



**CHILDREN'S
HOME SOCIETY**
OF MISSOURI

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LifeLines

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'Tis the Season for Sensory Sensitivity

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By Joy Hughes, MSW, with Lisa Cooseman, OTR/L, MS

The subject of sensory processing and sensory processing disorders has become a hot topic lately. So what exactly does the term sensory processing mean and what happens when children are challenged in this area? As the holidays approach, what are some special concerns for parents of kids with sensory challenges? A visit with Lisa Cooseman, OTR/L, MS, of Leaps and Bounds, a pediatric therapy center in St. Peters, Missouri, provided some answers.

As humans, we take in information about what happens around us through our senses. It is the job of our nervous system to make sense of that information. If our nervous system is not able to do its job properly, then our perception of what is happening around us is affected. Any or all of our senses may be influenced, so how we see, hear, feel, taste, smell, or experience the world around us (understand our place in space or how much force we are using to get things done), may be perceived differently. Generally speaking, kids with sensory issues either look to find more sensation (sensory seeking), or try to avoid sensation (sensory avoiding). A child who is seeking touch sensations may be constantly playing rough, hitting, or running into others. Conversely, a child who avoids touch may become extremely stressed from a light touch, punch someone who has tapped them on the shoulder, or adamantly refuse to be bathed or have their hair brushed.

All of us have different sensory preferences. One might like to have music on while they work, while another can only work in complete silence. Some enjoy wearing wool sweaters while others find

them too itchy. Sensory differences become a concern when they interfere with a child's ability to do their job; to learn, play, make friends, and be able to dress, bathe, eat, and sleep properly.

The causes of sensory processing disorder (SPD) are multiple and varied. Some common causes are heredity, prematurity, prenatal drug or alcohol exposure, lack of stimulation in the child's environment, or exposure to toxic substances. Children who have been part of the child welfare system often exhibit a number of these characteristics and are at higher risk for these types of difficulties. If parents are concerned, Lisa advises getting their child evaluated by an occupational therapist trained in sensory processing. "This evaluation will give you information about how your child is processing information in each of their sensory systems. A thorough evaluation is necessary when determining an appropriate treatment plan."

So what does all this mean to parents when caring for a child with sensory issues? Says Lisa, "Kids with SPD may be aware that they experience things differently than their peers. It is important to make sure they have people around them that understand that their perceptions are real. For example; a child that gets very upset every time someone bumps into them in line may truly be experiencing that touch as harmful or painful. It does not help to say, "That didn't hurt!," because in their nervous system, it did hurt. Parents and teachers can help by recognizing these experiences as real for their children, and helping their child find a way to get through that experience.

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We believe:

All children are best able to grow to their fullest potential as members of loving and supportive families.

All children deserve a family that is able to meet their emotional, developmental and physical needs.

Children who have been abused, neglected or otherwise traumatized will bring with them to their new families their feelings of hurt and anger, as well as the negative behaviors they use to express those feelings.

Families formed through the adoption process are equal to families created by birth in their love for and commitment to their children.

Families formed through the adoption process face challenges unique to adoptive families.

The challenges and issues faced by foster and adoptive families require specialized skills on the part of the parents as well as the professionals serving the family.

It is essential that the systems and professionals involved in the process of forming families through foster care and adoption be available at all stages of the family's life – prior to, during and after permanency is achieved.

Facts to Know About Fire Safety

By Capt. Brian Neukirch, EMT-P, FF

It is always important for families to have a plan for what to do if a fire happens. For foster parents or new adoptive parents, it is especially important to remember to talk to children about what to do given that they are in a strange, new environment.

Here are some tips to talk to kids about...

If a fire has cut-off your escape route out of the house, go to a room with a window. Do not hide under the bed, in a closet or windowless bathroom. Close the door and place clothing at the bottom of the door, and then open a window to yell for help. You **MUST** close the door, if you do not, the open window will feed the fire needed air and the fire and smoke will migrate to the window rather rapidly.

What ingredients make up an effective escape plan? A careful escape plan begins with careful preparation, proper placement of smoke detectors and regular Exit Drills In The Home (E.D.I.T.H.). Hopefully you will never have a fire in your home. However, should a fire occur, your safety and that of your family will depend on calm, rational actions of the occupants. Exit drills in the home and a carefully designed escape plan can be the key to a safe escape.

