

Sounding Off: How Auditory Stimulation Helps an Hurts and Autistic Child

Sounds are a part of our everyday life, and so when dealing with an autistic child who has sensory problems, sound is one of the first things you should learn to control, especially in a learning environment. Sound can both be hurtful and helpful for an autistic child. Because each autistic individual is different, you must closely observe him or her to find out what types of reactions you can expect from auditory sensory stimulation.

Loud or frightening sounds may be the most difficult type of sensory stimulation in an autistic child's life. Many of our routine daily activities include such sounds, hurting the growth process. Autistic children can not and will not learn if they are frightened. For example, parents often find that they have a difficult time toilet training their autistic children. This may be due to the scary sound of the toilet flushing; witch could be overpowering to and autistic child. Instead, try using a potty seat away from the actual toilet until they get used to the idea. Another example is loud or crunchy foods. If your autistic child is a picky eater, try to notice specifically which foods he or she blatantly refuses to eat. Sometimes, food simply sounds too loud when crunching in an autistic child's mouth, and these loud noises can hurt his or her ears. If this is the case with your child, provide alternative soft foods instead of crunchy carrots, apples, or potato chips. Other loud sounds, such as a vacuum cleaner, may hurt your child's ears. Try to do these activities when he or she is not in the room, or consider providing your child with earplugs that he or she can use if the world gets too loud.

Sounds can also cause fixation. Some children, for example, constantly hum and seem fixated on the sights and sounds of lawn mowers. Use this fixation to be beneficial. For example, read stories about lawn mowers or use the humming in conjunction with a song. Music is a great way in which autistic individuals can learn, because sound is a form of nonverbal communication. Teachers and parents should use this tool in learning environments. The key is to make sound work for you and your child. Autism is a difficult disorder to handle, so by being sensitive to your child's specific needs, you can help him or her learn to deal with the sounds of everyday life.