

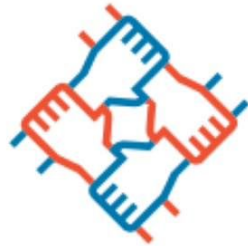
SEN Parent Support Group

Supporting SEND Educational

Processes For Better OUTCOMES

This document contains examples for each of the 4 Core Deficits and can support you to complete the Core Deficit Assessment

- Sensory Deficits
- Cognitive Deficits
- Emotional Deficits
- Social/Communication Deficits



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Processes For Better OUTCOMES

Sensory Deficits

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5. Shows apprehension in movement activities
6. Withdraws or hits when approached or touched
7. Becomes overwhelmed in loud, or crowded settings
8. Dislikes certain clothing, or layers clothing
9. Resists grooming: face washing, bathing, tooth brushing, combing hair, etc.
10. Problems understanding/following spoken directions
11. Sometimes appears not to hear when spoken to
12. Frequently seeks out stimulation (touch, deep pressure, crashing, movement, smells, etc.)
13. Frequently on the move; over active
14. Frequently touching/grabbing/hanging on others
15. Slow, sluggish, little energy

Either under or over sensitive to touch

Examples of Oversensitivity (Hypersensitivity / Tactile Defensiveness): *(These children experience touch more intensely than others and often find typical sensations uncomfortable or overwhelming)*

Clothing Issues:

- Strongly dislikes tags in clothes, seams in socks, or certain fabric textures (like wool or stiff denim).
- Insists on wearing only very soft, loose-fitting clothes, or specific familiar items.
- Distressed by tight waistbands, collars, or socks. May refuse to wear weather-appropriate clothes like hats, gloves, or coats because of how they feel.

Hygiene Difficulties:

- Hates having their hair brushed or washed (scalp sensitivity).
- Dislikes brushing teeth (sensation of bristles or toothpaste texture).
- Very resistant to having face or hands washed.
- Finds nail clipping extremely distressing.
- May react strongly to water temperature or the sensation of water in a bath/shower.

Food Textures:

- Is a very picky eater, often avoiding mixed textures (e.g., casseroles, yogurt with fruit chunks, soup with bits).
- Dislikes getting messy while eating and may constantly wipe hands/face or refuse finger foods.
- May gag easily on certain food textures.

Avoiding Touch:

- Pulls away from or dislikes hugs, cuddles, or casual pats on the back, especially if unexpected.
- Avoids holding hands.
- Becomes very distressed by being jostled in crowds or standing close to others in line.
- Reacts negatively (crying, hitting out) to light, feathery touch.

Play Preferences:

- Strongly dislikes messy play activities like finger painting, playing with sand, mud, play-doh, or glue.
- Avoids walking barefoot on grass or sand.
- May wipe hands constantly during craft activities.

Examples of Undersensitivity (Hyposensitivity): *(These children need more intense sensory input to register touch and may actively seek it out)*

High Pain Threshold / Lack of Awareness:

- Doesn't seem to notice minor bumps, scrapes, or bruises; may react minimally to injuries that would upset other children.
- May not realise their face or hands are messy (e.g., food around mouth, dirt on hands) or that their nose is running.
- Might not notice if clothes are twisted, inside out, or if shoes are on the wrong feet.
- May seem unaware of temperature unless it's extreme.

Seeking Intense Input:

- Craves deep pressure like tight hugs, squeezing, or enjoys being under heavy blankets or pillows.
- Loves rough-and-tumble play, crashing, jumping, and bumping into things/people.
- May touch people and objects constantly, sometimes with too much force (not meaning to be rough, but poor force modulation).
- May frequently mouth or chew on non-food items (like shirt collars, pencils) past the typical age.

Messy Play/Eating:

- Loves messy play and seeks out tactile experiences like mud, sand, and paint.
- May be a messy eater but seems completely unaware of the food on their face and hands.
- Might stuff their mouth with food, possibly seeking intense oral sensation.
- May prefer foods with strong flavours or extreme textures (very crunchy, very chewy).

Personal Space:

- May stand very close to others when interacting or bump into them frequently without noticing.

Either under or over sensitive to sounds

Examples of Oversensitivity (Auditory Hypersensitivity / Hyperacusis): *(These children experience sounds more intensely than others, and typical noises can feel overwhelming, painful, or distressing)*

Extreme Reactions to Sudden/Loud Noises:

- Covers ears, cries, screams, freezes, or tries to run away when hearing sounds like vacuum cleaners, hand dryers in public toilets, sirens, fireworks, balloons popping, dogs barking, or alarms (smoke detector, school bell).
- Shows an exaggerated startle response to unexpected noises.

Distress in Noisy Environments:

- Becomes easily overwhelmed, agitated, or shuts down in busy places like supermarkets, shopping centres, school cafeterias, assemblies, parties, or noisy playgrounds.
- May refuse to go to cinemas, concerts, or crowded events.

Sensitivity to Specific Sounds:

- Particularly bothered by high-pitched sounds (like microphone feedback), low humming noises (like refrigerators or fluorescent lights), or repetitive sounds (like clocks ticking or someone chewing).

Complaining About Normal Sound Levels:

- Frequently complains that the TV or music is too loud, even when others find the volume acceptable.
- Asks people to talk more quietly.

Distraction by Background Noise:

- Finds it difficult to concentrate in a typical classroom environment due to sounds like chairs scraping, pencils dropping, whispering, or ventilation systems.
- May struggle to filter out background noise to focus on a speaker.

Anticipatory Anxiety:

- Shows fear or anxiety before entering environments known to be noisy or before anticipated loud events (like fire drills).

Examples of Undersensitivity (Auditory Hyposensitivity): *(These children need more intense sound input to register it, or they might seem unaware of sounds around them)*

Difficulty Responding to Name/Instructions:

- Often doesn't seem to hear when their name is called, even when their hearing is medically confirmed as normal.
- Needs instructions repeated multiple times or given in a louder voice.
- May appear to be "daydreaming," "in their own world," or ignoring speakers.

Lack of Awareness of Environmental Sounds:

- Fails to notice sounds that others clearly react to, such as a doorbell, telephone ringing, someone entering the room, or even approaching sirens or traffic (which can be a safety concern).

Sound Seeking Behaviours:

- Enjoys listening to music or the TV at very high volumes.
- Prefers noisy toys and environments.
- May make loud noises themselves frequently – banging objects, shouting, singing loudly, making repetitive sounds (humming, clicking).

Speaking Too Loudly:

- Often uses a very loud voice when speaking, unaware of their own volume relative to the situation.

Apparent Difficulty Hearing:

- May sometimes be suspected of having a hearing impairment, but audiology tests come back normal.
- Might have difficulty discriminating between similar sounds or understanding speech clearly, especially in noisy settings (can overlap with Auditory Processing Disorder).

May Enjoy Background Noise:

- Paradoxically, some children who are undersensitive might seem to focus better or feel calmer with some level of background noise or music rather than complete quiet.

Either under or over sensitive to light

Examples of Undersensitivity (Visual Hyposensitivity):

Lack of Reaction to Bright Light:

- Seems relatively unaffected by bright sunlight or bright indoor lights that cause others to squint or complain.
- May not notice or be bothered by glare.

Seeking Intense Visual Input:

- Is fascinated by bright lights, flashing lights, or spinning objects with lights.
- May stare directly at light sources, including lamps or even the sun (which requires immediate redirection due to safety risks).
- Enjoys toys that light up intensely or flicker rapidly.
- Might flick light switches on and off repeatedly, seemingly enjoying the visual change.

Interest in Reflections and Shiny Objects:

- May spend long periods looking at reflections in mirrors, windows, or shiny surfaces.
- Attracted to sparkly or metallic objects.

Potential Difficulty in Dim Light:

- While seeking bright input, some undersensitive children might struggle to see clearly or navigate effectively in dimly lit conditions because the lower level of input isn't enough for their system to process well. They might need brighter light than others for tasks like reading or finding objects.

Craving Visual Stimulation:

- May enjoy visually "busy" environments or fast-paced visuals on screens (though screen time effects should still be managed).

Examples of Oversensitivity (Visual Hypersensitivity / Photosensitivity):

Sunlight Sensitivity:

- Frequently squints, covers their eyes, complains about brightness, or tears up excessively when outdoors, even on days that aren't intensely sunny by UK standards.
- Insists on wearing sunglasses or a hat with a brim whenever outside, sometimes even on overcast days.
- May avoid going outside during brighter parts of the day or prefer shady spots.
- Sunlight coming through windows indoors might also be bothersome.

Discomfort with Indoor Lighting:

- Particularly bothered by standard overhead fluorescent lighting (common in schools, supermarkets like Tesco or Asda, and other public buildings). They might complain the lights are too bright, "buzz," "flicker," or give them headaches.
- Prefers dimly lit rooms and may try to turn off lights or close curtains/blinds.
- May seem tired, irritable, or have difficulty concentrating in brightly lit indoor environments.

Reactions to Specific Light Sources:

- Distressed by camera flashes, avoiding having their photo taken.
- Bothered by flashing lights on toys, Christmas decorations, or emergency vehicles.
- May be sensitive to bright reflections off surfaces like water, snow, or even shiny floors or tables.

Difficulty Adjusting to Light Changes:

- Takes a noticeably long time to adjust when moving between different light levels (e.g., coming indoors after being outside, or when lights are switched on in a darker room). May blink excessively or keep eyes closed for a while.

Physical Signs:

- May frequently rub their eyes, complain of eye strain, eye pain, or headaches after being in bright light or under fluorescent lighting. Eyes might appear watery.

Either under or over smells/tastes

Examples of Oversensitivity (Olfactory/Gustatory Hypersensitivity): *(These children experience smells and tastes more intensely than others, often finding everyday scents and flavours overwhelming, unpleasant, or even causing nausea or gagging)*

Extreme Picky Eating:

- Refuses a wide variety of foods based on smell or taste, often gagging just from the smell of a disliked food.
- May only eat very bland foods (like plain pasta, bread, certain types of chicken) and avoid anything with strong flavours, spices, herbs, or sauces.
- Dislikes foods touching on the plate, possibly fearing flavour contamination.
- May identify and be bothered by subtle ingredients or flavours that others don't notice.

Strong Reactions to Food Smells:

- Complains intensely about cooking smells in the house, needing windows open or refusing to be in the kitchen while food is prepared.
- May refuse to eat in the school dining hall due to the mix of food smells.

Sensitivity to Environmental Smells:

- Complains frequently about smells that others might not even register (e.g., someone's perfume/aftershave, cleaning products used at home or school, air fresheners, the scent of specific shops like Lush, petrol stations, or even the general smell of certain buildings).
- May feel nauseous, get headaches, or become irritable when exposed to smells they find offensive.
- Avoids certain areas, like public toilets with strong disinfectant smells or the nappy bin area.

Reactions to People's Scents:

- May avoid hugging or being close to people wearing perfume, certain deodorants, or even commenting on natural body odours or smells like coffee breath.

Aversion to Hygiene Products:

- Strongly dislikes the taste of most toothpastes, often gagging or refusing to brush teeth (may tolerate specific mild or unflavoured types).
- Dislikes the scent of certain soaps, shampoos, or lotions, needing unscented versions.

Examples of Undersensitivity (Olfactory/Gustatory Hyposensitivity): *(These children need more intense smell or taste input to register it. They might seem unaware of smells/tastes others notice or actively seek strong sensations)*

Preference for Intense Flavours:

- Craves and eats foods with very strong, pungent, spicy, sour, or salty flavours (e.g., loves very hot curries, eats lemons, adds excessive salt/vinegar/hot sauce to food).
- May lick things with strong tastes (e.g., salty surfaces, condiments directly).

Lack of Awareness of Smells:

- Fails to notice strong or unpleasant smells that others react to, such as a dirty nappy needing changing, bins needing emptying, strong body odour, pet smells, or even potentially dangerous smells like smoke (unless very strong), gas, or spoiled food (this poses a safety risk).
- May not notice pleasant smells like baking or flowers unless pointed out.

Mouthing or Eating Non-Food Items (Pica):

- May mouth or chew on objects excessively past the typical developmental stage. In some cases, may eat non-food items like dirt, chalk, paper, or soap – this requires careful monitoring and intervention as it can be dangerous. Sometimes this is linked to seeking intense oral/taste input.

Smell Seeking Behaviour:

- May actively sniff objects, people, or food frequently and intensely.
- Might seem drawn to smelling things others would avoid (e.g., bins, dirty laundry).

Indifference to Hygiene Product Scents/Flavours:

- Seems unbothered by different toothpaste flavours or strongly scented soaps/shampoos.

Shows apprehension in movement activities

Here are examples of how apprehension in movement activities might look in children. This often relates to difficulties with their vestibular sense (balance and spatial orientation), proprioception (body awareness), fear of falling (gravitational insecurity), or general anxiety.

On the Playground / Outdoor Play:

- **Using Slides:** The child might climb the steps hesitantly, then freeze at the top, refusing to slide down. They might cry, ask for help, or try to climb back down the steps. If they do slide, they might go extremely slowly, try to control their speed excessively, or show clear fear on their face.
- **Swinging:** They might avoid swings altogether or only tolerate very gentle, low swinging while holding on extremely tightly. They may become distressed, cry, or demand to get off if the swing goes higher, faster, or if someone else pushes them unexpectedly.
- **Climbing Frames / Structures:** The child approaches climbing equipment with noticeable caution, staying very low to the ground. They might refuse to climb higher than one or two levels, move very slowly and deliberately, or freeze if they feel unsure of their footing or handhold, even at a low height. They might avoid structures with moving parts (like wobble bridges).
- **Roundabouts / Spinning Equipment:** They strongly dislike or refuse to go on roundabouts or any equipment that spins, perhaps saying it makes them feel sick or scared even with slow movement.
- **General Movement:** They move very cautiously around the playground, often watching their feet intently, avoiding running, and seeming fearful of uneven surfaces like grass or wood chip areas. They might be overly scared of bumping into other children.

Everyday Situations:

- **Stairs:** Clings tightly to railings or an adult's hand when going up or down stairs, especially if they are steep, open-backed, or unfamiliar. Moves very slowly, one step at a time. May avoid escalators or moving walkways.
- **Uneven Ground:** Walks very carefully and slowly on uneven surfaces like pavements with kerbs, grassy slopes, gravel paths (common in UK parks and gardens), or stepping stones, showing a high fear of tripping or losing balance.
- **Heights:** Shows significant fear or discomfort near edges, looking down from windows (even on the first floor), or standing on chairs or stools.

During PE (Physical Education) or Sports Activities:

- **Balance Activities:** Shows extreme reluctance or fear when asked to walk on a low bench or balance beam, perhaps refusing entirely or needing constant hand-holding and reassurance. Their body posture might be very stiff and movements jerky.
- **Activities Involving Rolling or Being Upside Down:** Becomes very distressed or refuses to participate in activities like forward rolls, log rolls, cartwheels, or even simple stretches where the head goes below the waist.
- **Jumping and Landing:** Hesitates or refuses to jump off even low objects (like a small step or low box). If they do jump, their landing might be very stiff or uncontrolled.
- **Ball Games:** May show fear of fast-moving balls, cringing, turning away, or avoiding games where balls are kicked or thrown. This might be less about catching skills and more about the fear of impact or unpredictable movement.
- **General Participation:** Tends to hang back, stay on the sidelines, or participate with minimal effort and obvious reluctance in activities requiring running, quick changes of direction, or dynamic movement.

