

Sensory Questionnaire

Sense of Hearing

Greater Glasgow and Clyde



This series of Sensory Questionnaires are designed to enable you to support your child's progress with particular areas of sensory development.

YOUR SENSE OF HEARING

Listening to the world around us helps us make sense of where we are. Some children can be very sensitive to sound and can react badly to sudden loud noises. This is very common and is part of normal development, however some children can remain sensitive to sound much longer than others.

If you suspect your child does not process auditory information as well as they should please complete the following questionnaire and then try using the downloadable strategies to help them.

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Question 1 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

Question 1

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Does your child show distress at sudden or unexpected loud noises?

If your child becomes agitated, starts to cry or covers their ears when they hear sudden or unexpected loud noises then try the following strategies:

Sound sensitivity can affect people of all ages, including adults, but it is most common in young children under the age of six. Often the sensitivity appears to sudden, loud sounds such as sirens, vacuum cleaners, motorbikes, fireworks, balloons popping, hair dryers and hand dryers. Prolonged loud noises such as at a concert or even the volume at the cinema or in assembly at school can be too much for some children to enjoy. For some children specific types of sounds (which may not seem that loud to other people) can be upsetting. When a sound that your child dislikes occurs, children with sensitivity to sound may show signs of anger, distress or panic. Children with sound sensitivity may be nervous of particular activities or rooms where they have experienced distressing sounds before. Sound sensitivity can be a normal phase that children go through. A lot of young children find loud, sudden sounds scary, particularly if they don't fully understand why the sound has appeared. Most children will adapt as they learn to understand what the noise is, where it comes from and that it isn't anything dangerous. However, it is not uncommon for a child with additional sensory issues, particular conditions or with complex needs to experience sound sensitivity.

Strategies and Suggestions

- It is important that everyone who cares for your child regularly responds to your child in the same way. Share the specific sounds that your child finds upsetting with those working with them in school and also with anyone who cares for your child after school or at the weekend.
- If your child is distressed, comfort them but try not to over emphasise the situation as this can have a negative effect in the long run. Children who are sensitive to noise might get upset with sounds that do not upset you, so this is worth considering sound sensitivity if a child's behaviour has changed for no apparent reason. You could try using relaxation and breathing techniques to help calm your child and distract them. There are a list of websites and apps that can help with this at the end of this sheet.
- Warn the child if possible that a loud noise is going to happen. Visual symbols/timetables may be helpful to prepare your child.
- We do not recommend the use of ear plugs or ear defenders, even if your child finds a particular sound distressing. This is because it can make a child even more sensitive to louder sounds in the long term.





Question 1 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

- Reassure your child when they come across a sound that they find upsetting. Explaining to them what the sound is, where it comes from and why it is loud can help them to understand. If you know the sound is coming, prepare your child by telling them about it in advance.
- It can be tempting to remove your child from a distressing situation or to use ear defenders to help them. Unfortunately, this is likely to make them more sensitive to the particular sounds because they haven't had the chance to get used to the sound. Allowing your child the opportunity to get used to the sound they dislike in a safe, controlled way can help them to become less sensitive to it. You can use videos on the internet, show your child a video clip of the sound they find upsetting, with the volume turned down, or even off completely. Prepare your child for the start of the clip, get them to press the "play" button, and allow them to alter the volume - this can give them a sense of control. Then gradually increase the volume as they become less sensitive to it. This can take time, for instance try five minutes one week at a certain level then again a few days later at a louder level.
- If possible involve your child in making the noise that distresses them but make it fun. Use the hairdryer to keep a balloon in the air, see who can do it for the longest. Wash a doll or action figure's hair and then dry it with the hairdryer. Tie dye a t-shirt, bag or pillowcase then use the washing machine to set the dye. Leave a paper trail to some treasure using torn up pieces of paper. Get your child to Hoover them up to follow the trail and find the treasure (a favourite toy, time to do something they love with you).

Useful Websites, Apps and Videos

Websites:



Coping Skills for KIDS

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>

Apps:



Ninja Focus

Ninja Focus

<https://www.ninjafocus.com/>



Awesome Breathing

<https://isjustawesome.com/awesome-breathing/>



KIDS

www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids



Question 1 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)



Calm

<https://www.calm.com/>



My Life: Stop Breathe Think

<https://my.life/>



Safespot

<https://safespot.org.uk/>



Smiling Mind

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

Deep Sleep Sounds

Deep Sleep Sounds

<https://deepsleepsounds.com/>



Breethe

<https://breethe.com/>

Videos:

Breathing Buddies

https://youtu.be/scqFHGI_nZE



Five Finger Breathing

<https://youtu.be/DSqOW879jjA>



Coping Skills: Grounding Technique

<https://youtu.be/8IM8pgMgjEs>



www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids



Question 2 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child hold their hands over their ears to protect ears from sound?

