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# Sensory and Sensibility



Issue #4

## Can't Touch This!

### Tactile Defensiveness

Tactile defensiveness and hypersensitivity happens because the nervous system is not interpreting touch sensations and stimulation accurately, resulting in a child responding with fear, avoidance, withdrawal, or acting out with a "fight-or-flight flight" response.

#### A few of the classic signs are:

- Complaints about clothing, especially tags and seams
- Refusing to touch certain textures like lotion, glue, or liquid soap
- Lashing out when others are too close, tantrums over being groomed,
- Difficulty transition between activities,
- Seeking out tight hugs
- Habitually fisting the hands
- Refusing to walk barefoot and/or preferring to walk on tiptoes.



# Ideas for Tactile Defensive Behaviors At School

## Calming Strategies

- Heavy Work activities [any task involving resistance - pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying, gross motor exercises, etc.]
- Wearing spandex or lycra clothes under regular clothing has a calming effect because deep pressure is distributed over the body/limbs
- Deep pressure such as: massage, a "bear hug" or wrapping your child snugly in a blanket or body stocking

## Standing in line

- Position the child at the end of the line
- Give the child a "special task" (i.e. closing the door, turning off the lines)

## Personal Space Strategies:

- Provide physical and visual cues for each child's "personal space" in crowded environments (i.e. an area marked out with masking tape on the carpet,
- pillow to sit in during floor time, a designated tile square to stand in while on line, etc.)

## Toe-walking as a result of avoiding contact with feet and surface

Speak with your health care provider to rule out musculoskeletal conditions (i.e. heel-cord shortening).

Provide deep tactile pressure to the bottom of the foot

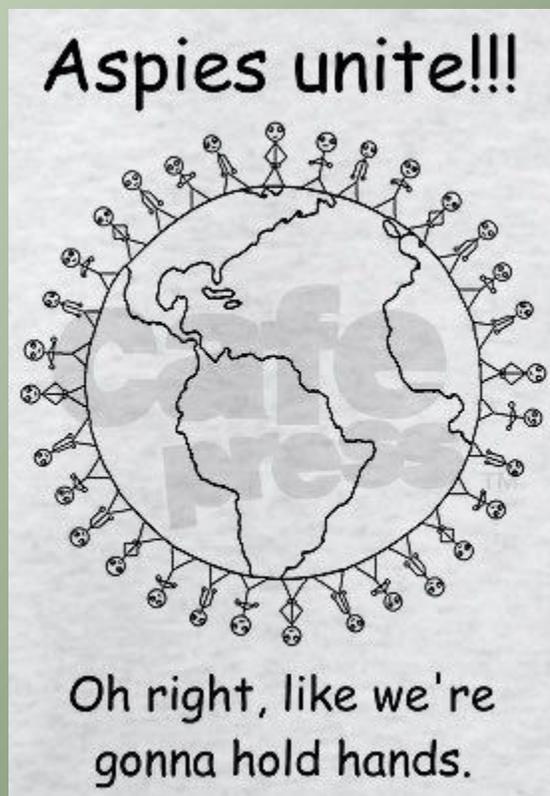
Engage in lower extremity proprioceptive/ "heavy work" activities such as pushing legs into wall.

## Clothing

- Seamless socks ([www.smartknitkids.com](http://www.smartknitkids.com) )
- Use seamless/tagless articles of clothing when possible (Hanes ® and Fruit of the Loom ® both make seamless/tagless undergarments and socks)
- Turn articles of clothing inside-out if you can (i.e. socks, undershirts)
- Cut out tags for articles of clothing that cannot be turned inside out

## Avoids manipulating "messy" materials or only uses fingertips

- Before fine motor activities, provide deep tactile pressure into palms of hand or engage in resistive hand exercises (i.e. elastic bands or Theraputty)
- Engage in play with undesirable textures for short periods of time and in a non threatening way. (See Sensory Bins on next page!)





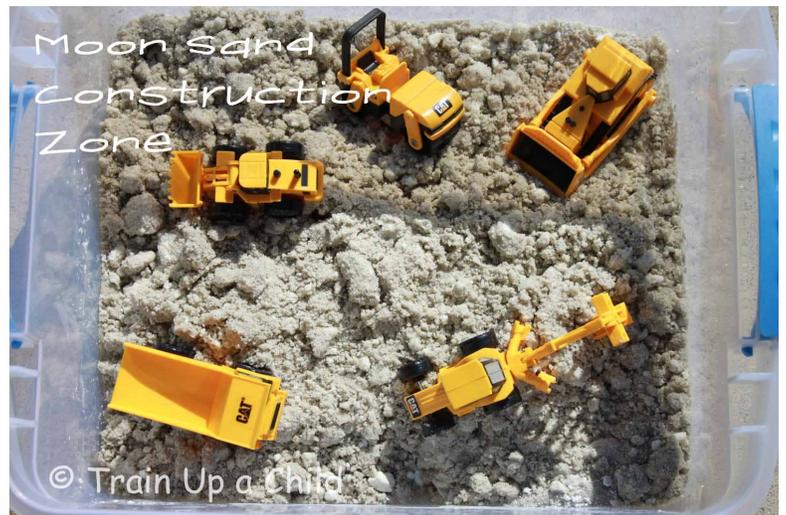
Aquarium Gravel



Feathers



Dried Beans



Moon Sand



Chick Peas



Water Beads

Easter Grass



Coffee Beans

\*\*If the child is fearful of any materials, have him play with it in a less threatening way. For example, he can use *your* hands to start touching it, he can put objects in or out of the "messy" materials, or he can push toy cars or plastic animals through it etc.