Withdraws or hits when approached or touched

Examples of Withdrawing When Approached or Touched:

Avoiding Social Greetings: When a familiar adult (like a neighbour or family friend) approaches with a friendly smile and leans in slightly to say hello, the child physically pulls back, tucks behind their parent's legs, avoids eye contact, or becomes suddenly very quiet.

Classroom Proximity: A teacher walks over to the child's desk to offer help or look at their work. The child flinches visibly as the teacher gets close, leans their body away, or draws their arms and shoulders inward, seeming to try and make themselves smaller.

Playground Interactions: Another child runs up excitedly to ask them to play. The child immediately steps back, looks down or away, and might even physically turn their body away, showing clear reluctance to engage at that close proximity.

Accidental Touch in Lines: While lining up for lunch or assembly at school, if another child brushes against them accidentally, the child might quickly pull away, hug themselves tightly, or look distressed and try to create a noticeable gap around themselves.

Caregiving Touch: A parent reaches out to gently brush hair from the child's face or help them put on a coat. The child ducks away, shrugs off the touch, or physically resists the contact without anger, just avoidance.

Group Activities: During 'circle time' or when sitting close to others for a story, the child consistently positions themselves slightly apart or tenses up whenever neighbours move closer.

Examples of Hitting (or Pushing/Lashing Out) When Approached or Touched:

Unexpected Touch: A classmate playfully taps the child on the shoulder from behind to get their attention. The child startles, spins around instantly, and hits or pushes the classmate away, possibly shouting something like "Get off!" or "Don't touch me!"

Crowded Spaces: In a busy corridor at school or a crowded shop, if someone bumps into them or gets too close while passing, the child might lash out impulsively by pushing them away forcefully.

Attempts at Guidance/Help: A parent or teacher tries to gently guide the child by the hand or put an arm around their shoulder to lead them somewhere or offer comfort. The child forcefully pulls away and might slap at the adult's hand or arm.

Personal Space Invasion: Another child sits down too close on the bench or sofa, entering what the child perceives as their personal space. The child immediately pushes the other child away to create distance.

During Play/Sharing: If another child reaches across them or very close to them to get a toy or materials during play, the child might hit their hand away or push their body back defensively.

Overwhelm + Approach: The child is feeling frustrated or overwhelmed by a task or situation. Someone approaches, perhaps meaning to help, and the child lashes out physically as a seemingly disproportionate reaction, possibly because the approach adds to their sense of being overloaded or trapped.

Becomes overwhelmed in loud, or crowded settings

In a Busy Supermarket:

- The child initially seems fine but gradually becomes more irritable as the noise (trolleys, beeping checkouts, announcements, chatter) and visual clutter (bright lights, colourful displays, many people moving) increase.
- They might start whining, complaining, refusing to walk, or lagging behind.
- May begin covering their ears or squinting their eyes.
- Could lead to a full meltdown near the checkouts – crying uncontrollably, shouting, trying to escape the trolley, or becoming physically resistant.

At a Children's Birthday Party:

- The child enters excitedly but soon becomes withdrawn amidst the chaos of running children, loud music, shouting, and echoing sounds.
- They might cling tightly to their parent's leg, refusing to join in the games.
- May seek out a quieter corner, hide under a table, or repeatedly ask to go home.
- Alternatively, some children become hyperactive and agitated when overwhelmed – running around almost frantically without purpose, unable to settle or engage appropriately.

During School Assembly or Lunchtime:

- In the large, echoing school hall filled with many children talking or singing, the child covers their ears, looks distressed or fearful, and might rock back and forth.
- At lunchtime in a noisy dining hall, they might eat very little, put their head down, complain of a stomach ache or headache, or become easily upset by small things (like someone accidentally bumping their chair).

At a Local Event (e.g., a village fair, or fireworks display):

- Surrounded by crowds, music, ride noises, and various smells, the child becomes visibly anxious or stressed.
- They might pull their parent strongly by the hand, trying to leave, or become completely still and unresponsive ("shut down").
- Sudden loud noises (like fireworks or announcements) might trigger intense crying, screaming, or attempts to flee.

On Public Transport:

- The combination of engine noise, many people talking, frequent stops/starts, and lack of personal space causes distress.
- The child might cover their ears, complain loudly, become restless and fidgety, or try to curl up small in their seat, looking miserable.

In a Crowded Shop or Shopping Centre:

- The child struggles to navigate the crowds, seeming easily disoriented or bumped.
- They might complain about the lights being too bright or the music being too loud.
- May become oppositional, refusing to follow directions, or have sudden emotional outbursts that seem disproportionate to any specific trigger other than the overwhelming environment itself.

Dislikes certain clothing, or layers clothing

Examples of Disliking Certain Clothing:

- **Tag Troubles:** The child becomes extremely distressed by labels/tags inside clothes, constantly scratching at their neck or side, complaining it's "itchy" or "hurting." They might refuse to wear an item unless the tag is completely removed, sometimes even needing the residual seam smoothed down.
- **Seam Sensitivity (Especially Socks):** Major struggles putting on socks; the child insists the seam across the toes isn't straight or feels "lumpy," leading to meltdowns. They might refuse to wear socks altogether, wear them inside out, or only tolerate specific seamless brands.
- **Fabric Fussiness:** Refuses to wear certain textures like wool jumpers ("too scratchy"), stiff denim jeans ("too hard"), corduroy ("bumpy"), or sometimes even common school uniform fabrics like specific polyester blends in polo shirts or trousers. They strongly prefer very soft, worn-in cotton clothes.
- **Fit Fanaticism:** Dislikes clothing that feels tight, particularly around the waist (jeans, some school trousers), cuffs, or neck (polo shirts, turtlenecks). Prefers loose-fitting clothes or items with soft, elasticated waistbands like joggers or leggings. Complains shoes or socks are "too tight" even if they appear to fit correctly.
- **Aversion to Specific Items:** Refuses to wear weather-appropriate items, for example, hating the feel of a waterproof coat even when it's raining, or refusing sturdy shoes/wellies in favour of softer trainers. May resist wearing shorts even on warmer days, or conversely, refuse warmer layers in cooler weather due to the feel.
- **Battles Over Uniform:** School uniform policies can be particularly challenging. The child might constantly fight wearing the required stiff-collared shirt, specific trousers/skirt fabric, or the school jumper, leading to stressful mornings.
- **Resistance to New Clothes:** Dislikes the feeling of new, unwashed clothes which often feel stiffer or have a different texture than familiar, worn items.

Examples of Insisting on Layering Clothing:

- **Wearing Outerwear Indoors:** Insists on keeping their coat, hoodie, or jumper on indoors at home or school, even when the heating is on and they seem warm enough (or even slightly sweaty) to others. Becomes distressed if asked to remove the outer layer.
- **Multiple Base Layers:** Consistently wears multiple layers underneath their main clothes, such as wearing two T-shirts under a school shirt, or a vest plus a long-sleeved top plus a jumper, regardless of the temperature.
- **Year-Round Hoodie/Jumper:** Has a specific favourite hoodie or jumper they insist on wearing every day over their clothes, even on warmer spring or summer days. Removing it causes significant anxiety or upset.
- **Layering for Comfort/Security:** Seems to add layers when feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or seeking comfort. The physical sensation of the layers might provide a calming, deep-pressure feeling (proprioceptive input).
- **Resistance to Removing Layers for Activities:** Refuses to take off jumpers for PE lessons at school or becomes upset if needing to remove layers for activities like swimming.
- **Layering Multiple Pairs:** Might insist on wearing two pairs of socks or leggings under trousers for the feeling, even if it makes shoes tight or movement slightly restricted.

Resists grooming: face washing, bathing, tooth brushing, combing hair, etc.

Examples of Resisting Face Washing:

- The child turns their head sharply away or physically pushes the flannel/wipe away as soon as it approaches their face.
- They begin to cry, whine, or protest loudly ("No! Don't like it!") when told it's time to wash their face, or upon seeing the flannel.
- They squeeze their eyes shut tightly and hold their breath, tensing their whole body.
- They might run and hide when they anticipate face washing is about to happen (e.g., after a messy meal).

Examples of Resisting Hair Combing/Brushing/Washing:

- Cries, screams, or shouts "Ouch!" dramatically as soon as a brush or comb touches their hair, even if it's done gently and there are no major tangles.
- Constantly pulls their head away or ducks down to avoid the brush/comb.
- Might hit out at the person trying to brush their hair or throw the brush.
- Runs away or hides when they see the hairbrush.
- Shows extreme distress specifically when hair is being washed during bath time (see bathing examples).

Examples of Resisting Other Grooming (Nail Clipping, Haircuts):

- Snatches hands or feet away instantly when nail clippers approach; hides hands or refuses to remove socks. Cries or screams throughout nail clipping.
- Refuses to go to the barber/hairdresser or sit in the chair. Cries, screams, or squirms excessively during a haircut, making it very difficult and stressful. May be particularly distressed by the sound/vibration of clippers or hair falling on their skin.

Examples of Resisting Bathing or Showering:

- Refuses to get into the bath or shower, perhaps crying, screaming, or physically clinging to the parent or the doorframe.
- Complains excessively about the water temperature ("Too hot! Too cold!") even when it feels fine to others.
- Shows significant distress from the sensation of water hitting their skin, especially from a showerhead ("It hurts!").
- Tries to stand up or climb out of the bath constantly.
- Strongly protests having soap or shampoo applied, or having water used to rinse hair (often linked to fear of getting it in eyes/ears).
- Fights against being dried with a towel afterwards, complaining about the texture or the feeling of being cold.

Examples of Resisting Tooth Brushing:

- Clamps their mouth tightly shut and refuses to open it for the toothbrush.
- Turns their head rapidly from side to side, making it impossible to brush effectively.
- Gags, cries, or screams as soon as the toothbrush or toothpaste enters their mouth.
- Spits out toothpaste immediately or refuses specific flavours/textures (e.g., complaining mint is "spicy" or foam feels "yucky").
- Pushes the parent's hand away or hits the toothbrush.
- Might only tolerate it for a few seconds before protesting intensely.

Problems understanding/following spoken directions

Ignoring or Missing Keywords in Instructions:

- *Scenario:* At school, the teacher says, "Please put your reading books in your bags and line up *quietly* by the door."
- *Example Behaviour:* The child puts their book away and lines up, but is talking loudly or jostling with others, seeming to have completely missed or failed to process the crucial word "quietly."

Difficulty with Multi-Step Directions:

- *Scenario:* At home, a parent asks, "Go upstairs, get your muddy wellies from your room, and bring them down to the back door."
- *Example Behaviour:* The child might go upstairs but come back empty-handed ("What did you want again?"), or perhaps just bring down *any* pair of shoes, having forgotten the specific details ("muddy wellies," "back door") after the first step.

Problems Processing in Noisy Environments:

- *Scenario:* During a busy PE lesson in the school hall, the teacher calls out, "Everyone get a blue bean bag and find a space."
- *Example Behaviour:* Amidst the echoey hall and other children's noise, the child looks lost, doesn't move immediately, or grabs the wrong colour beanbag, struggling to filter and understand the instruction clearly.

Slow Response Time (Processing Lag):

- *Scenario:* Parent asks, "Can you pass me the remote control, please?"
- *Example Behaviour:* There's a significant delay where the child seems not to have heard, but then after several seconds, they process it and hand over the remote without needing a repeat. The slowness makes it appear initially like they didn't understand or hear.

Misunderstanding Vocabulary or Complex Sentences:

- *Scenario:* A teacher says, "Before you commence writing, ensure you have reviewed the criteria on the board."
- *Example Behaviour:* The child looks blank or starts writing immediately, not understanding words like "commence" or "criteria," or finding the sentence structure too complex to follow. They need simpler language ("Before you start writing, check the list on the board").

Needing Instructions Repeated Frequently:

- *Scenario:* Throughout the day, both at home and school (e.g., during craft activities, getting ready routines), the child constantly needs directions repeated, even simple, single-step ones. They often say "What?" or "Huh?"

Appearing Forgetful or Inattentive:

- *Scenario:* Parent gives an instruction like, "Please hang your coat up on the hook."
- *Example Behaviour:* The child nods or says "Okay" but then wanders off and starts doing something else entirely, suggesting they either didn't fully process the request into their working memory or couldn't initiate the task.

Getting Steps Out of Order:

- *Scenario:* Instruction: "Finish your drawing, *then* put the crayons away."
- *Example Behaviour:* The child starts putting the crayons away *before* finishing the drawing, misunderstanding the required sequence.

Sometimes appears not to hear when spoken to

Deep Absorption in an Activity:

- A child is intensely focused on drawing a picture or building with LEGO bricks on the floor. A parent calls their name from across the room to ask a question, but the child gives no visible response, continuing their activity as if they heard nothing. They only react when the parent comes closer and speaks again or gently touches them.

Screen Time Hyperfocus:

- The child is watching a programme on TV or playing a game on a tablet. A family member speaks directly to them, perhaps asking them to pause for dinner. The child's eyes remain fixed on the screen, and they show no sign of having heard until the request is repeated more loudly, or eye contact is made after pausing the screen.

Daydreaming or Internal Focus:

- During 'carpet time' at school, the teacher asks the child a question. The child is staring blankly into space or fiddling with something small, seemingly unaware they were addressed. They might jump slightly or look confused when the teacher repeats their name more firmly.

Difficulty Filtering Background Noise:

- In a slightly noisy environment like a family gathering at home or a busy classroom, an adult speaks directly to the child. The child doesn't respond, possibly because they are struggling to separate the speaker's voice from the surrounding chatter, music, or other sounds. They might respond if the environment becomes quieter or if the speaker moves closer and reduces distractions.

Slow Processing Speed:

- A parent gives an instruction like, "Can you pass me the book next to you?" There is a noticeable pause where the child seems not to have heard, making no move. However, after a few seconds, they process the request and hand over the book without needing a repetition. The initial lack of response *looked* like not hearing.

Attention Fluctuation:

- A child, perhaps with attentional difficulties, is engaged in a conversation but their focus drifts. The other person continues talking or asks another question, but the child's mind has wandered, and they miss what was said, appearing not to have heard that part of the conversation.

Overwhelm or Shutdown:

- After a stimulating or stressful event (like a party or a difficult school day), the child might be sitting quietly. A parent asks them a simple question, but the child remains unresponsive, staring ahead, almost 'tuned out' due to sensory or emotional overload.

Frequently seeks out stimulation (touch, deep pressure, crashing, movement, smells, etc.)

Examples of Seeking Movement (Vestibular Input):

- **Constant Motion:** The child rarely sits still; they might be rocking in their chair during lessons at school, fidgeting constantly, bouncing their legs, or needing to get up and walk around frequently.
- **Playground Preferences:** Always heads straight for the swings, roundabout, or spinners at the local park and wants to swing very high, spin very fast, or stay on for long periods.
- **Running, Not Walking:** Tends to run everywhere – down corridors at school, around the house, in the supermarket – rather than walking.
- **Spinning/Rocking:** Enjoys spinning around in circles, sometimes without appearing to get dizzy as quickly as peers. May rock back and forth while standing or sitting.
- **Inverted Positions:** Likes hanging upside down, whether it's off the sofa, a climbing frame, or even trying handstands frequently.