Some children dislike certain frequencies or sounds such as cutlery against china dinner plates, or chalk against a blackboard. The noise may not be loud, in fact you may not even have noticed it, but if it causes a different response in your child than it does in other children then it is likely they are sensitive to sound. If your child does not become obviously upset but covers their ears at certain sounds then it is still worth trying the following suggestions:



Strategies and Suggestions

- When a child covers their ears it is usually because they are hearing a noise they don't like. Help them find out what it is and don't try and stop them covering their ears. You may need to let them calm down before you explain what the noise was.
- Warn them if the noise will happen again.
- Certain situations such as busy shops may be more of a trigger; it may be best to visit venues such as shops at quieter times.





Question 3 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child not appear to hear certain sounds?

A few children have a reduced range of frequencies that they are able to hear so if a noise is too low or too high a child might miss it. If this is the case it is always worth having an Audiologist check out your child's hearing.

Children can miss certain sounds if they are engrossed in an activity they really love, or because they know you are about to tell them to go to bed or do their homework. That is perfectly normal! If however it happens across lots of different settings then try the following strategies:



Strategies and Suggestions

- Use the child's name and ensure you have their full attention before giving instructions.
- You may need to touch them gently and focus them in on certain noises or sound sources but be aware that some children do not like unexpected direct touch.
- Some children respond well to visual cues such as picture cards or symbols to remind them to listen.



- Use an agreed gesture to get their attention e.g. tap your shoulder and get them to do a thumbs up to ensure they have understood that it is time to listen.





Question 4 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child seem disturbed or intensely interested in sounds not usually noticed by other people?

Some children are able to hear certain frequencies that the rest of us are oblivious to such as the hum of traffic outside, other children's pencils rubbing on the paper, the noise of the central heating system as they are trying to fall asleep, or the high frequency sounds emitted by computers or TV digiboxes. Children can have difficulty filtering these noises out and ignoring them and this can prove distracting when they are trying to concentrate.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Some children are able to hear certain frequencies that the rest of us are oblivious to such as the hum of traffic outside, other children's pencils rubbing on the paper, the noise of the central heating system as they are trying to fall asleep. Children can have difficulty filtering these noises out and ignoring them and this can prove distracting when they are trying to concentrate.
- A child might look distracted or become irritable if they need to concentrate but can't because of all the background noise they are hearing and trying to process, whilst also trying to pay attention to what the parent or teacher is saying.
- Some children can concentrate better when they are listening to music. Playing music quietly in the background can reduce the irritation caused by the 'white noise' of electrical appliances or strip lighting. We all have sensory preferences though so make sure you monitor your child as they find the music more distracting.
- Explaining to your child what the sounds are and where they are coming from might help.
- Where possible consider the surroundings; soft surfaces absorb sound and hard surfaces reflect sound. Placing a rug on a laminate floor will help reduce clatter and echo, as well as softening the general sounds in a room, having curtains and blinds can help too. Close doors and windows where possible to cut down on external sound.





Question 5 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child find it hard to concentrate and is easily distracted by background noises?

Some children struggle to concentrate when they are trying to focus on completing written work and there are background noises. An example would be a child trying to do their homework and being distracted by the sound of the TV or radio. Some children are so sensitive to noise that even doing their homework in the kitchen can be a struggle because of the noise coming from the fridge's cooling mechanism.



In class there is always background noise such as other children chattering, the teacher talking to another child, the noise coming from the projector or the noise emitted by the neon strip lights overhead.

Strategies and Suggestions

- Please think about the noises that might be distracting to the child when you are asking them to sit still and focus.
- If you can reduce the background noise for them this will help them to focus so make sure the TV or radio are off when they are trying to do homework.
- Switch off strip lighting which emits a high pitched hum that can be inaudible to us but distracting for the child. LED lights do not produce a sound so are a better option.
- Where possible consider the surroundings; soft surfaces absorb sound and hard surfaces reflect sound. Placing a rug on a laminate floor will help reduce clatter and echo, as well as softening the general sounds in a room, having curtains and blinds can help too. Close doors and windows where possible to cut down on external sound.





Question 6 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child make noises, hum, sing or scream unexpectedly?

Some children generate their own noise in an attempt to 'drown out' the sounds they cannot control. This can include making noises 'internally' for example using their mouth and throat to hum, or making noises 'externally' by drumming a pencil on a table top, clicking the end of a pen, or constantly tapping their feet on the floor.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Before you tell them off for being too noisy ask them about the noises they are hearing and see if there is something you can do about changing the environment.
- Ensure one adult at a time is talking to the child
- Playing music quietly in the background can help reduce the effects of other more irritating noises. But we all have sensory preferences so check in with your child as they might find this more annoying.



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Question 7 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child not respond when their name is called, but you know their hearing is ok?

Some children seem unaware when they are being spoken to. You might say your child's name and not get a response from them even though you know they can hear perfectly well. This can happen if they are engrossed in an activity then really love, or because they know you are about to tell them to go to bed or do their homework. That is perfectly normal! If however it happens across lots of different settings then try the following strategy:



Strategies and Suggestions

- Get the child's full attention before you give them the instruction or action. Be aware that they might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision and getting eye contact will help them focus.





Question 8 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child have difficulty paying attention?

There are many reasons why children struggle to pay attention and noise is only one of them. Are you sure that it is noise that is the major factor for your child? Try the suggestions below and see if any help, if not it is worth considering whether movement or vision may be contributing to their inattention.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Think about the noises that might be distracting the child when you are asking them to sit still and focus. Are other children talking whilst carrying out group work nearby? Is there white noise coming from overhead lights or a projector that could be switched off? Is the TV or radio on? Are siblings playing nearby? If you can reduce the background noise this will help the child focus.
- Get the child's full attention before you tell them the instruction or action. Be aware they might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision and getting eye contact with them will help them focus.



- Getting the right amount of sleep can have a big effect on attention and concentration the next day. Check out <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids/life-skills/sleep/> for further advice and information. You might also want to look at Sleep Scotland <https://www.sleepscotland.org/>





Question 9 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child find it difficult to determine the location of sounds or voices?

If your child cannot tell where a sound is coming from e.g. if you are upstairs and shouting on them and they are becoming increasingly upset trying to find you in the downstairs rooms, then it is important to have their hearing checked. Try the following strategies to ensure all is well:



Strategies and Suggestions

- Have your child's hearing checked out by an audiologist to ensure that they can hear the full range of frequencies and that both ears are working together effectively.
- When speaking to the child ensure that they are looking in the direction of your voice.
- Often children who are not aware of where a sound originated are not fully paying attention, because they are tuned into something far more interesting. Try using an exaggerated expression or a higher tone to draw your child's attention to the sound they should be listening to.
- Don't rely on the child's ability to listen alone; let them see where the noise is coming from.





Question 10 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

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Does your child like to cause certain sounds to happen over and over such as repeatedly flushing the toilet or repeatedly operating a musical toy?

Some children really enjoy certain sounds and will make them over and over to the point of distraction. Whilst this can appear quite cute when a child is 2 years old, it can be extremely irritating to others if they are still doing it at the age of 10 years old. If your child falls into this category try the following strategies:



Strategies and Suggestions

- A child who likes to create the same sounds over and over again can do so for one of several reasons; they like the sound and enjoy controlling it, they are trying to drown out other noises they don't like and can't control, they are stimulated by hearing the sound and enjoy repeating the pleasurable sensation, or they know it will annoy you!
- If you feel that your child produces this noise in times of stress, try some relaxation and breathing techniques. You can find lots of websites and apps that can help with this, you will find some to try at the bottom of this sheet.
- If they do it to drown out other noises they can't control, help them to understand what the noises are and why they make that noise. Distract them by doing something else.
- If they do it because they enjoy the sound then give clear boundaries around when they can make their favourite noises and how often they can repeat them. Use visual countdowns such as egg timers or stop watches to help them if they need this.
- Although this is annoying for you it makes the child feel happy and they are unlikely to want to stop. They may need your support to help them stop and move on from the game/activity.
- Be firm and be consistent. This will help them to learn to stop and move on to another task or activity, and gradually they will understand the rules.
- Allow the child opportunities at various points during the day to make their favourite noises; give them a couple of choices and use a timer to show how long they can play with their chosen toy or activity.
- Use an egg/visual timer to show the child that an activity is soon going to finish to encourage the child to stop pressing sound toys over and over again. Limit the sound before it over-stimulates the child.



KIDS

www.nhsggc.org.uk/kids



Question 10 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

Useful Websites, Apps and Videos

Websites:



Coping Skills for KIDS

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>

Apps:



Ninja Focus

Ninja Focus

<https://www.ninjabfocus.com/>



Awesome Breathing

<https://isjustawesome.com/awesome-breathing/>



Calm

<https://www.calm.com/>



My Life: Stop Breathe Think

<https://my.life/>



Safespot

<https://safespot.org.uk/>



Smiling Mind

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

Deep Sleep Sounds

Deep Sleep Sounds

<https://deepsleepsounds.com/>



Breathe

Breathe

<https://breathe.com/>



www.nhs.uk/ggc/org/kids



Question 10 - Auditory (5 - 12 Years)

Videos:

Breathing Buddies

https://youtu.be/scqFHGI_nZE



Five Finger Breathing

<https://youtu.be/DSqOW879jjA>



Coping Skills: Grounding Technique

<https://youtu.be/8IM8pgMgjEs>