How To Design a Fire Escape Plan

Planning ahead provides numerous benefits. Advanced planning will ensure that you are ready for any fire emergency and can provide you and your loved ones peace of mind.

To design your own fire escape plan, sketch the floor plan of your home on a piece of paper. Indicate on the plan all doors, windows and other areas from which you could escape from each room in your home. Draw arrows to indicate the normal exits which would be your primary escape route. With an alternate color, draw arrows to indicate a secondary exit from each room in the home. Choose a location outside the home where family members should meet once they have safely escaped. A neighbor's front yard or sidewalk may be an ideal meeting place.

If you need help in designing your plan or if you would like to have your plan reviewed, contact your local fire department or the Office of the State Fire Marshal for assistance. After completion of the floor plan, take the time to discuss the following important points with family members.

Hold Exit Drills In The Home Regularly

Your fire escape plan may look great on paper, but does it really work? Regular exit drills in the home will allow you to test the plan and make adjustments as may be needed. When practicing your exit drills in the home, remember to use alternate escape routes as well. Children should be closely supervised during drills in the home and no one should take unnecessary chances.

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Educational Opportunities for Adoptive and Foster Parents

(Each session counts as training toward your licensure requirement)

WINTER
2011-12

**Classes are offered at a low or no cost to foster and adoptive families.
Registration is required. Contact Gail for further details.**

Positive Communication with Children One of the most important things for children with special needs is to support their efforts to succeed and encourage the development of positive self-esteem.

Monday, Dec. 5, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Lifebooks: Lifebooks are an important tool for helping children who are in foster care and are adopted to feel connected to their past. Class focuses on the demonstration of age-appropriate activities and tools.

Wednesday, Dec. 7, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Using Humor in Parenting

Learn to tap into your funny bone to make it through the trials of raising your children. Humor is good for the body and soul—and so is this class!

Thursday, Dec. 15, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Child Safety

Topics covered will include child proofing the home, bike safety, first aid, safely transporting children and CPR.

Wednesday, Jan. 11, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Nurturing Parenting for Kinship Families

A new five week series of classes will explore issues in parenting including respectful communication, developing empathy, family values and rules, managing stress and anger and dealing with discipline. Participants are encouraged to bring their lunches.

Wednesday, Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 1, 8, 15, 11 AM–2 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Nurturing Parenting

This course is the same as the above class, however it is open to all families. Classes will meet every other Wednesday in the evening.

Wednesday, Feb. 22, March 7, 21, April 4, 18, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

CHS has 2 training locations!

CHS
9445 Litzsinger
Brentwood, MO
63144

~or~

Family Nurturing Center
Deer Creek Center
3202 Laclede Station Rd.
Maplewood, MO
63143

**Registration is
required:
(314) 968-2350, ext. 234
or
gailk@chsmo.org**

Sensory Processing Disorders

Difficulties with sensory processing are often confused with behavioral problems - children who have been adopted or in foster care are at a heightened risk to experience these challenges. Learn about Sensory Processing Disorder- what it is, signs and symptoms, suggested ways that parents and teachers can help, and resources in the area.

Monday, Jan. 23, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Enhancing Executive Function in Children

New training! Many foster and adoptive children have difficulty with organizing, planning, goal setting, time management and retaining things in their memory. Parents will learn how to help their child function better in the home setting utilizing common practices used by classroom teachers.

Monday, February 13, 6-9 PM, Litzsinger Training Room

Parenting Children with Elevated Needs

Children with histories of abuse and neglect tend to exhibit very difficult behaviors such as chronic lying, stealing, aggression, difficulties with eating and/or sleeping. Trauma-focused parenting is discussed with an emphasis on the impact of trauma on brain development. Insuring a child's physical, emotional and psychological safety is paramount to decrease behavioral issues and "re-wire" the brain for appropriate behavioral responses. This six week class is mandatory training for Level A Foster Care Licensing, but is beneficial for all foster/adoptive parents.

Tuesday, February 21, 28, March 6, 13, 20, 27, Deer Creek Location

Transracial Parenting in Foster Care and Adoption

Parenting a child of another racial heritage brings with it additional challenges and opportunities. In this two-part class, activities include video-based training regarding ways to prepare to better meet the cultural needs of children and a panel discussion with other parents.