Examples of Seeking Smells (Olfactory Input):

- **Sniffing Objects:** Habitually sniffs toys, books, markers, food, or other objects before using them or just out of interest.
- **Sniffing People:** May get unusually close to sniff people's hair, clothes, or skin (can be socially inappropriate).
- **Drawn to Strong Scents:** Particularly interested in or drawn towards items or places with strong smells, whether pleasant (perfume, scented candles, specific foods) or sometimes unpleasant (bins, old shoes).

Examples of Seeking Deep Pressure & Proprioceptive Input (Crashing/Squeezing):

- **Rough Play:** Loves rough-and-tumble play, wrestling, playful tackling, and being physically active and forceful during play with siblings or friends.
- **Crashing and Bumping:** Deliberately crashes into sofas, beds, crash pads, or beanbags. May frequently bump into walls or furniture, sometimes intentionally for the feedback. Might jump off furniture or low walls frequently.
- **Tight Hugs and Squeezes:** Frequently asks for tight hugs, cuddles, or "squeezes." Enjoys being squeezed or having pressure applied. May enjoy being rolled up tightly in a blanket ("sausage roll").
- **Heavy Work:** Likes activities involving pushing or pulling heavy objects, carrying heavy bags (like the school book bag), or wearing a weighted backpack or lap pad if available.
- **Stomping/Jumping:** Walks heavily, stomping their feet, or jumps frequently while moving around.
- **Chewing:** Frequently chews on non-food items like shirt collars, cuffs, pencils, or specific chew toys, seeking oral proprioceptive input.

Examples of Seeking Touch (Tactile Input):

- **Touching Everything:** Constantly touches objects, textures, walls, and surfaces while moving around; may fiddle with different textured items.
- **Messy Play:** Loves activities involving strong tactile sensations like playing with slime, play-doh, mud, sand, or finger paints, often immersing hands or even whole body if allowed.
- **Leaning/Proximity:** May frequently lean on people or enjoy sitting very close to others for the physical contact.

Frequently on the move; over active

Difficulty Staying Seated (School/Home):

- During lesson time at school, the child frequently squirms in their seat, rocks their chair, taps their feet, or gets up to wander around the classroom (e.g., to sharpen a pencil repeatedly, look out the window, or approach the teacher's desk without a clear need).
- At home during mealtimes, they struggle to remain seated at the table for the duration of the meal, often getting up after only a few minutes, kneeling on their chair, or fidgeting excessively.

Excessive Running and Climbing:

- Tends to run rather than walk indoors at home or in public places like corridors at school or down supermarket aisles).
- Frequently climbs on furniture (sofas, tables, beds) at home, or attempts to climb inappropriate structures outdoors (e.g., low walls, bins, fences).

Appears "Driven by a Motor":

- Seems to be in almost constant motion from waking up until going to sleep. Even when watching TV, they might be fidgeting, bouncing, or changing position frequently on the sofa.
- Engages in activities with high energy but may switch focus rapidly, dashing from one thing to another.

Restlessness During Quiet Activities:

- Finds it very hard to engage quietly in activities like reading, drawing, or doing homework for sustained periods. They might constantly fidget with materials, get up frequently for breaks, or abandon the activity quickly in favour of moving around.
- During story time at school or home, they might roll around on the floor, interrupt frequently, or poke neighbours instead of listening quietly.

Challenges in Structured Settings:

- In PE lessons or organised sports, they might struggle to listen to instructions fully before acting, have difficulty waiting for their turn, or continue moving when asked to stop (e.g., during games like 'musical statues').
- Finds waiting in lines (at school, in shops) extremely challenging, often fidgeting intensely, pacing, or bumping into others.

Difficulty Winding Down:

- Has trouble settling down for sleep at night, often bouncing in bed, getting out of bed repeatedly, or seeming physically restless long after bedtime.

Frequently touching/grabbing/hanging on others

Examples of Frequently Touching Others:

- **Constant Fiddling with Others:** While sitting next to peers during 'carpet time' or group work at school, the child frequently reaches out to touch their neighbour's hair, stroke their arm, play with their clothing (like fiddling with a zip or button), or tap them repeatedly, often without seeming to intend communication.
- **Touching While Talking:** When speaking to an adult (parent, teacher, teaching assistant) or even a peer, the child constantly touches their arm, hand, shoulder, or clothing as they talk.
- **Touching in Lines/Crowds:** While lining up for assembly, lunch, or waiting outside the classroom, the child habitually pokes, pats, or touches the back or arm of the child in front of them.
- **Brushing Past Intentionally:** Seems to deliberately brush against people when walking past them in corridors or crowded spaces, perhaps seeking the tactile input.

Examples of Frequently Grabbing Others or Their Things:

- **Grabbing for Attention:** If a parent is on the phone or talking to someone else, the child might repeatedly grab their arm, hand, or clothing to demand attention instead of waiting or using words.
- **Impulsive Grabbing of Objects:** Sees another child holding an interesting toy or object and immediately grabs it from their hands rather than asking for a turn or looking.
- **Grabbing During Play:** During games or playtime, might grab another child's arm or hand suddenly, perhaps to pull them somewhere, stop them from doing something, or just out of impulse.
- **Grabbing Clothing:** Might grab onto another person's jumper, coat, or bag, either playfully or to get their attention forcefully.

Important Considerations:

- **Reason Behind the Behaviour:** Understanding *why* the child is doing this is key. Is it sensory seeking? Difficulty with social rules? Trying to connect? Impulse control issues? Anxiety?
- **Frequency and Intensity:** How often does it happen, and how forceful or intrusive is the contact? Does it happen across different settings and with different people?
- **Impact on Others:** Does the behaviour annoy, hurt, or frighten other children or adults? Does it lead to social rejection or conflict?
- **Age Appropriateness:** Very young children naturally explore through touch and have less defined personal space boundaries. Concerns arise when these behaviours are excessive or persist beyond the typical developmental stage.

Examples of Frequently Hanging On or Leaning On Others:

- **Leaning for Input:** Frequently leans heavily against a parent, sibling, or even a familiar teacher when standing or sitting near them, seeking the deep pressure sensation.
- **"Human Climbing Frame":** Treats familiar adults or sometimes even tolerant older children like furniture, attempting to climb on them or hang off their arms or legs when seeking physical contact or play.
- **Clinging During Transitions:** Persistently hangs onto a parent's or caregiver's hand, arm, or leg while walking down the street, through a shop, or between classrooms at school, even when not necessary for safety or guidance.
- **Needing Constant Physical Connection:** Seems to require almost constant physical contact with a preferred adult when in social settings or even at home, perhaps draping themselves over the adult on the sofa or always needing to be holding hands.
- **Hanging on Peers:** Might frequently put their arm around a peer's shoulder or try to hold their hand during playtime in a way that the peer finds intrusive or annoying.

Slow, sluggish, little energy

Morning Routine Difficulties:

- The child is consistently very difficult to wake up in the morning, often needing multiple calls or physical prompts to get out of bed.
- They move extremely slowly through the morning routine – taking a long time to get dressed, eat breakfast (perhaps picking slowly at food), and brush teeth, often making the family late for the school run.

Low Energy During the School Day:

- Teachers report the child frequently looks tired in class, perhaps resting their head on the desk or having a slumped posture.
- They are often slow to start tasks and take significantly longer than peers to complete written work or practical activities.
- On the playground, they might choose to sit down, walk slowly around the perimeter, or engage in only very low-key activities, lacking the usual energetic running and chasing seen in peers.

After-School Fatigue:

- Comes home from school and immediately collapses onto the sofa or floor, appearing drained.
- Shows little enthusiasm or energy for playing, hobbies, or even preferred activities; might prefer passive screen time over anything requiring physical or mental effort.
- May complain of feeling tired very early in the evening.

Slow Pace of Movement:

- Generally walks at a slower pace than peers or family members, often lagging behind.
- Movements might appear heavy, effortful, or lacking coordination, not due to clumsiness but seemingly due to low energy.

Reduced Stamina in Physical Activities:

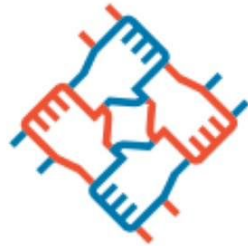
- Tires very quickly during PE lessons, local sports clubs (like football or dance), or even just running around in the garden or park.
- May ask to stop or sit out frequently, complain about being tired, or breathe heavily after minimal exertion compared to peers.

Passive Engagement:

- Seems generally passive or lethargic; requires significant prompting to initiate or participate in activities, chores, or even conversations.
- May respond slowly when spoken to, with quiet or monotone speech, giving an impression of low energy/effort.

Low Enthusiasm and Initiative:

- Shows little spontaneous energy or enthusiasm, even for activities they usually enjoy. Seems content to just sit or lie around unless actively prompted into action.



SEN Parent Support Group

Supporting SEND Educational

Processes For Better OUTCOMES

Cognitive Deficits

Contents

1. Displays delayed information processing; delay in responding
2. Difficulty processing multiple information simultaneously
3. Gets confused with multiple step directions
4. Needs tasks broken down into small steps
5. Problems multi-tasking
6. Short attention span, concentration, easily distracted
7. Has trouble starting and finishing tasks
8. Poor planning and organizing skills; scattered.
9. Often loses or forgets things
10. Poor impulse control, acts without forethought
11. Problems monitoring actions to stay coordinated with others
12. Doesn't understand the effects of their behaviour
13. Difficulty shifting gears with minor snags or changes
14. Rigid/inflexible thinking; can only see their way
15. Black and white, all or nothing thinking (cannot see grey areas)

Displays delayed information processing; delay in responding

Verbal Communication & Following Instructions:

- **Delayed Answers:** You ask the child, "What did you have for lunch today?" There's a long pause (5-10 seconds or more) where they might look thoughtful or blank before they start to answer, even if they know the answer. They aren't being defiant; their brain is just taking longer to retrieve and formulate the response.
- **Slow Compliance with Instructions:** A teacher says, "Okay class, put your books away and line up at the door." While other children start moving relatively quickly, this child might sit still for several seconds before starting the first action (putting the book away), and then another pause before moving to the next step (lining up). They heard and understood, but the processing and initiation of the action are slow.
- **Needing Repetition:** The child frequently says "What?" or needs instructions repeated, not because they didn't hear, but because they haven't finished processing the information the first time before the speaker moves on or expects a response.

Motor Responses:

- **Slow Motor Initiation:** In PE class, when the whistle blows to start a race, the child takes longer to actually start running.
- **Clumsiness due to Processing Delay:** Sometimes, apparent clumsiness can be related. If asked to quickly step over an object, the processing time needed to judge the distance, plan the movement, and execute it might be longer, leading to a stumble.

Academic Settings:

- **Reading Comprehension:** A child might read a passage accurately but take much longer than peers to answer questions about it, needing extra time to mentally review and process the text they just read.
- **Math Problems:** When given a math problem (even one they know how to solve), there might be a significant lag time before they begin writing or state the answer. They need more time to process the numbers and the operation required.
- **Copying from the Board:** The child might look up at the board, look down to write, but pause for a noticeable time before actually writing the word or sentence segment. The process of visually taking in the information, holding it in working memory, and translating it to motor output is slower.

Social Interactions:

- **Slow Reaction to Social Cues:** In a game, if the rules suddenly change or someone does something unexpected, the child might react much later than others, looking confused for longer before adapting.
- **Lagging in Conversations:** In a fast-paced group conversation, the child might think of something to contribute but by the time they've processed the ongoing dialogue and formulated their thought, the topic has already shifted, so they frequently miss their chance to speak.
- **Delayed Emotional Responses:** They might see a friend fall and scrape their knee, but their reaction (showing concern, offering help) might come noticeably later than other bystanders'.

Difficulty processing multiple information simultaneously

Following Multi-Step Directions:

- **Example:** You say, "Please go upstairs, get your blue jumper from your wardrobe, and bring down your library book." The child might go upstairs but only remember the first part (getting the jumper) and forget about the book, or they might get confused about the sequence or miss a step entirely. They can likely follow *one* instruction fine, but juggling three related commands overwhelms their processing capacity.

Listening and Performing Another Task:

- **Example:** A teacher is explaining a task while children are expected to look at a worksheet or gather materials. The child with this difficulty might either focus intently on listening (and miss what they're supposed to be doing visually/physically) or focus on the physical task (and miss crucial verbal instructions). They struggle to effectively divide their attention and process both auditory and visual/motor information simultaneously.
- **Example:** Trying to have a conversation with the child while they are concentrating on building with LEGOs. They might completely stop building to listen, or completely ignore you to focus on building, finding it hard to do both.

Filtering distractions:

- **Example:** Trying to do homework in a slightly noisy or visually busy environment. The child finds it extremely difficult to focus on their work because their brain struggles to filter out the competing background sounds or sights. They are trying to process the homework *and* unconsciously processing the distractions, leading to overload.

Classroom Learning:

- **Example:** Taking notes while listening to a lecture. The child finds it very hard to listen, comprehend the information, *and* summarise it in writing at the same time. Their notes might be sparse, disorganized, or they might abandon note-taking to just listen (or vice versa).
- **Example:** Solving complex math word problems. These require reading and understanding the text, identifying the relevant numbers, holding them in mind, *and* selecting and performing the correct operation(s). The child might get lost in the steps because they can't juggle the linguistic and numerical information simultaneously.

Social Situations:

- **Example:** Participating in a fast-paced group game or conversation. The child might seem lost or withdrawn because they struggle to track multiple speakers, understand the flow of conversation or game rules, *and* think about their own contribution or next move all at once.
- **Example:** Understanding sarcasm or complex humour that requires processing the literal words *plus* the tone of voice *plus* the context *plus* social knowledge simultaneously.

Organization and Task Management:

- **Example:** Cleaning their room when asked to put away toys, clothes, and books. They might start one part (e.g., pick up a toy) but then get easily sidetracked or overwhelmed by the multiple categories of items and tasks, struggling to keep the overall goal and sequence in mind.

Gets confused with multiple step directions

Morning Routine (At Home):

- **Direction:** "Okay Tom, please go upstairs, brush your teeth, and then put your school uniform on." (3 steps)
- **Child's Response:** Tom might go upstairs successfully (Step 1), but then wander into his room and start playing with toys, having forgotten about brushing teeth or the uniform. Or, he might brush his teeth (Step 2) but then come back downstairs without changing, asking, "What was I supposed to do next?" He lost track after the first or second step.

Classroom Activity (At School):

- **Direction:** "Class, I need you to put your reading books back on the shelf, get your maths workbook out, and open it to page 15." (3 steps)
- **Child's Response:** The child might put the reading book away (Step 1) but then sit back down without getting the maths book. Or, they might get the maths book out (Step 2) but then look around confused, unable to recall the specific page number (Step 3 detail lost). They might look at what their tablemates are doing to try and figure out the missed steps.

Tidying Up (At Home or School):

- **Direction:** "Right, playtime's over. Put the LEGOs back in the red box, put the colouring pencils in the pot, and bring me any finished drawings." (3 steps)
- **Child's Response:** The child starts putting LEGOs away (Step 1) but might then mix the pencils in with the LEGOs, or simply stop after the first task, looking overwhelmed or unsure what comes next. They might bring you *all* the drawings, finished or not, having missed the "finished" qualifier because they were focused on remembering the sequence of actions.

