.
Arlington, TX: Future Horizons.

Adult Tactile Defensiveness

- Willey (1999) an adult with Asperger's Disorder made the following suggestions for what she called "Tactile Sensitivity":
 - "If you dislike being touched, politely ask those around you to warn you before they touch you or ask them not to touch you at all. If you decide someone can touch you, let them know which you prefer, light or firm pressure.



Adult Tactile Defensiveness



- Willey Continued:
 - If even the slightest sensation aggravates your nerves, try to move your work, study and other personal spaces as far away as you can from air vent currents, window treatments and other obstacles that might inadvertently brush against your body.
 - If you enjoy the sensation of deep pressure, you might put weights...in the pockets of jackets...” (p. 155-156).

Willey, H.L. (1999). Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger Syndrome. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley.

Adult Tactile Defensiveness



- Willey Also Suggested:
 - Get every garment made of materials that feel good.
 - Cut hair short if you cannot stand to wash your hair.
 - If you need to chew do so on paraffin wax, rubber tubing, gum or plastic straws.
 - Use squeeze balls for motor restlessness.
 - Bathing with brushes and scrubbing lightly or firmly

Willey, H.L. (1999). Pretending to be Normal: Living with Asperger Syndrome.
Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley.

Tactile Defensiveness

- Helpful Profession:
 - American Occupational Therapy Association:
www.aota.org



Tactile Defensiveness



- Other Helpful Websites:

- www.hyperlexia.org
- www.ldonline
- www.asperger.org
- www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/
- www.sinetwork.org/index.htm



Tactile Defensiveness



- Good Resource:

Myles, B.M., Tapscott-Cook, k., Miller, N.E., Rinner, L., and Robbins, L. (2000). Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues: Practical Solutions for Making Sense of the World. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing

