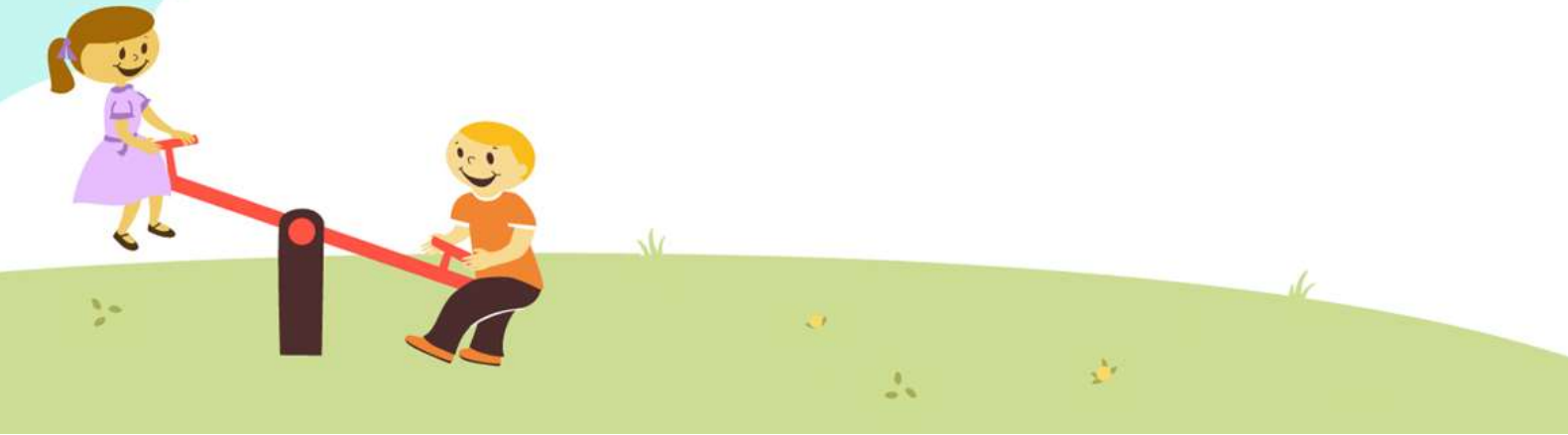


Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Body Awareness

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



This series of Sensory Questionnaires are designed to enable you to check your child's progress at particular stages of development.

YOUR SENSE OF BODY AWARENESS

Your sense of body awareness is also known as your **PROPRIOCEPTIVE** sense. It is proprioception that tells your body how your limbs are moving and how much force to use when lifting, squeezing or pushing things. If your sense of body awareness isn't well developed you can appear quite clumsy.

We are constantly receiving and processing information from not only the world around us but also from inside our bodies. It is our sense of proprioception (or body awareness) that tells us how our limbs are moving (and where they are if they are not moving!), whether they are stretching or bending, and how much force to use if we are lifting or throwing. It is your sense of body awareness that lets you know where your legs and feet are, when they are tucked under the table and you can't see them.

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Question 1 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

Question 1

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Can you be quite clumsy and often bum into people or objects?

Do you seem oblivious to the position of other people and things? Do you often bump into furniture or door frames, even in well-known surroundings? Whilst this can be about how you process vision, it can also be because your sense of body awareness isn't working as well as it should.



Strategies and Suggestions

Try the following strategies to help you become more aware of your body and the space around it:

- Try wearing tight fitting clothes or weighted garments. This provides you with additional feedback for your sense of body awareness and enables you to judge spaces better.



- If you struggle to keep to your own space in class use electrical tape to mark out your part of the desk and support you to remain within the space.



- Spend time taking part in activities such as trampolining and swimming. Both give extra feedback to your body awareness (proprioceptive) sensory system by providing resistance to the limbs.

- Try other activities such as teen yoga, wall/chair push ups, lifting weights etc. as these also help improve your sense of body awareness.



- Sometimes slowing down and thinking about where you are about to walk can make you less clumsy as you negotiate around the room, school, house etc. If your mind is on homework, the person you really like, or the last Instagram you received, rather than where you are actually walking you are more likely to bang into things. Remember to stop, think and focus.





Question 2 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you often spill contents when opening containers, or spill liquid when trying to prepare a drink?

Although this can also be as much about vision as it is about body awareness, if you are not getting the sensory feedback from your arms about how much force to use to lift and pour the bottle or jug you are likely to spill and make a mess.



Strategies and Suggestions

- People can sometimes be more accurate with their lifting and pouring when supported with a variety of tactics, combining visual and body awareness (proprioceptive) input. Whilst it may sound odd why not try putting a lightly weighted wrist band around your wrist; you may find this gives you the additional feedback you need to pour more accurately.
- Practice this task in a place where it doesn't matter if you make a mess initially; trying to pour and measure water in the bath for example, or over the sink, or even out in the garden.
- Using weighted items e.g. weighted cutlery, cups etc. will help give your body better feedback and make you less likely to appear clumsy.
- Remember to slow down and focus; getting distracted or daydreaming about something else when you are carrying out these tasks will just add to the likelihood of you making mistakes.





Question 3 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you difficulty judging how much force to use when carrying out activities and can break things accidentally?

Young people who are unable to judge force properly can appear very 'heavy handed' and are often described as being rough with others. You may have observed that types of behaviour in toddlers when they go to hug another infant and their mums are rushing in to prevent them from squeezing the living daylight out of them. It is not intentional, it is simply that they cannot judge force properly.



Strategies and Suggestions

Evidence suggests that you can become more aware of how much force to use by working on muscle strength and giving your body opportunities to develop body awareness (proprioceptive) skills:

- Bouncing on a trampoline is a good way of providing extra proprioceptive input.
- Practice ball games; learning how much force to use to throw a ball effectively is a skill in itself. Throwing is an easier skill to master than catching so start with throwing practice. Draw a target on the garden wall or on a pavement with chalk. Vary the distance you stand away from the target so that you learn to use different amounts of force. Once you have gained confidence with throwing, start to introduce catching games such as throwing a tennis ball at the wall and catching it after it rebounds. The more you practice the easier it gets so don't give up!
- Playing at 'wheelbarrows' is good for developing upper limb strength, which in turn helps with awareness of force and pressure. If you don't have friends or relatives strong enough to hold your legs whilst you do a wheelbarrow try 'walking' with your hands over a therapy ball.
- Try doing chair push ups; grip the side of your school chair or a dining chair with your hands and then 'push up' by straightening your arms and lifting your bottom off the seat. You can move onto doing wall push-ups and then try the real thing!





Question 4 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you find fastenings such as small buttons or zips fiddly?

Managing small fastenings can be hard particularly if you can't feel accurately where your fingertips are or what they are doing. This is why some people struggle to do up the top buttons of their shirt or fasten a skirt button if they can't actually see what they are doing and are relying on touch and body awareness instead.



Strategies and Suggestions

Try some of the following strategies to see if they help:

- Stand in front of a mirror when dressing so that you can use your vision to support your sense of body awareness. It is very hard to do the top button on a shirt if you can't see your fingers because your chin is in the way, so standing in front of a mirror helps make the task easier.
- If you find doing up buttons hard at the best of times practice with large buttons and toggles first, and once you have mastered these move on to smaller buttons.



- Fasten your bra at the front and then spin it round to the back. You can do the same with skirt fastenings.
- Look on the 'Dressing Myself' section (www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/self-care/dressing-myself) for strategies and alternative techniques to use.





Question 6 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you like to wear tight fitting clothes and like deep pressure input such as bear hugs?

When we are stressed or needing comforted nothing beats a big hug! Babies and small children sleep better when they are wrapped up or swaddled, children need a hug from Mum to feel secure and even teenagers occasionally like a bear-hug. To replicate this sensation people often choose to wear tight fitting clothes or squash themselves into tight spaces as the 'squeezed' sensation makes us feel calmer. If you can identify with this then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

Try some of the following strategies:

- Some people like weighted items to provide additional calming and body awareness input. You can try weighted clothes such as gilets or fleeces with inbuilt weights, or even carry a rucksack with some catalogues or heavy books in it.



- Other people prefer the tightness of clothing without the weight. If that applies to you then try wearing tight fitting lycra garments such as under-armour under your clothes or school uniform. There is also a device called a 'squeeze vest' which is an inflatable vest that the wearer can pump with air to achieve the desired degree of tightness!



- After a stressful day try wrapping yourself up in a weighted blanket. Some people find this really helpful and, although they can be expensive to buy, if you know somebody who is handy with a sewing machine ask them to make you one. Have a look on Pinterest for ideas.



- If you struggle with either getting to or staying asleep try putting a single duvet inside a double duvet cover and tucking the excess fabric under the mattress. Some people prefer to sleep inside a sleeping bag or use lycra sheets to get that nice tight feeling.





Question 6 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

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Does it help to concentrate if you chew gum or objects such as pens, fingernails etc?

We receive lots of body awareness (proprioceptive) feedback through our mouths. This can be very calming, hence the reason so many people bite their nails, suck their thumb and grind their teeth! We often put our fingers to our mouths without even realising what we are doing.



Strategies and Suggestions

Some young people take this need for mouthing a stage further and will chew on their pencils, collar or cuffs. Try to find other, more appropriate, sensory input that gives you the same sensation and prevents you from chewing on less 'savoury' items!

- It is possible to buy plastic pencil toppers that are designed to be chewed. This is preferable to chewing on paint, wood and lead!
- Providing water in a sports bottle can help, as you can have something in your mouth without it being too obvious what you are doing.
- Some companies produce 'chewellery'. This is a range of chewable pendants, necklaces and bracelets designed for young people to wear and be able to put in their mouths.
- Sometimes squeezing something in your hand can reduce the need to put something in your mouth. Try putting together a fidget kit with items such as rubber bands, squeeze or stress balls, marbles, paper clips etc. that you can keep in your pocket for when required.





Question 7 - Body Awareness (12 - 18 Years)

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Do you hold pens or pencils so tightly that it makes your hand sore when writing?

Some children press their pencils with such force when writing that they are constantly having to sharpen their pencils because they keep breaking the lead. They press so hard that you can actually read what they have written through several pages of their jotters. If this describes you then answer 'yes' to this question.



Strategies and Suggestions

Whilst the amount of pressure you use when writing might seem unimportant just now, the further through school or college you go the more writing you will be expected to produce, and the more tired your hand will become. Try the following strategies to reduce the amount of pressure you use:

- Try using an angled board and large soft pencil grip to help with finger, hand and wrist position.
- If you can find a stockist of old fashioned carbon paper try creating a paper 'sandwich' by alternating sheets of writing paper with carbon paper, then try to write a sentence on the top sheet without pressing so hard the writing will be read through the layers below. Repeat this activity on a daily basis until you learn to press less.
- Do some hand 'warm up' exercises before completing any writing exercise. This could include wiggling fingers and shaking wrists, placing hands palm to palm and pressing together (visit www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/resources/ot-activityinformation-sheets/hand-warm-up-exercises for further ideas).
- Make sure you have a pencil grip to cue you (using both vision and touch) as to where the pen or pencil should be in your hand e.g. a rubber band or blue tack stuck a couple of centimetres from the end of your pencil gives great feedback about where to place your fingers.
- Try to rest your hands between writing activities; do exercises such as stretching your fingers, hands, and arms, or getting up and taking a movement break.