Simple Craft or Cooking Task:

- **Direction:** "First, glue the cotton balls onto the paper plate, and then sprinkle glitter on top before the glue dries." (2 steps + condition)
- **Child's Response:** The child might meticulously glue the cotton balls (Step 1) but then forget entirely about the glitter (Step 2). Or, they might remember the glitter but only *after* the glue has dried (missing the "before it dries" condition), because holding the action *and* the timing constraint was too much.

Getting Ready to Go Out:

- **Direction:** "We're leaving in five minutes. Go find your trainers, put them on, and then grab your water bottle from the kitchen." (3 steps)
- **Child's Response:** The child might find their trainers (Step 1) but then leave them sitting by the door and wander off, forgetting to put them on or get the water bottle. Or they might put the trainers on (Step 2) but then ask, "What else did I need?"

Common Signs of Confusion in these situations:

- Completing only the first step and stopping.
- Completing steps out of order.
- Forgetting steps in the middle or at the end.
- Looking blank or hesitant after completing one step.
- Asking "What?" or "What do I do now?" frequently.
- Starting the sequence but getting easily distracted before finishing.
- Looking at peers to figure out what they should be doing.

Needs tasks broken down into small steps

Task: Getting Ready for School in the Morning

Typical Instruction (Too Broad): "Go get ready for school."

Child's Reaction: Might wander upstairs, get distracted by a toy, forget some items of clothing, or feel overwhelmed and not know where to start.

Broken Down into Small Steps:

1. "First, go upstairs and put on your school trousers and shirt." (Wait for completion/check-in)
2. "Great! Now, please brush your teeth." (Wait for completion/check-in)
3. "Well done. Next, come down and put on your socks and shoes." (Wait for completion/check-in)
4. "Okay, last step before breakfast, find your coat and school bag and put them by the door."

Outcome: The child can focus on completing one manageable action at a time, reducing overwhelm and increasing the likelihood of completing the whole routine successfully.

Task: Tidying Up Their Bedroom

Typical Instruction (Too Broad): "Please tidy your room."

Child's Reaction: Might look at the mess, feel completely overwhelmed, push a few things around vaguely, and quickly declare it's too hard or they're finished when little has changed.

Broken Down into Small Steps:

1. "First, let's find all the dirty clothes and put them in the laundry basket." (Focus on one category)
2. "Brilliant. Now, can you find all the books and put them back neatly on the shelf?" (Focus on the next category)
3. "Okay, great! Next, let's put all the building blocks back into their box." (Another category)
4. "Nearly done! Just pick up any rubbish off the floor and put it in the bin."

Outcome: The large, daunting task becomes a series of achievable mini-tasks. The child sees progress and understands exactly what needs to be done at each stage.

Task: Completing a Multi-Part Worksheet (e.g., English or Maths)

Typical Instruction (Too Broad): "Okay class, complete this worksheet. First, read the passage at the top. Then, answer the comprehension questions 1 to 5. After that, complete the vocabulary exercise at the bottom by matching the words to their definitions." (Involves reading comprehension, written answers, and a matching task).

Child's Difficulty (Why breakdown is needed): A child needing support might read the passage but then feel overwhelmed by the multiple question types. They might answer the first question and then stop, unsure how to proceed or losing focus. They could skip sections or mix up instructions. This relates to **sequencing, working memory (holding all instructions), planning (how to tackle the sheet), and sustained attention.**

Broken Down into Small Steps (Teacher/Assistant Support or Structured Worksheet):

1. "First, just read the passage at the top carefully. Put your finger under the words as you read." (Focus only on reading).
2. "Good reading. Now, let's look *only* at Question 1. Read the question. Find the answer in the passage." (Focus on one question).
3. "Well done. Now, let's do the same for Question 2." (Address each question sequentially).
4. (After Q5) "Great, you've finished all the questions! Now, look at the vocabulary section at the bottom. Let's just look at the *first word*. Read it. Which definition matches?" (Address the new section, one item at a time).
5. "Perfect. Now for the *second word*..." (Continue matching task step-by-step).

Outcome: Ensures the child tackles all parts of the worksheet in the correct order, reduces cognitive load, prevents overwhelm, allows the teacher to check understanding at each stage, increases likelihood of successful completion.

Problems multi-tasking

Listening to the Teacher While Taking Notes:

- **Scenario:** The teacher is explaining a new concept (e.g., photosynthesis in Science) using slides and verbal explanation, and expects students to write down key points.
- **Struggle Example:** A child finds it very hard to process the teacher's spoken words *and* read the slide *and* decide what to write *and* physically write it down all at once. They might either:
 - Focus intently on listening, understanding the explanation but writing almost nothing, leaving them without notes for later revision.
 - Focus intently on copying words from the slide, missing the nuances or extra details provided verbally by the teacher.
 - Try to do both, resulting in fragmented notes and incomplete understanding because their attention is split inefficiently.

Following Instructions While Performing an Action:

- **Scenario:** The class is transitioning activities. The teacher says, "Put your maths book back in your tray, get out your blue writing pen, and open your exercise book to the next clean page," while children are expected to start moving.
- **Struggle Example:** The child tries to physically put the maths book away *while* listening to and remembering the next two steps. They might successfully complete the first action but then pause, looking lost, because the cognitive load of doing+listening+remembering was too high. They can't effectively perform one action while encoding instructions for subsequent actions.

Participating in Group Work:

- **Scenario:** Children are working in a small group. They need to listen to their peers' ideas, contribute their own thoughts, perhaps look at shared resources (like a map or text), and maybe even help record the group's decisions.
- **Struggle Example:** A child finds it hard to track the conversation (listen) *while* formulating their own idea *and* looking at the resource *and* possibly waiting for a turn to speak. They might miss what others say while thinking of their own point, struggle to integrate information from the resource into the conversation, or have difficulty finding the right moment to contribute because they are juggling too many cognitive tasks.

Copying from the Board While Listening:

- **Scenario:** The teacher writes notes or instructions on the board while continuing to talk, perhaps adding extra details or explanations verbally.
- **Struggle Example:** The child struggles to shift visual attention (board) and auditory attention (teacher's voice) effectively. They might focus on copying accurately but miss the verbal context, or focus on listening but fall significantly behind in copying the notes, finding it hard to perform both information intake tasks concurrently.

Trying to Talk While Engaged in Another Activity:

- **Scenario:** A parent is trying to ask the child about their school day while the child is deeply involved in building a complex LEGO model or playing an engaging video game.
- **Struggle Example:** The child cannot easily switch attention between the engaging activity and the conversation. They might give brief, non-committal answers ("fine," "dunno," "uh-huh") without really processing the questions, or they might completely ignore the parent until they pause their activity. They can't effectively play/build *and* hold a meaningful conversation simultaneously.

Following a Bedtime Routine Sequence While Distracted:

- **Scenario:** The child needs to complete several steps for bed (e.g., pyjamas, teeth, toilet) but gets distracted by a toy seen in the bedroom or by wanting to tell a parent "one more thing."
- **Struggle Example:** They start one step (e.g., putting on pyjama bottoms) but then get sidetracked by the distraction. They cannot easily hold the sequence of the routine in mind *while* also engaging with the distraction or initiating a new conversation. The routine stalls, and they struggle to disengage from the distraction to return to the necessary tasks.

Short attention span, concentration, easily distracted

Homework Time:

- **Scenario:** A child sits down to do a worksheet that should take about 15-20 minutes.
- **Example Behaviours:** After just 3-5 minutes, they start fidgeting excessively with their pencil or eraser. They suddenly comment on a car driving past the window. They get up to get a drink or snack, even if they just had one. They ask unrelated questions ("What are we having for tea?"). They might stare blankly at the page, clearly thinking about something else. Completing the worksheet requires constant redirection ("Focus on your work," "What does the next question say?").

Reading a Book:

- **Scenario:** The child is asked to read independently for 20 minutes, or you are reading a storybook to them.
- **Example Behaviours:** When reading alone, they might read only one or two pages before putting the book down and drifting to another activity. When being read to, they might frequently interrupt with off-topic comments, wiggle constantly, play with their clothes, or start looking around the room instead of at the book or the reader. They seem unable to stay mentally engaged with the narrative for long.

During a Conversation:

- **Scenario:** You are trying to talk to the child about their school day or explain something important.
- **Example Behaviours:** Their eyes dart around the room as you talk. They might interrupt mid-sentence to point out something irrelevant ("Look, a squirrel!"). They might only seem to catch snippets of what you're saying, asking "What?" frequently, or giving answers that show they missed the main point. They struggle to maintain conversational focus.

Classroom Setting (Based on Teacher Feedback or Observation):

- **Scenario:** The teacher is giving instructions or teaching a lesson to the class.
- **Example Behaviours:** The child is often looking out of the window, fiddling with objects in their tray, rocking on their chair, or whispering to neighbours when they should be listening. During independent work, they frequently get up from their seat, look around at what others are doing, or stop working after only a brief period, needing prompts to restart. They miss instructions because a minor distraction (like someone dropping a pencil) completely captures their attention.

Structured Activities (e.g., Sports Practice, Music Lesson):

- **Scenario:** A coach or instructor is explaining a technique or drill.
- **Example Behaviours:** The child's focus drifts after the first few moments. They might start fiddling with their equipment, watching other groups, or engaging in side conversations. They then might not know what to do when the activity starts because they missed the core instructions due to distraction or a short attention span for the explanation.

Playing a Game or Doing a Puzzle:

- **Scenario:** The child starts playing a board game, building a model, or doing a jigsaw puzzle.
- **Example Behaviours:** They begin enthusiastically but quickly lose interest, especially if it requires sustained effort or concentration. They might abandon the game or puzzle halfway through to jump to something else that seems more novel or less demanding. They struggle to persist through challenges that require focused attention.

Has trouble starting and finishing tasks

Homework Assignment:

Task: Complete a page of maths problems or write a few paragraphs for an English assignment.

- **Trouble Starting:** The child knows they need to do it, but they might sharpen pencils excessively, rearrange their workspace multiple times, ask for snacks/drinks, complain it's too hard before looking at it, or simply "forget" and start playing. Getting them to actually begin the first question requires significant prompting and effort.
- **Trouble Finishing:** Once started, they might do the first couple of easy problems but then stop when they hit a slightly harder one. They might drift off, start doodling, or declare they're finished when the page is only half done. They might rush the last few items with careless mistakes just to get it over with, leaving the work incomplete or poorly done without supervision.

Tidying Up Toys Before Dinner:

Task: Put away the toys used during playtime before mealtime.

- **Trouble Starting:** Despite reminders that dinner's nearly ready, the child continues playing. When finally persuaded to start tidying, they might stand amidst the toys looking overwhelmed, unsure where to begin, or pick up one toy and immediately get distracted playing with it again.
- **Trouble Finishing:** They might put a few obvious items away but leave many smaller pieces scattered around. They might shove things into a box unsorted, or quickly declare "Done!" when the job is clearly only partially complete, losing steam or motivation halfway through.

Getting Ready for Bed (A Multi-Step Routine):

Task: The bedtime routine: Put on pyjamas, brush teeth, put dirty clothes in the hamper.

- **Trouble Starting:** The child delays the start of the routine, negotiating for more playtime or screen time. Getting them to head towards the bathroom or bedroom requires repeated calls.
- **Trouble Finishing:** They might put on their pyjama top but not the bottoms, brush their teeth but leave the toothpaste and brush out, or forget to put the day's clothes in the hamper. They often leave parts of the routine incomplete unless prompted for each specific step through to the very end.

A Creative Project (Drawing, Building, Craft):

Task: Drawing a detailed picture, building a complex LEGO set, or doing a craft activity.

- **Trouble Starting:** They might have the idea but hesitate to get the materials out or make the first mark/step, perhaps fearing it won't be perfect or feeling unsure how to begin.
- **Trouble Finishing:** They work enthusiastically for a while but might abandon the project as soon as they hit a small snag, make a mistake they can't easily fix, or simply when the initial excitement wears off. They might have many half-finished drawings or models around.

Setting the Table for Dinner:

Task: Put out mats, plates, cutlery, and glasses for the family.

- **Trouble Starting:** Needs to be asked multiple times; might wander towards the kitchen but get sidetracked by something else before reaching the plates cupboard.
- **Trouble Finishing:** Might put out plates and mats but forget the cutlery or glasses, or only set their own place. They leave the task partially done, assuming someone else will complete it, or simply losing focus before all components are finished.

Poor planning and organizing skills; scattered.

Managing Homework and Assignments:

- **Poor Planning:** A child is assigned a project on Monday that's due Friday. They don't think about breaking it down into smaller steps (research, outline, writing, review). They leave it all until Thursday evening, then panic, realizing it's too much work for one night or that they need materials they don't have. They didn't plan ahead for time or resources.
- **Poor Organization/Scattered:** Their homework folder or notebook is disorganized. Important assignment sheets are crumpled or lost amongst random drawings and old worksheets. They might do the homework but then forget to put it in their school bag, or forget which book they need for which subject. Notes taken in class might be incomplete or nonsensical because they couldn't organize the information as they heard it.

Keeping Track of Belongings:

- **Poor Organization/Scattered:** Their school bag is a black hole – a jumble of loose papers, books, pencil shavings, maybe an old apple core, and missing items (like homework or permission slips). Finding a specific item requires emptying the entire bag. Similarly, their bedroom floor might be covered in clothes (clean mixed with dirty), toys, and school supplies with no clear system for where things belong. They frequently lose things like jumpers, PE kits, or library books.

Workspace Management:

- **Poor Organization/Scattered:** Their desk or homework space at home is cluttered with unrelated items, old papers, and requires significant clearing before work can even begin. They might waste time searching for basic supplies like a pencil, ruler, or eraser that are buried somewhere in the chaos.

Executing Multi-Step Tasks:

- **Poor Planning:** When asked to do a chore like "Tidy your room by putting clothes in the hamper, books on the shelf, and toys in the box," they might start without a plan.
- **Scattered Approach:** Instead of tackling one category at a time, they might pick up one piece of clothing, then get distracted by a toy, put a book somewhere random, then spot another piece of clothing. They dart between task components inefficiently, making little overall progress and taking much longer than necessary. They lack a systematic approach.

Time Management:

- **Poor Planning:** They consistently underestimate how long tasks will take (e.g., getting ready for school, completing homework). This leads to constantly rushing, being late, or needing to finish things frantically at the last minute.
- **Scattered:** When they have free time after school, they might flit between activities – starting a game, then grabbing a snack, then remembering homework, then getting distracted by TV – without settling into or completing any one thing purposefully. They struggle to prioritize or allocate time effectively.

Preparing for Activities:

- **Poor Planning/Organization:** They are going to football practice but only start looking for their kit (boots, shin pads, water bottle) five minutes before they need to leave, resulting in a frantic search and possibly forgetting items. They didn't plan ahead to have everything ready.

Often loses or forgets things

School Belongings (Very common after school):

- **Jumpers/Cardigans/Coats:** Consistently coming home from school without their uniform jumper or coat, having left it on the playground, in the lunch hall, or hanging on a peg in the classroom. This might happen multiple times a term.
- **Water Bottles/Lunch Boxes:** Frequently leaving their water bottle or lunch box at school, discovered only when packing the bag for the next day or when they arrive home without it.
- **Homework/Books:** Arriving home and realizing they've forgotten the specific textbook, reading book, or homework sheet needed for that evening's tasks. Or, completing homework and consistently forgetting to put it back in their bag to hand in the next day.
- **PE Kit:** Regularly forgetting to bring their PE kit home for washing, or forgetting to take it back into school on the correct day.

