



**North East  
Learning Trust**

**SEND newsletter**

# SPD

Sensory Processing Disorder

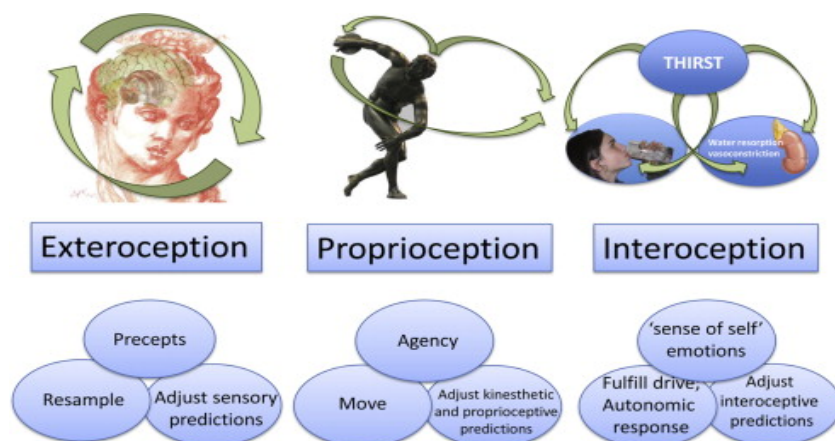
We are all aware of the 5 senses. Touch, taste, see, hear and smell. What you might not know is that there are three more senses that come together and affect our everyday functioning.

These are called *interoception*, *exteroception* and *proprioception*.

*Interoception* is the internal sense of body. This can be thirst, hunger, feeling hot or cold even aches and pains.

*Exteroception* is the external sense of body. This is when you are in a space and are aware of external stimuli such as feeling the clothes on your body or someone tapping you on the shoulder. This is the most connected to the five senses.

*Proprioception* is a mix of the two it affects how you walk a straight line or think about a movement such as lifting your arm to reach for something.





# SPD and Autism

Autistic people can have either hyper (over sensitive) or hypo (under sensitive) reactions to their senses. This is known as SPD (sensory processing disorder).

So, some Autistic people are hypersensitive, and others are hyposensitive. Some are a mixture of both, and this can affect them in different ways.

Non autistic people don't experience the world in the same way as an autistic person, they have a balance in their sensory, nervous, and vestibular systems. It's as though their bodies work in harmony with the senses. Autistic people find it more chaotic, like they are working faster and more powerful than other senses.

If someone has difficulties with interoception they may not feel hungry or thirsty. This can cause problems with dehydration and weight loss. They may also have a high pain threshold; they are hyposensitive to pain meaning they cannot feel the full pain when they hurt themselves.

On the flip side they may be hypersensitive to hot and cold temperatures and react with extreme shivering when cold and nausea and unbearably uncomfortable when hot.

When struggling with exteroception and proprioception an example could be when reaching out to get hold of the mouse when using a computer, they can see the mouse but overreach and knock the mouse onto the floor even though they could see it. Often, they can struggle with spatial awareness and may spread out their limbs and not realise they are encroaching on others personal space.

# Key information

For more information contact



**National  
Autistic  
Society**

**<https://www.autism.org.uk/>**

## Important contacts

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