Saturday, February 18 and 25, 9 AM–Noon, Litzsinger Training Room

If there is a topic you would like to know more about or a problem you are struggling with in your family, please let us know. We are always looking for ways to better serve the foster and adoptive families of our community and are happy to add new classes on a regular basis.

Planning for Special Needs

Some people face greater risks during a fire emergency as they may have special needs. This would include individuals who are mentally or physically handicapped. Persons with special needs should sleep in a bedroom near someone who can help in the event of an emergency. A physically handicapped person may require a sleeping area on the ground floor. Designing a special escape plan will depend on the abilities of the person. If living with someone with special needs, contact your local fire department so that the area dispatch agency can be alerted to the special situation in the home.

Exit Drills In The Home can help people prepare for an emergency. Most home fires begin between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m. This is a time when most people are least prepared. In the middle of the night, fire can be a disaster if you and your family are not familiar with how to escape during an emergency.

So, to protect yourself and your family, remember these tips:

Prepare a fire escape plan.

Install and maintain smoke detectors.

Practice Exit Drills In The Home regularly.

Examine your home for fire hazards and take steps to prevent a fire before it occurs.

<http://www.fireescapesystems.com/>

New Service Available at Children's Home Society

Family Support Partner services are intended to provide help for families of children with **developmental disabilities***. Services available include:

- Parenting education and emotional support
- Short-term counseling
- Referral / Resource development (finding respite, applying for DMH services, etc.)
- Advocacy and assistance (such as with the IEP process)

*includes physical, mental and emotional challenges for children birth to 19.

These services are **FREE** for St. Louis County residents or any child currently in the custody of St. Louis County Children's Division. This is a great opportunity to enlist some extra help in meeting the needs of your family. If you are parenting a child who has special needs, you are encouraged to call Jamie Grieshaber at (314) 968-2350, ext. 224. She will be happy to help in whatever ways she can!

Nurturing Parenting Classes to Premiere in January

Kinship Connection

CHS will begin a new series of Nurturing Parenting Education that will begin in January and will be held at the Litzsinger location. The first series is geared towards grandparents or other adults who are providing kinship care for a grandchild, niece or nephew. To use the popular term of the day, parents will multi-task by "brown bagging" their lunch from home and receiving training at the same time.

Nurturing is a philosophy and a lifestyle, that when embraced can guide children to be respectful, caring and cooperative within the family; this will naturally translate to the larger community. Topics that will be covered are nurturing attachment with your child, developing empathy, developing family rules and values, managing stress and anger within the family and discipline guidelines.

The series will be repeated later in the spring and will then be opened to families other than kinship families. Check the training schedule for further details. This training is free to families, however registration is required. Contact Gail at 314-968-2350, ext. 234 or by email at gailk@chsmo.org.



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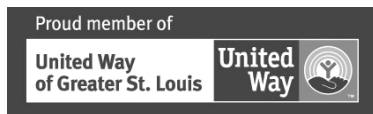
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*Improving the Quality of
Life for Children in Need
Since 1891*



Words of Wisdom

"The things that make me different are the things that make me, me."

Winnie the Pooh

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During the often hectic holiday season, dealing with the additional stresses of children who melt down for unusual or inexplicable reasons can be especially challenging. It's important to look for ways to manage our own stress, as well as help our kids manage theirs. So what are some ways parents can help? Some tips Lisa shared include the following:

- Be as predictable as possible. Let kids know where they are going, who they will be seeing, and what they will encounter.
- There are a lot of activities scheduled during the holidays, but we should be aware of our kids' limits and our limits. Planning too much may be setting your kids up for failure.
- Plan for how to get the sensory input they need. If you know you will be going on long car rides, plan movement breaks before and after. Give them activities to do in the car or when they get to the destination that will organize their sensory system. (ex. chewing gum, swinging, running around outside)
- Have a place to retreat if they need to. We like to call it a "safe spot." It may be different in different homes. Having a planned spot to go to if it gets to be too much may be helpful in getting through the day

What are some good reads to find out more? Some of the most popular and helpful books available include *The Out of Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Processing Disorder*, by Carol Stock Kranowitz, and *Sensational Kids: Hope and Help for Children With Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)*, by Lucy Jane Miller. Leaps and Bounds has included a wealth of information on their website: <http://www.leapsandboundskids.com>, including links to some other good web resources.