Personal Items:

- **Small Essentials:** Constantly losing pencils, erasers, rulers, or pencil sharpeners, both at school and at home.
- **Accessories:** Frequently misplacing hats, gloves, or scarves, especially after playing outside.
- **Toys/Comfort Items:** Bringing a toy to school or a friend's house and forgetting to bring it home.
- **Keys/Passes:** If they carry a house key or bus pass, frequently forgetting where they put it last or leaving it in a coat pocket when they switch coats.

Forgetting Information/Instructions:

- **Messages:** Forgetting to pass on important messages from the teacher to parents (e.g., "We need cardboard boxes tomorrow") or from parents to the teacher. The information just doesn't stick or get relayed.
- **Verbal Directions:** You ask them, "Please put your shoes away and hang up your coat." They might do one part but completely forget the other moments later, seemingly not having held the full instruction in mind.
- **Assignments:** Forgetting what the homework assignment actually was, even if they wrote it down (and then perhaps lost the note). Forgetting instructions for how to complete a task.

Forgetting Tasks/Events:

- **Routine Tasks:** Forgetting to pack their reading book in their school bag each morning, despite it being a daily requirement. Forgetting to charge a device needed for school.
- **Appointments/Activities:** Forgetting it's their day for swimming lessons or football practice until the last minute (or after it's too late), even if it's a regular weekly event.

Poor impulse control, acts without forethought

Social Interactions:

- **Snatching:** Sees another child playing with a desirable toy and immediately grabs it, without asking or considering the other child's feelings or the likely outcome (conflict, adult intervention).
- **Interrupting Play:** Runs into the middle of a game others are playing without asking to join or understanding the rules, potentially disrupting the game impulsively.
- **Physical Impulsivity:** Gets accidentally bumped by another child and immediately pushes back hard, without stopping to assess if it was intentional or considering a less aggressive response.
- **Overly Boisterous:** Gets excited during play and becomes too rough, pushing or grabbing friends without intending harm but lacking the forethought to moderate their actions.

Communication:

- **Blurting Out:** In class or conversation, calls out answers or comments constantly without waiting for their turn or raising their hand. The thought enters their head and comes out immediately.
- **Interrupting:** Frequently cuts into others' conversations (adults or peers) because they can't wait to say what's on their mind.
- **Saying Hurtful Things:** Blurts out critical or unkind comments without considering the impact on the other person's feelings ("That drawing is messy," "Your jumper is ugly"). There's no filter between thought and speech.

Following Rules and Instructions:

- **Resisting Temptation:** Walks past a cake cooling on the side for later and immediately sticks a finger in the icing, despite knowing they should wait.
- **Ignoring Directives:** Is told, "Don't run inside," but moments later, chases the cat through the living room at full speed. The urge to run overrides the instruction.
- **Taking Things:** Sees sweets or small items belonging to someone else and pockets them on impulse, without thinking about ownership or consequences.

Safety Awareness:

- **Running Off:** Suddenly darts away from a parent in a park or shop to look at something interesting, without thinking about getting lost or safety rules.
- **Road Safety:** Steps off the pavement to cross the road without looking for traffic, focused only on getting to the other side quickly.
- **Risky Physical Actions:** Climbs too high on playground equipment or jumps off furniture without accurately assessing the risk of falling or injury.

Task Completion & Academics:

- **Rushing Work:** Races through homework or classwork, making careless errors, just to be finished quickly, without thinking about the need for accuracy.
- **Starting Without Understanding:** Begins a task or worksheet immediately upon receiving it, without fully reading or listening to the instructions first.
- **Guessing:** When faced with a challenging question, blurts out the first guess that comes to mind rather than pausing to think it through or work it out.

Emotional Reactions:

- **Low Frustration Tolerance:** When slightly frustrated (e.g., a game piece doesn't fit, a drawing goes wrong), immediately rips the paper, throws the object, or yells out loud, instead of pausing to manage the feeling.
- **Exaggerated Reactions:** Reacts to minor events with overly dramatic emotional outbursts (positive or negative) because they struggle to modulate their immediate response.

Problems monitoring actions to stay coordinated with others

Team Sports or Group Games:

- **Scenario:** Playing a simple team game like relay races or tag at an after-school club.
- **Example Behaviour:** In a relay race, the child consistently starts running before their teammate reaches them with the baton, or they might run past the designated handover spot. They aren't monitoring their teammate's approach and timing their own action accordingly. In tag, they might continue running when the agreed signal to 'freeze' is given, failing to monitor the group's collective stop.
- **Scenario:** Participating in a football or netball practice drill involving passing in sequence.
- **Example Behaviour:** The child frequently passes the ball too early or too late for the teammate's run, or throws it with significantly more or less force than appropriate for the distance/situation. They struggle to sync their action with the dynamic movement and readiness of others.

Classroom or Group Activities:

- **Scenario:** The class is lining up to leave the room or moving together during a group activity.
- **Example Behaviour:** The child often bumps into peers, steps on their heels, or leaves large, awkward gaps. They aren't effectively monitoring the pace and spacing of the children around them and adjusting their own movement to maintain formation.
- **Scenario:** Working on a collaborative building project or craft with peers.
- **Example Behaviour:** The child might continue adding pieces or colours that don't fit the group's emerging plan, or work at a much faster/slower pace, seemingly oblivious to the need to coordinate efforts and contributions with their partners.

Music, Dance, or Movement Activities:

- **Scenario:** Participating in a group song with actions or a simple dance routine.
- **Example Behaviour:** Their movements are consistently out of sync with the music and the rest of the group – they might be a beat behind, rush ahead, perform the actions slightly differently, or struggle to mirror the instructor while also staying aware of the group's rhythm. They have difficulty coordinating their own motor output with external auditory and visual cues from the group.

Everyday Social Interactions:

- **Scenario:** Walking down the street or through a park with friends or family.
- **Example Behaviour:** Without constant reminders, the child repeatedly lags far behind or surges ahead, failing to naturally adjust their walking speed to match the pace of the group they are with.
- **Scenario:** Helping to carry a large or awkward object with another person.
- **Example Behaviour:** They struggle to synchronize their lifting, walking speed, and turning with their partner, making the task difficult and awkward. They aren't monitoring their partner's movements and adjusting their own effort in response.

Conversational Flow (Subtle Coordination):

- **Scenario:** Participating in a group conversation.
- **Example Behaviour:** The child might consistently talk much louder or softer than the established tone of the group, or miss the non-verbal cues (eye contact, pauses) that signal turn-taking, leading to awkward interruptions or silences. They aren't monitoring and adjusting to the subtle social rhythm of the conversation.

Doesn't understand the effects of their behaviour

Impact on Peer's Feelings:

- **Scenario:** Two children are playing. Child A makes a comment about Child B's drawing, saying "That looks really messy and silly." Child B looks upset and stops drawing.
- **Lack of Understanding:** Child A seems genuinely bewildered by Child B's reaction, perhaps saying, "What's wrong? I was just saying what I thought!" They don't grasp that their words (behaviour) directly caused Child B's hurt feelings (effect).

Disrupting a Game:

- **Scenario:** Children are playing a structured board game. Child A keeps trying to change the rules mid-game whenever they are losing. The other children get frustrated and stop playing.
- **Lack of Understanding:** Child A seems confused and upset that the game ended, asking, "Why did you stop? It was getting fun!" They don't understand that their inconsistent rule-changing (behaviour) made the game unfair and frustrating for others (effect), leading them to quit.

Consequences of Actions at Home:

- **Scenario:** A child runs through the house with muddy shoes after being asked not to, leaving muddy footprints on a clean floor. A parent points this out, sounding annoyed.
- **Lack of Understanding:** The child seems surprised by the parent's annoyance, perhaps saying, "Oops!" but not really connecting their action (running inside with muddy shoes) to the consequence (creating a mess that someone now has to clean up, causing frustration). They don't fully grasp the impact beyond the immediate footprints.

Interrupting Conversations:

- **Scenario:** A child repeatedly interrupts their parents who are trying to have a serious conversation, despite being asked to wait. The parents eventually get exasperated and tell the child firmly to go to their room.
- **Lack of Understanding:** The child might react with surprise or indignation, feeling unfairly punished. They don't connect their persistent interruptions (behaviour) with the parents' inability to communicate and resulting frustration (effect), which led to the consequence.

Sharing and Taking Turns:

- **Scenario:** A child is engrossed in playing with a popular toy at a playgroup. When another child asks for a turn, they refuse loudly and clutch the toy tightly. The other child walks away sadly, and an adult might comment on the need to share.
- **Lack of Understanding:** The first child seems oblivious to the other child's disappointment or the social expectation of sharing. They might think, "But I'm playing with it!" without understanding how their refusal to share (behaviour) impacts the social dynamic and the other child's feelings (effect).

Impact of Noise Level:

- **Scenario:** A child is playing loudly and shouting in a room where their sibling is trying to do homework or read quietly. The sibling complains or leaves the room in annoyance.
- **Lack of Understanding:** The noisy child seems unaware that their volume (behaviour) was disruptive and directly caused their sibling's inability to concentrate and subsequent annoyance (effect). They might just think their sibling is being grumpy for no reason.

Key Indicators:

- The child often seems genuinely surprised, confused, or defensive when faced with the negative outcome of their actions.
- They might struggle to explain *why* someone else is upset or why a situation went wrong.
- They may repeat the same behaviours despite previous negative outcomes because they haven't grasped the cause-and-effect link.

Difficulty shifting gears with minor snags or changes

Changes in Routine:

- **Scenario:** It's nearing bedtime. Usually, the child gets a specific story read by Mum. Tonight, Mum is caught on a late work call, so Dad offers to read the story instead.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** The child becomes very upset, insisting only Mum can read the story, refusing to accept Dad as a substitute even if he offers the same book. They get stuck on the "Mum reads" part of the routine and can't adapt to the minor personnel change.
- **Scenario:** Dinner is usually pasta on Wednesdays, but today it's shepherd's pie because the pasta ran out.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** The child might refuse to eat, complain persistently about wanting pasta, or become visibly distressed by the unexpected change to the meal plan, unable to easily accept the alternative.

Snags During Tasks:

- **Scenario:** The child is finishing their homework or drawing, and the lead breaks in their pencil, or their favourite colour crayon snaps.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** Instead of simply sharpening the pencil or choosing a similar colour, they might have a mini-meltdown, declare the homework/drawing ruined, push it away, or refuse to continue. The minor equipment issue becomes a major obstacle they can't easily navigate around.
- **Scenario:** Following instructions to build a specific model with construction toys, they realise a non-essential piece is missing or they made a small error a few steps back.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** They might get extremely frustrated, insisting they *must* have the exact piece or wanting to abandon the whole project rather than adapting (using a different piece, backtracking to fix the error). They get stuck on the perfect plan and struggle with minor deviations.

Adjustments in Play or Activities:

- **Scenario:** Playing a board game, and a sibling clarifies a rule slightly differently than the child initially understood it.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** The child might argue vehemently that their interpretation is the only right way, refuse to play by the clarified rule, or become upset and quit the game. They struggle to flexibly update their understanding.
- **Scenario:** The plan was to play outside after dinner, but it's started raining.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** The child becomes fixated on the missed outdoor play, complaining excessively about the rain and rejecting suggestions for indoor activities. They can't easily shift their expectation and adapt to the change in circumstances.

Technology Issues:

- **Scenario:** The child is allowed 20 minutes on a tablet, but the battery dies after 15 minutes.
- **Inflexible Reaction:** They become extremely upset about the "lost" 5 minutes, potentially having a tantrum, unable to accept the situation or shift to a different activity smoothly. The unexpected interruption is hard to cope with.

Key Characteristics of the Difficulty:

- The reaction (frustration, anger, distress, shutdown) seems disproportionate to the size of the problem or change.
- The child gets "stuck" on the original plan, expectation, or way of doing things.
- They struggle to problem-solve or think of alternatives when faced with a small obstacle.
- They might argue, refuse to cooperate, or become emotionally dysregulated.

Rigid/inflexible thinking; can only see their way

Rule Adherence in Games:

Example: A group of children are playing a board game. One child insists that everyone must follow the *exact* printed rules, even if the other children agree to a slight modification to make it faster or accommodate a younger player. They might get very upset, refuse to play, or try to force everyone else to adhere strictly to *their* understanding of the rules, unable to accept any deviation.

Daily Routines and Sequences:

Example: A child has a very specific bedtime routine: bath, then pyjamas (top first, then bottoms), then two specific books read in a particular order, then a kiss goodnight. If a parent tries to change the order (e.g., read books before pyjamas) or suggests a different book, the child might have a significant meltdown, insisting it *must* be done *their way*, unable to adapt to the small change.

Problem Solving:

Example: A child is building with blocks and wants to make a bridge. Their initial design keeps collapsing. Instead of trying a different approach (like using more support blocks or a different configuration), they repeatedly try the *exact same* failing method, becoming increasingly frustrated. They can't easily shift their thinking to consider alternative solutions suggested by others or experiment independently.

Food Preferences and Presentation:

Example: A child will only eat chicken nuggets if they are a specific brand and shape. If offered a different brand, or even the same brand cooked slightly differently, they might refuse to eat them altogether. Similarly, they might insist their sandwich must be cut diagonally and refuse to eat it if cut horizontally, seeing only *their* preferred way as acceptable.

Social Interactions and Play:

Example: During imaginative play (e.g., playing "house"), a child has a fixed idea of the storyline and each person's role. If another child tries to introduce a new idea or wants their character to do something different, the first child might reject it outright, insisting, "No, that's not how it goes! You *have* to do it *this way*." They struggle to incorporate others' ideas into their envisioned scenario.

Transitions and Changes in Plans:

Example: The family always goes swimming on Tuesdays. One Tuesday, the pool is unexpectedly closed, and the parent suggests going to the park instead. The child might become extremely distressed, repeatedly stating, "But it's Tuesday! We *go swimming* on Tuesday!" They find it very hard to mentally shift from the expected plan to the new one, fixated on the established routine.

Understanding Perspectives:

Example: A child accidentally bumps into a classmate, making them drop their books. The classmate gets upset. The child who did the bumping might insist, "But I didn't mean to!" and struggle to understand *why* the other child is still upset. They are stuck on their own intention ("I didn't mean it, therefore you shouldn't be upset") and find it hard to grasp the other child's feeling of being startled or inconvenienced.

Interpreting Rules:

Example: A classroom rule is "No talking during silent reading." A child might rigidly interpret this to mean *absolutely no sound*, becoming upset if someone coughs or accidentally drops a pencil. Or, conversely, they might find a 'loophole' based on their specific interpretation (e.g., humming isn't 'talking') and insist they aren't breaking the rule according to *their* understanding, unable to grasp the broader intention of quiet focus.

Black and white, all or nothing thinking (cannot see grey areas)

Judging Academic Performance:

Example: A child gets one problem wrong on a spelling test but gets all the others right. Instead of seeing it as a mostly successful effort (a "grey area" of doing very well with a small mistake), they might declare, "I failed the test! I'm terrible at spelling." For them, it's either perfect (100% correct - "all") or a complete failure ("nothing").

Evaluating Social Interactions:

Example: A friend is unable to come to their birthday party because of a prior family commitment. The child might think, "He doesn't really like me. If he was *really* my friend, he would come." They struggle to understand that the friend can like them *and* have other unavoidable obligations; the situation is seen only as "likes me" (attends) or "doesn't like me" (doesn't attend).

Self-Perception and Skills:

Example: A child is learning to ride a bike and falls off a few times. They might conclude, "I'll *never* be able to ride a bike. I'm useless at it." They see the initial difficulty not as part of learning (a grey area of progress) but as proof of complete and permanent inability (all bad, no good).

Interpreting Rules and Behaviour:

Example: A child sees a classmate whisper briefly during a silent work period but doesn't get told off immediately. They might think, "Sarah broke the rule, she's a bad kid," or "The teacher isn't fair because she didn't punish Sarah!" They see rules as absolute; either you follow them perfectly (good) or you break them (bad), struggling with degrees of rule-breaking or contextual factors (like the teacher handling it later).

Dealing with Mistakes:

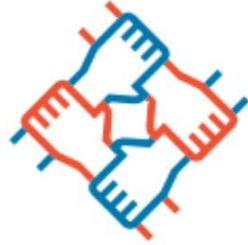
Example: While working on an art project, a child makes a small smudge with the paint. Instead of trying to fix it or incorporate it, they might dramatically rip up the paper, shouting, "It's ruined! It's horrible!" The entire project is deemed worthless ("nothing") because of one imperfection, rather than being mostly good with a minor flaw.

Forming Opinions About People:

Example: A favourite teacher has one day where they seem a bit stressed or less cheerful than usual. The child might decide, "Mr. Jones isn't nice anymore. He's mean." They struggle to hold the idea that a person can be generally good/nice but have an off day or display different moods; the person is categorized entirely based on the most recent interaction (either all good or all bad).

Understanding Complex Emotions:

Example: A child wins a game against a friend. They might struggle to feel happy about winning while also feeling a bit sad that their friend lost. They might suppress one feeling or feel confused, as they tend to categorize experiences as purely positive or purely negative, finding it hard to accept mixed emotions (the grey area).



SEN Parent Support Group

Supporting SEND Educational

Processes For Better OUTCOMES

Emotional Deficits

Contents

1. Displays intense emotional reactions; often over exaggerated
2. Goes from 0-100 quickly, difficulty calming down
3. Seems to lose control, becomes overwhelmed
4. Poor frustration tolerance (has to have it now!)
5. Has trouble identifying/labelling emotions
6. Often appears anxious, scared, or apprehensive
7. Changes moods quickly, difficult to predict
8. Laughs or cries for no apparent reason
9. Becomes over-excited easily
10. Emotions often don't match situation
11. Shows little emotion
12. Has difficulty recognizing emotions of others

Displays intense emotional reactions; often over exaggerated - examples in the home

Minor Frustrations Leading to Meltdowns:

Example: A child is trying to build a tower with blocks, and it keeps falling over. Instead of expressing mild frustration or trying again, they might scream at the top of their lungs, throw the blocks across the room, hit the table, and dissolve into uncontrollable sobbing, declaring, "This is impossible! Everything is ruined!"

Small Disappointments Treated as Catastrophes:

Example: The child's preferred flavour of yoghurt isn't available at breakfast. They might react as if something truly devastating has occurred – loud wailing, refusing to eat anything at all, repeatedly crying, "But I *only* wanted the strawberry! Now my whole day is horrible!" long after the moment has passed.

Losing a Low-Stakes Game:

Example: While playing a simple card game like 'Snap' with a sibling, the child loses. They might dramatically accuse the other person of cheating, throw their cards down, burst into tears, and refuse to play any games for the rest of the day, reacting with the intensity one might expect from a high-stakes competition loss.

Reaction to Minor Physical Discomfort:

Example: A child gets a very small scrape on their knee after tripping, with minimal bleeding. They might react with piercing screams, claiming they can't walk, demanding excessive attention and comfort, and talking about the "terrible injury" for hours, far beyond the actual severity of the scrape.

Difficulty with Transitions:

Example: It's time to leave the playground. Even after warnings, when the moment comes to go, the child might drop to the ground, refuse to move, scream, cry, and protest loudly as if being forced to do something dreadful, rather than expressing simple reluctance or sadness that playtime is over.

Responding to "No":

Example: A child asks for sweets just before dinner and is told "no, not right now." They might react with immediate, intense anger or despair – stomping feet, yelling "You never let me have anything!", slamming doors, or prolonged, loud crying, far exceeding a typical expression of disappointment.

Social Setbacks:

Example: A friend says they can't play today because they are busy. The child might interpret this as a major rejection, crying inconsolably, saying "Nobody likes me! I have no friends!", and withdrawing completely, unable to see it as a simple scheduling issue.

Overwhelming Excitement:

Example: On learning about an upcoming fun event (like a birthday party), a child might become so intensely excited that they are unable to function normally. They might run around chaotically, shriek loudly and uncontrollably, be unable to follow simple instructions, and struggle to sleep due to the overwhelming anticipation. Even positive emotions become dysregulated and exaggerated.

Displays intense emotional reactions; often over exaggerated - examples at school

Reacting to Academic Mistakes:

Example: A child makes a small spelling error on a worksheet. When the teacher gently points it out for correction, the child might burst into tears, dramatically scribble over the entire word or page, rip the paper, and loudly proclaim, "I'm stupid! I can't do *anything* right!" refusing to continue the task. The reaction is disproportionate to a minor, correctable mistake.

Difficulty with Transitions Between Activities:

Example: It's time to tidy up the toys after 'choosing time' and move on to literacy work. A child might have a full meltdown – screaming, crying, throwing themselves on the floor, or refusing to let go of a toy – reacting as if something truly awful is happening, rather than managing the routine transition from a preferred to a less-preferred activity.

Minor Social Conflicts on the Playground:

Example: During break time, another child briefly uses the swing the child was heading towards. The child might react with immediate, intense anger – yelling, screaming "That's MINE!", trying to push the other child off, and continuing to cry and rage long after a teacher intervenes, unable to cope with the minor frustration or negotiate sharing.

Responding to Gentle Correction or Redirection:

Example: A teacher quietly asks a child to face the front during story time as they were turned around chatting. The child might react as if harshly reprimanded, bursting into tears, putting their head down, sobbing loudly that the teacher "shouted" at them (even if the tone was gentle), and withdrawing completely.

Frustration with Classroom Materials:

Example: The lead in a child's pencil breaks, or the glue stick runs out mid-task. Instead of calmly asking for a new one or using a sharpener, the child might throw the item down forcefully, yell out in frustration, bang their fists on the table, and declare loudly, "This is useless! I can't finish now!" letting the minor inconvenience halt all progress.

Not Being Chosen or Called On:

Example: A child eagerly puts their hand up to answer a question but the teacher chooses someone else. They might react with exaggerated disappointment – slumping dramatically in their chair, crossing their arms tightly, scowling, sighing loudly, or even starting to cry, feeling intensely rejected or overlooked.

Losing a Classroom Game or Activity:

Example: During a group game in PE or a board game in class, the child's team doesn't win, or they personally lose. They might react with accusations of cheating, storming off, refusing to shake hands or congratulate others, and crying inconsolably about the unfairness of it all, treating the low-stakes loss as a major event.

Goes from 0-100 quickly, difficulty calming down

Responding to "No" or Limits:

Example: A child is playing calmly. They ask for another biscuit after already having one, and a parent says gently, "No more biscuits now, dinner is soon." Instantly, the child explodes – screaming at the top of their lungs, perhaps throwing themselves on the floor or hitting. There was no apparent build-up of frustration. Attempts to talk to them, offer a hug, or distract them are met with louder screaming or physical rejection. The intense crying and anger might continue for 30-60 minutes or longer, only gradually subsiding into exhausted whimpering long after the biscuit issue is past.

Dealing with Minor Frustrations:

Example: A child is trying to tie their shoelace or work a zipper. After only a brief moment of difficulty, they suddenly throw the shoe across the room or rip at the coat, yelling "I can't DO it! It's stupid!" in full rage or bursting into uncontrollable tears. They might refuse any help offered, shouting "Go away!" Even after the shoe is tied or the coat zipped by someone else, the child remains highly agitated, crying, or sullen and withdrawn for a long time afterwards, unable to easily shake off the intense feeling.

Making Small Mistakes:

Example: While drawing, a child makes a small line that they didn't intend to. Immediately, they might slam the crayon down, violently crumple the paper, and scream "I ruined EVERYTHING!" dissolving into intense tears. Offering a new paper or reassurance doesn't help; they might push materials away or hide their face, sobbing intensely. It can take a very long time for them to stop crying and be willing to try again or engage in anything else.

Unexpected Changes or Disappointments:

Example: A child is expecting to go to the park, but it starts raining heavily. Upon hearing the plan has to change, they instantly go from seemingly fine to a state of intense despair or anger – loud wailing, yelling "But you PROMISED!", potentially hitting furniture or doors. Reasoning about the weather or suggesting fun indoor alternatives is completely ineffective in the moment. The intense upset continues unabated for a significant period, making it very hard to transition to a new activity.

Peer Interactions:

Example: During play, another child accidentally bumps into them or takes a toy they weren't actively using. The child might immediately lash out physically (hitting, pushing) or verbally (loud screaming, harsh words), seemingly going from 0 to 100 in anger. Separating the children might stop the immediate conflict, but the child remains highly agitated, perhaps crying angrily, refusing to interact, and staying 'stuck' in that heightened emotional state for a long time, unable to be easily soothed or rejoin play.

Seems to lose control, becomes overwhelmed

In Busy Sensory Environments:

Example: A child is at a crowded, noisy supermarket with a parent. After a while, amidst the bright lights, announcements, chatter, and movement, they start to lag behind, look dazed, or become irritable. Suddenly, they might start crying inconsolably, try to hide behind the parent's legs, cover their ears, or even try to run away aimlessly. They seem panicked and unresponsive to attempts to soothe them, appearing completely overloaded by the sensory input.

During Complex Tasks or Multiple Instructions:

Example: A teacher gives a multi-step instruction for a classroom task involving cutting, gluing, and writing in a specific order. The child might start the task but then suddenly stop, push the materials away, put their head on the desk, and either become completely unresponsive or start crying. They aren't necessarily being defiant but seem mentally flooded and unable to process the sequence of demands, leading to a shutdown.

Navigating Social Complexity:

Example: At a large family gathering or a busy playground with many children, a child might initially try to engage but then gradually withdraw. They might end up sitting alone in a corner, looking distressed. If another child approaches or an adult encourages them to join in, they might suddenly burst into tears, yell "Leave me alone!", or even lash out physically (like pushing), seeming unable to handle the social pressure and stimulation.

When Facing Academic Pressure:

Example: During a timed math test or when working on a particularly challenging piece of writing, a child might suddenly scribble frantically all over their paper, rip it up, or start crying loudly. It's not just frustration at being stuck, but looks more like a complete loss of composure due to feeling overwhelmed by the difficulty, the time pressure, or the fear of failure.

After Accumulated Stressors:

Example: A child has had a day with several small challenges – perhaps they slept poorly, had a small disagreement with a friend at school, and then found their favourite toy wasn't where they left it. When asked to do a simple routine task like putting their coat away, they might suddenly explode into seemingly uncontrollable tears or yelling, or run to their room and refuse to come out. The final small request tips them over the edge from coping to overwhelmed.

During Transitions, Especially Unexpected Ones:

Example: The class is enjoying an art activity, and the fire alarm unexpectedly goes off for a drill. While other children might be startled but follow instructions, an overwhelmed child might freeze completely, start screaming uncontrollably, or try to hide under a table, unable to process the sudden loud noise and abrupt change in routine.

Poor frustration tolerance (has to have it now!)

Waiting for Food or Drink:

Example: A child says they are thirsty. A parent starts pouring a drink, but the child immediately starts whining loudly, "I want it *now!* Give it to me *now!*" escalating to crying or trying to snatch the cup before it's ready, unable to tolerate the few seconds it takes to pour.

Wanting Attention Immediately:

Example: A child wants to show their teacher a drawing they just finished, but the teacher is currently helping another student. Instead of waiting quietly, the child might repeatedly interrupt, "Miss! Miss! Look! Look *now!*", pulling on the teacher's sleeve, becoming increasingly agitated and upset the longer they have to wait for attention.

Desiring a Toy or Item:

Example: While out shopping, a child sees a toy they want. When told "Not today" or "Maybe for your birthday," they immediately demand it – "But I want it *NOW!* You have to buy it for me *NOW!*" – often leading to a public meltdown if the demand isn't met instantly, unable to delay gratification or accept postponement.

Taking Turns in Games or Activities:

Example: During a group activity or board game, the child finds waiting for their turn almost unbearable. They might repeatedly ask, "Is it my turn yet? When is it my turn?", try to jump ahead, grab pieces, or become visibly distressed and angry, potentially abandoning the game altogether because the waiting is too frustrating.

Starting a Desired Activity:

Example: A parent promises to play a game with the child after they finish sending one email. The child, unable to wait the few minutes, might stand right next to the parent, whining, "Are you finished yet? Play with me *now!* Stop doing that!", escalating to crying or trying to physically pull the parent away from the computer.

Wanting Immediate Solutions:

Example: A child is struggling slightly with a puzzle or building task. Instead of persisting for a moment or asking calmly for help, they might immediately throw the pieces down, yelling, "It won't work! Fix it *now!*" demanding an instant solution rather than tolerating the brief frustration of the challenge.

Anticipating Events:

Example: A child is excited about going to a party later in the day. They might repeatedly ask "Is it time to go *now?*" throughout the morning, becoming increasingly irritable, tearful, or demanding each time they are told they still have to wait, finding the anticipation and delay intolerable.

Has trouble identifying/labelling emotions

Vague Descriptions of Own Feelings:

Example: When asked "How are you feeling?" after experiencing a disappointment (like a cancelled playdate), the child might just shrug, say "I don't know," "Okay," or use a very general term like "bad." They struggle to pinpoint and name the specific feeling, such as sadness, disappointment, or frustration.

Focusing on Physical Sensations Instead of Emotions:

Example: A child is clearly anxious about an upcoming school event. When asked if they feel worried or nervous, they might respond, "My tummy feels fizzy," or "My legs are shaky," describing the physical symptoms without connecting them to or labelling the underlying emotion of anxiety.

Difficulty Explaining Emotional Outbursts:

Example: After suddenly yelling, crying, or hitting out seemingly without a clear trigger, an adult asks, "What happened? Why did you get so upset?" The child might genuinely respond with "I don't know!" or give an unrelated reason, unable to identify the specific feeling (e.g., jealousy, frustration, feeling overwhelmed) that led to the behaviour.

Misinterpreting Facial Expressions:

Example: A peer looks clearly sad (droopy eyes, downturned mouth) after dropping their ice cream. The child might approach them and ask cheerfully, "Do you want to play?" or seem confused by the crying, failing to recognize the facial cues signalling sadness or distress. They might mistake concentration frowns for anger.

Trouble Understanding Emotions in Stories or Scenarios:

Example: While reading a book or watching a film, the parent asks, "How do you think that character feels now?" after the character experiences something obviously sad or scary. The child might guess incorrectly ("Happy?") or consistently say "I don't know," struggling to infer emotions from context, illustrations, or tone.

Using Limited Emotional Vocabulary:**Example:** The child might use only basic emotion words, often incorrectly. They might say they are "angry" when they are actually feeling frustrated, embarrassed, or disappointed. Similarly, anything positive might just be labelled "happy," lacking words for excited, proud, content, etc.

Appearing Insensitive Due to Misinterpretation:

Example: A classmate receives praise from the teacher and beams with pride. The child might not recognize the signs of pride and make an unrelated or even slightly negative comment, appearing insensitive simply because they didn't identify the positive emotion the classmate was feeling.

Difficulty Recognizing Subtle Emotions or Sarcasm:

Example: Someone might use a sarcastic tone of voice intended to convey annoyance playfully. The child might take the words literally or misinterpret the tone as genuine anger or happiness, failing to pick up on the more complex emotional nuance.

Often appears anxious, scared, or apprehensive

Entering New or Busy Environments:

- **Example:** When walking into a classroom on the first day of school, or entering a busy soft play centre, the child might physically shrink back, cling tightly to their parent's hand or leg, keep their head down, look around with wide, worried eyes, and refuse to move forward without significant coaxing.

During Social Interactions:

- **Example:** When approached by unfamiliar peers or even familiar ones in a group setting, the child might avert their gaze, speak in a very quiet, hesitant whisper (or not at all), fidget nervously with their hands or clothes, and look generally uneasy or fearful, even if the interaction is friendly.

Facing New Activities or Tasks:

- **Example:** Presented with a new game, a slightly challenging climbing frame at the park, or a novel task in class, the child might immediately say "I can't do it" or "It's too scary," shake their head, step back physically, and appear genuinely apprehensive about trying, even with encouragement.

Separating from Caregivers:

- **Example:** At school or nursery drop-off (even well into the term), the child might consistently look panicked, cry profusely, cling desperately, and plead with the parent not to leave, appearing genuinely terrified rather than just having mild separation sadness.

Anticipating Future Events:

- **Example:** In anticipation of an upcoming event (even a potentially fun one like a party, or a routine one like a swimming lesson), the child might frequently ask worried "what if" questions ("What if nobody talks to me?", "What if the water is cold?"), look tense, complain of a tummy ache, and need constant reassurance.

Responding to Minor Unknowns or Changes:

- **Example:** If there's an unexpected loud noise outside, a slight change in the daily routine, or a visitor they weren't expecting, the child might jump, look visibly startled and scared, ask repeatedly "What's happening?", and take a long time to settle, appearing hyper-vigilant.

During Routine Activities:

- **Example:** Even during familiar, low-stress activities like story time or quiet play at home, the child might have a persistently worried expression, sit tensely, bite their lip, or frequently seek glances towards a caregiver for reassurance, appearing generally 'on edge'.

Physical Signs of Apprehension:

- **Example:** The child often complains of physical symptoms like headaches, stomach aches, or needing the toilet frequently, especially before challenging situations. They might also look pale, have trembling hands, a shaky voice, or tense body language (hunched shoulders, clenched fists) suggesting underlying anxiety.

Changes moods quickly, difficult to predict

During Play or Activities:

Example: A child is laughing and happily engaged in drawing a picture. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, they might slam the crayon down, scowl, declare "I hate drawing!", and become withdrawn or irritable, refusing to continue. The shift from contentment to intense negativity is abrupt and wasn't obviously triggered.

Responding to Everyday Requests:

Example: A parent asks the child to put their shoes on, a routine request. One minute the child might comply cheerfully, the next minute the *same* request might be met with sudden, intense tears, yelling, or outright refusal, leaving the parent unsure how they will react moment to moment.

Social Interactions:

Example: The child is playing seemingly well with a friend. A minor disagreement arises (e.g., who gets to use the red car). Instead of typical negotiation or mild frustration, the child might instantly switch to intense anger, shouting hurtful things, or abruptly become deeply sad and withdrawn, wanting the friend to leave immediately. The reaction feels disproportionate and unpredictable.

Meal Times:

Example: A child might start eating their favourite meal enthusiastically. Partway through, they might suddenly push the plate away, burst into tears, or become intensely angry, refusing to eat more, without any apparent reason like disliking the food or feeling full just seconds before.

Shifting Between Extremes Quickly:

Example: A child might be extremely giddy and excitable, laughing uncontrollably. A moment later, following a very minor frustration (like dropping a toy), they might plunge into intense sobbing and despair, or switch to explosive anger. The moods swing rapidly between highs and lows.

Unpredictable Reactions to Environment:

Example: The child might be calm and focused in a relatively busy classroom one day. The next day, in the same environment with a similar noise level, they might suddenly become highly irritable, overwhelmed, or tearful without a clear change in circumstances, making it hard to predict how they'll cope.

Morning Moods:

Example: A child's mood upon waking can be highly variable and unpredictable. One morning they might wake up cheerful and cooperative, the next they might wake up instantly grumpy, tearful, or defiant, with no obvious reason related to sleep or upcoming activities.

Laughs or cries for no apparent reason

Examples of Laughing for No Apparent Reason:

During Quiet Classroom Work:

- **Example:** The class is silently reading or completing individual worksheets. A child suddenly lets out a loud burst of laughter, then stops abruptly. When asked by the teacher what was funny, the child might shrug, say "I don't know," or mention a random thought that doesn't logically lead to laughter in that context.

At the Dinner Table:

- **Example:** The family is having a calm meal, perhaps discussing their day. In a lull in the conversation, a child suddenly starts giggling or chuckling for several seconds, unrelated to anything being said or done. They might stop just as quickly and continue eating as if nothing happened.

While Engaged in a Neutral Activity:

- **Example:** A child is sitting watching clouds pass by or quietly drawing. They might suddenly start laughing heartily for a moment, then stop, without any obvious external stimulus like seeing something funny or being told a joke.

During Routine Tasks:

- **Example:** While getting dressed or walking to school, a child might suddenly burst into laughter for a few seconds, seemingly unprompted by their environment or thoughts they can articulate.

Examples of Crying for No Apparent Reason:

While Playing Calmly:

- **Example:** A child is sitting on the floor, seemingly contentedly playing with dolls or building blocks. They might suddenly start crying intensely for a minute or two, then stop just as quickly and resume playing. If asked what's wrong, they might say "Nothing" or "I don't know."

Watching Neutral Media:

- **Example:** A child is watching a calm, plot-neutral segment of a television show or animation (not a sad or scary part). They suddenly begin to sob or cry, but stop after a short period, without an obvious on-screen trigger.

During Quiet Moments:

- **Example:** While sitting quietly in the car looking out the window, or lying down for a rest period at nursery, a child might suddenly start crying without any discernible cause like discomfort, a bad thought they express, or remembering something sad.

Upon Waking:

- **Example:** A child might wake up from sleep (nap or night) and immediately start crying intensely for several minutes, even when comforted, without being able to explain why or seeming to have had a nightmare or be in physical discomfort.

Becomes over-excited easily

Anticipating Fun Events:

Example: On the morning of a planned trip to the zoo or a theme park, the child might wake up extremely early, bounce around the house non-stop, speak very loudly and rapidly, struggle to eat breakfast or get dressed due to hyperactivity, and repeatedly ask "Are we leaving NOW?" with increasing intensity. Their excitement makes it hard for them to manage normal routines.

During Parties or Social Gatherings:

Example: At a birthday party, the child might quickly become highly energized by the atmosphere, running around wildly (perhaps more than peers), squealing or screaming loudly instead of talking, having difficulty waiting for turns in games, and potentially becoming overly physical or "bumping" into others due to lack of spatial awareness in their excitement.

When Greeting Loved Ones:

Example: When a beloved grandparent or parent returns home, the child might greet them with such intense excitement that they jump up and down uncontrollably, shriek with delight, cling tightly, and find it very difficult to calm down enough to have a conversation or listen for several minutes afterwards.

Playing High-Energy Games:

Example: During a game of tag or chase on the playground, the child's excitement might build to a fever pitch where they are laughing hysterically, running almost blindly without paying attention to safety or boundaries, and unable to stop or calm down easily when the game is meant to end or transition.

Receiving Gifts or Treats:

Example: When opening presents or receiving a special treat, the child might react with extreme physical excitement – flapping hands rapidly, jumping, letting out high-pitched squeals – and might move so quickly they barely acknowledge the gift before wanting the next, becoming almost frenzied with anticipation and joy.

Responding to Positive News in School:

Example: A teacher announces a fun activity or a 'well done' award for the class. The child might react with disproportionate excitement compared to peers – bouncing in their seat, talking loudly over the teacher, unable to refocus on the next instruction, remaining 'buzzing' long after the announcement.

Watching Exciting Media:

Example: During a fast-paced, action-packed scene in a film or video game, the child might be physically unable to stay seated, jumping up, yelling at the screen, pacing, and remaining highly agitated and energized even after the scene concludes.

Emotions often don't match situation

Laughing at Sad or Serious Situations:

- **Example:** During a class discussion about a sad historical event or while watching a poignant scene in a film where a character is upset, a child might suddenly start to giggle or laugh inappropriately. This isn't necessarily malicious, but their expressed amusement is out of sync with the somber tone.
- **Example:** A classmate accidentally falls and scrapes their knee, starting to cry. The child might observe this and smile or let out a chuckle, seeming unable to mirror the appropriate concerned or sympathetic response.

Smiling When Being Corrected or Disciplined:

- **Example:** A parent or teacher is speaking to the child calmly but seriously about a rule they broke or a mistake they made. Throughout the reprimand, the child might maintain a smile or even look amused, which seems incongruent with the gravity of the conversation.

Showing Distress During Positive Events:

- **Example:** It's the child's birthday party, and they are surrounded by friends, cake, and presents. Despite everything going well, the child might look persistently sad, worried, or even burst into tears without any obvious trigger like disappointment or conflict. Their distress doesn't match the celebratory atmosphere.
- **Example:** Upon receiving praise from a teacher for excellent work or winning an award at assembly, the child might look downcast, anxious, or even start to cry, rather than showing happiness or pride.

Displaying Flat Affect During Exciting or Emotional Moments:

- **Example:** The family shares exciting news, such as an upcoming holiday to a much-anticipated destination. While others react with joy, the child might show little to no facial expression or verbal enthusiasm, responding with indifference (e.g., a monotone "okay").
- **Example:** When a beloved pet or family member they are attached to leaves after a visit, the child might show no outward signs of sadness or missing them, appearing emotionally unaffected by the departure.

Expressing Unrelated Emotions:

- **Example:** While participating in a calm, neutral activity like reading a book or doing a simple puzzle, the child might suddenly exclaim, "I'm so angry!" or look intensely fearful, despite nothing in the immediate environment warranting such feelings.

Sudden Fear in Safe, Familiar Settings:

- **Example:** During a routine, comforting activity like bath time or snuggling on the sofa watching TV at home, the child might suddenly declare "I'm scared!" or look genuinely frightened without any apparent cause or trigger in their safe surroundings.

Shows little emotion

Reacting to Positive Surprises:

- **Example:** Upon receiving a highly anticipated gift for their birthday or Christmas, the child might look at it, perhaps say "Thank you" in a quiet, monotonous voice, but show minimal change in facial expression – no broad smile, gasp of excitement, or jumping up and down. Their outward reaction appears muted or absent.

During Exciting Events:

- **Example:** At a lively birthday party with games, music, and excited peers, the child might participate passively with a neutral facial expression. They don't seem to outwardly display the joy, silliness, or high energy typically seen in such stimulating environments.

Responding to Achievements or Praise:

- **Example:** After winning a race at sports day or receiving significant praise from a teacher for excellent work, the child might show little sign of pride or happiness. Their face remains largely neutral, they might offer a brief, small smile if prompted, but lack spontaneous celebratory gestures or expressions.

Dealing with Minor Pain or Discomfort:

- **Example:** After a small fall resulting in a scrape, the child might acknowledge the injury (e.g., point to it) but show little outward sign of distress – minimal wincing, no crying, facial expression remains unchanged – even if the scrape would cause other children to cry or fuss.

During Sad or Disappointing Situations:

- **Example:** When a planned fun outing has to be cancelled due to bad weather, the child might hear the news with little discernible reaction. No visible disappointment, sighing, or sad expression; they might just say "Okay" in a flat tone.
- **Example:** While watching a typically sad scene in a movie that evokes tears or sad expressions from others, the child's face remains neutral, and they show no outward signs of being emotionally affected.

Social Greetings and Farewells:

- **Example:** When greeting or saying goodbye to familiar relatives they like, the child might do so with minimal facial expression or vocal inflection, appearing somewhat detached or indifferent compared to the expected warmth or sadness.

General Communication Style:

- **Example:** Even when talking about topics they are interested in, the child's tone of voice may remain quite monotonous, lacking the usual variation in pitch and intonation that conveys enthusiasm or other feelings. Their facial expressions during conversation might also be limited.

Has difficulty recognizing emotions of others

Misinterpreting Facial Expressions:

- **Example:** A classmate is clearly frowning and looks upset after losing a game. The child might approach them cheerfully and ask, "That was fun, wasn't it?", seemingly not recognizing the frown and other facial cues indicating disappointment or sadness. They might mistake a look of concentration for anger.

Ignoring or Misreading Tone of Voice:

- **Example:** A teacher uses a firm, slightly exasperated tone of voice when repeating an instruction for the third time. The child might respond as if the instruction was given neutrally or cheerfully, showing no sign of picking up on the teacher's subtle frustration conveyed vocally. They might also take sarcastic comments literally.

Overlooking Body Language Cues:

- **Example:** A friend is sitting slumped on a bench with their arms crossed, clearly feeling down or wanting to be left alone. The child might run up excitedly, trying to pull them into a high-energy game, completely missing the body language that signals withdrawal or unhappiness.

Inappropriate Responses Due to Misinterpretation:

- **Example:** A peer starts crying because they miss their parent. The child, failing to recognize the sadness, might start laughing (perhaps finding crying unusual or unexpected) or try to engage the crying child in a boisterous activity, rather than offering comfort or space.

Appearing Insensitive:

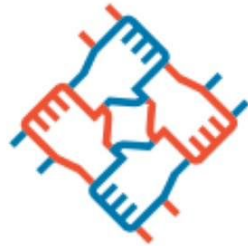
- **Example:** A parent shares that they have a headache and need some quiet time. The child, not fully processing the parent's discomfort cues (perhaps a pained expression, softer voice), might continue to talk loudly, ask multiple questions, or make noisy demands, appearing insensitive because they haven't recognized the parent's need.

Difficulty Understanding Emotions in Stories:

- **Example:** When looking at illustrations in a book or watching a scene where a character has an obviously scared expression (wide eyes, open mouth), the child might struggle to identify the feeling, guessing incorrectly ("Is he happy?") or saying "I don't know," showing difficulty linking the visual cues to the correct emotion.

Struggling to Gauge Reactions During Conversation:

- **Example:** While telling a long story about their own interests, the child might fail to notice that the listener looks bored (e.g., avoiding eye contact, sighing, looking away) and continue talking at length, unable to read the cues indicating disinterest.



SEN Parent Support Group

Supporting SEND Educational

Processes For Better OUTCOMES

**Social /
Communication
Deficits**

Contents

1. Has difficulty communicating needs and wants
2. Gets frustrated when others don't understand
3. Has a difficult time understanding spoken directions
4. Needs to have directions repeated several times
5. Gets upset when given directions
6. Has a difficult time making friends
7. Has a difficult time reading social cues
8. Poor regard for (difficulty reading) the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of others
9. Has to control all interactions
10. Difficulty sharing and taking turns
11. Difficulty coordinating, back and forth interaction
12. Poor awareness of how his actions affect others
13. Seeks out frequent attention
14. Seems anxious, apprehensive when interacting
15. Tends to avoid social contact

Has difficulty communicating needs and wants

In a School/Nursery Setting:

Needing Help with a Task:

Scenario: A child is trying to put on their coat to go outside for playtime but the zip is stuck.

Struggle Example: Instead of clearly asking the teacher or assistant ("My zip is stuck, can you help me?"), the child might:

- Stand silently struggling, getting increasingly frustrated, maybe making whimpering sounds. (Difficulty initiating communication/formulating request).
- Pull vaguely at the adult's sleeve without making eye contact or using words. (Using non-specific non-verbal cues).
- Say something unclear like "Coat... me..." (Limited expressive language).

Needing the Toilet:

Scenario: A child needs to use the toilet during lesson time.

Struggle Example: Instead of raising their hand and asking ("Please may I go to the toilet?"), they might:

- Wriggle uncomfortably in their seat, looking anxious, but say nothing due to shyness or fear of interrupting. (Social anxiety).
- Have an accident because they couldn't or didn't communicate their need in time.
- (In cases of selective mutism) Be completely unable to speak to ask, potentially relying on a pre-arranged non-verbal signal if one exists, or hoping the teacher notices their discomfort.

Wanting a Specific Resource:

Scenario: During an art activity, a child wants to use the blue paint, which another child currently has.

Struggle Example: Instead of using appropriate language ("Can I use the blue paint when you've finished?"), they might:

- Just stare intently at the blue paint pot. (Limited strategy/pragmatic difficulty).
- Grab for the paint without asking. (Impulsive action substituting for communication).
- Make a general complaining noise like "Ehhh!" without specifying what they want. (Limited language/frustration).

Feeling Unwell:

Scenario: A child starts to feel a headache or tummy ache during class.

Struggle Example: They might not be able to pinpoint or label the feeling precisely or might be too anxious to tell the teacher. They might:

- Put their head on the desk and look withdrawn, but say "I'm fine" if asked. (Difficulty identifying/expressing internal state or anxiety).
- Complain vaguely "I don't feel good" but be unable to give more detail when asked where it hurts or what feels wrong.

At Home or During Play:

Wanting a Snack or Drink:

- **Scenario:** A child is thirsty but involved in playing.
- **Struggle Example:** Instead of asking directly ("Can I have a drink of water, please?"), they might become increasingly irritable, whiny, or disruptive, without clearly stating the underlying need for a drink. The parent has to guess what the problem is. (Difficulty linking internal state to communication).

Desiring Parent's Attention:

- **Scenario:** A parent is busy cooking or working, and the child wants their attention to show them something.
- **Struggle Example:** Instead of saying, "Mummy/Daddy, look at this when you have a second," they might repeatedly pull at the parent's clothes, make loud noises, or engage in minor misbehaviour to get noticed, using less effective or more negative strategies to communicate their desire for attention. (Pragmatic difficulty/immature strategy).

Gets frustrated when others don't understand

Explaining a Need with Unclear Speech:

Scenario: A young child with some speech sound difficulties needs help because another child has taken their building blocks. They approach the teacher saying something like, "/ti: bwɒt!" (trying to say "He took my blocks!"). The teacher doesn't immediately understand and asks, "Sorry, can you tell me again slowly?"

Frustrated Reaction: The child might stomp their foot, point emphatically but non-specifically, raise their voice repeating the unclear phrase louder ("TEE BWOT!"), burst into tears, or give up and walk away looking angry and defeated because their urgent message isn't getting through.

Describing an Idea or Experience:

Scenario: During 'news time' or circle time, a child is trying to recount a complex event from their weekend (e.g., a detailed sequence at a theme park). Their storytelling might be disorganized or jumpy. Peers or the teacher look confused.

Frustrated Reaction: Seeing the confused faces, the child might get flustered, stop talking abruptly, say "Doesn't matter!" crossly, or insist angrily, "You're not listening properly!" because they perceive the lack of understanding as a failure on the listener's part, not a difficulty in their own explanation.

Asking for Specific Help on a Task:

Scenario: A child is stuck on a worksheet and tries to explain *why* they are stuck, but uses vague language ("I just don't get... this bit... here."). The teaching assistant tries to clarify, "Which bit? The adding part or understanding the question?"

Frustrated Reaction: The child might groan loudly, scribble on the page, put their head down, or snap, "I *told* you! This bit!" feeling exasperated that their (unclear) attempt to specify

Trying to Express Complex Emotions:

Scenario: A child feels a mix of emotions (e.g., disappointed about a cancelled plan but also a bit relieved) and tries to explain this nuance to a parent, perhaps struggling to find the right words. The parent might reflect back only one part ("So you're just disappointed?").

Frustrated Reaction: The child might yell, "No! That's not it! You don't understand me!" or burst into tears, feeling completely misunderstood because the parent didn't grasp the complexity they were trying (and failing) to articulate.

Giving Directions or Instructions:

Scenario: A child is trying to explain the rules of a game they invented to a sibling or parent. The rules might be convoluted or change as they explain. The listener asks clarifying questions.

Frustrated Reaction: The child might get annoyed by the questions, interpreting them as doubt or stupidity, saying "Just listen! It's easy!" or "Why do you keep asking things?!" becoming increasingly agitated when their internal (possibly flawed) logic isn't immediately clear to others.

Has a difficult time understanding spoken directions

Following Multi-Step Instructions:

Spoken Direction: The teacher says, "Right class, please finish the question you are on, then put your maths book back in your tray, take out your reading book, and find page 25." (4 distinct steps).

Difficulty Example: The child might successfully finish their question but then look lost. They might put the maths book away but forget the next two steps entirely, perhaps starting to talk to a neighbour or just sitting idly. Or, they might get the reading book out but forget the specific page number. They struggle to hold the sequence of verbal instructions in their working memory.

Understanding Complex Sentences:

Spoken Direction: The teacher explains, "Before you start colouring your picture, make sure you have outlined all the important parts with a black pencil, unless you plan to use paint later." (Contains conditional clauses and specific vocabulary).

Difficulty Example: The child might start colouring immediately, having missed the initial outlining instruction embedded in the complex sentence. They might get confused by the "unless" part or not fully grasp what "outlining important parts" means in this context. Difficulty processing complex grammar or specific vocabulary hinders understanding.

Processing Directions in a Noisy Classroom:

Scenario: The class is transitioning between activities, and there's background chatter. The teacher gives an instruction like, "Everyone needs to bring their whiteboard and pen to the carpet now."

Difficulty Example: The child might not react promptly or might look around confused. They may follow the general flow of children moving but arrive at the carpet without their whiteboard and pen, having failed to filter the specific instruction from the background noise. This can be a sign of auditory processing difficulties.

Remembering Instructions with Details:

Spoken Direction: "When you write your sentences, remember to use capital letters at the beginning, finger spaces between words, and a full stop at the end." (3 specific details to apply).

Difficulty Example: The child writes their sentences but forgets one or more of the specific criteria – maybe they remember capital letters but forget full stops, or their spacing is inconsistent. Holding onto multiple linguistic rules or details presented verbally while also focusing on the content of their writing is challenging for their working memory.

Following Instructions for Physical Actions (PE/Movement):

Spoken Direction: During a PE lesson, the teacher instructs, "Run to the blue cone, then side-step to the red cone, and finally hop back to the start line." (Sequence of specific motor actions).

Difficulty Example: The child might run to the blue cone correctly but then run (instead of side-stepping) to the red cone, or hop back but forget which leg to use or the specific action required. Translating a verbal sequence into distinct physical actions in the correct order can be difficult.

Common Signs:

- Frequently asking "What?" or needing instructions repeated.
- Looking confused or lost after directions are given.
- Watching peers intently to figure out what to do.
- Completing only the first part of a multi-step direction.
- Completing steps in the wrong order.
- Saying "I don't know what to do" even after hearing the instructions.

Needs to have directions repeated several times

Following Classroom Instructions:

- **Scenario:** The teacher says to the class, "Everyone take out your science books and open them to page 50."
- **Need for Repetition Example:** A particular child doesn't react immediately. They might continue what they were doing or look around vaguely. The teacher might say again, perhaps a bit louder, "Science books out now, page 50." The child might then slowly get the science book out but still not open it. It often takes a third, more direct prompt like, "James, find page 50 in your science book, please," before James fully processes and completes the instruction.

Responding to Questions:

- **Scenario:** During a lesson, the teacher asks the child a question directly, "Sarah, can you tell me one thing you learned about volcanoes?"
- **Need for Repetition Example:** Sarah might look blank, say "What?" or not respond. The teacher patiently repeats the question, "What's one thing you learned about volcanoes?" Sarah might still hesitate, appearing not to have fully processed the question. The teacher might need to repeat it a third time, possibly simplifying it ("Tell me one thing about volcanoes?"), before Sarah attempts an answer.

Transitioning Between Activities:

- **Scenario:** The teacher announces, "Okay class, finish writing your sentences and then put your whiteboards away."
- **Need for Repetition Example:** A child finishes their sentence but then just sits there. The teacher might give a general reminder, "Whiteboards away now, please." The child still doesn't move. It often requires an individual prompt, repeated, "Chloe, put your whiteboard away now... Chloe, whiteboard away, please," before the instruction 'lands' and Chloe acts on it.

During Group Activities:

- **Scenario:** Children are working in small groups, and the teacher gives an instruction relevant to all groups, "You have five minutes left to finish your posters."
- **Need for Repetition Example:** One child in a group might seem oblivious to the time limit and continue working at a slow pace or chatting. A peer might repeat, "Teacher said five minutes left!" The child might nod but not change their pace. It might take the teacher coming over and saying directly to that child, "Remember, only five minutes left, you need to focus on finishing," perhaps repeated again after a minute, for the urgency to register.

Simple, Everyday Directions:

- **Scenario:** As children line up for lunch, the teaching assistant reminds them, "Remember to walk quietly in the corridor."
- **Need for Repetition Example:** A specific child starts walking and talking loudly. The assistant repeats the instruction, "Quiet walking, please." The child might quieten for a second then resume talking. It often takes several repetitions of the instruction, possibly directed specifically at them ("Sam, quiet walking"), before they consistently follow the direction for even a short period.

Gets upset when given directions

Simple Classroom Instruction:

Direction: The teacher says calmly during quiet work time, "Sam, please make sure you're working on the maths sheet now."

Upset Reaction Example (Resistance/Control): Sam might scowl, pointedly turn away from the maths sheet, bang his pencil down, mutter "You're not the boss of me," or even rip the paper. The direction, however mild, triggers resistance.

Transition Between Activities:

Direction: The teaching assistant announces, "Okay everyone, five more minutes of choosing time, then we need to tidy up for assembly."

Upset Reaction Example (Transition Difficulty/Anxiety): A child who loves choosing time and dislikes assembly might immediately start to cry, whine "No! I don't want to tidy up!" or plead "Just five more minutes!" The direction signals the end of a preferred activity and the start of something less preferred, causing distress.

Gentle Request or Prompt:

Direction: A teacher notices a child hasn't started their writing and says gently, "Maya, can you try writing just the title to get started?"

Upset Reaction Example (Anxiety/Perfectionism/Demand Avoidance): Maya might burst into tears, put her head on the desk refusing to look up, or whisper "I can't." The perceived pressure of the expectation, even gently phrased, feels overwhelming.

Group Work Direction:

Direction: During a group project, one child says to another, "You need to colour in this part blue now."

Upset Reaction Example (Control/Social Dynamics): The child being directed might snap back, "Don't tell me what to do!" or deliberately colour it a different colour, reacting negatively to being directed by a peer.

Routine Chore:

Direction: A parent says, "Time to put your shoes away by the door, please."

Upset Reaction Example (Oppositional/Control): The child might yell "NO!", throw the shoes in the opposite direction, or drop to the floor refusing to move. The simple demand triggers defiance.

Helpful Suggestion:

Direction: A child is struggling to open a packet. A parent says, "Try pulling the little tab there."

Upset Reaction Example (Perceived Criticism/Frustration): The child might throw the packet down, shouting "I CAN DO IT MYSELF!" or start crying, interpreting the helpful direction as implying they are incapable.

Has a difficult time making friends

The Hesitant Observer (Social Anxiety/Shyness):

Scenario: During playground time or classroom free play.

Example Behaviour: The child consistently stays on the periphery of groups. They watch others play intently, perhaps smiling when something funny happens, but they rarely initiate contact or attempt to join in. If invited, they might shy away, mumble, or look down. They might report wanting friends but feel too scared to approach peers.

The Awkward Interactor (Social Skills/Pragmatic Difficulty):

Scenario: Trying to join a conversation or ongoing game.

Example Behaviour: The child might approach a group but struggle with how to enter the interaction smoothly. They might interrupt inappropriately, stand too close, make off-topic comments, miss non-verbal cues (like others subtly turning away), or talk excessively about their own interests without showing reciprocal interest in others. Peers may find these interactions confusing or awkward.

The Rigid Player (Inflexibility/Difficulty Compromising):

Scenario: Children are trying to decide on rules for a game or collaborate on building something.

Example Behaviour: This child insists that things must be done *their* way. They have trouble accepting peers' suggestions, compromising on rules, or taking turns leading. They might say "No, that's the wrong way!" or become upset if others don't follow their exact vision. Peers may find them bossy or difficult to play with.

The Impulsive/Boisterous Peer (ADHD-related traits):

Scenario: Active games or even quieter group work.

Example Behaviour: The child struggles to regulate their impulses or energy levels to match the situation. They might play too rough, accidentally bump into others frequently, have difficulty waiting their turn, interrupt constantly, or touch others' belongings without asking. While often meaning well, this behaviour can annoy or overwhelm peers, leading them to avoid interaction.

The Child with Different Communication Styles/Interests (ASD-related traits):

Scenario: Casual conversation or finding play partners.

Example Behaviour: The child might primarily initiate conversations about their intense special interest, providing lengthy monologues but struggling to engage in back-and-forth chat on other topics. They might interpret language very literally, missing jokes or sarcasm, or struggle with imaginative, pretend play that doesn't follow clear rules. Finding peers who share their specific interests or understand their communication style can be challenging.

The Emotionally Reactive Child:

Scenario: Any situation involving minor social setbacks, like losing a game, a slight disagreement, or perceived unfairness.

Example Behaviour: The child reacts with disproportionately large emotional outbursts – yelling, crying, storming off, or blaming others intensely. Peers may become wary of interacting with them for fear of triggering such a reaction.

The Withdrawn Child (Possibly due to Low Self-Esteem or Past Rejection):

Scenario: Opportunities for social interaction arise.

Example Behaviour: The child actively avoids interaction, perhaps keeping their head down, choosing solitary activities, or making negative self-statements ("Nobody wants to play with me anyway"). They may not attempt to make friends due to a belief they will be rejected.

Has a difficult time reading social cues

Misinterpreting Tone of Voice:

- **Scenario:** A classmate says in a clearly sarcastic tone, "Oh, *great* job," after the child accidentally spills some paint.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child takes the words literally and beams, saying, "Thanks!" completely missing the sarcastic tone that indicated the classmate was actually annoyed or critical.

Missing Cues of Boredom:

- **Scenario:** The child is talking at length about their favourite topic (e.g., dinosaurs) to a peer during playtime. The peer is fidgeting, looking around the playground, giving short "uh-huh" responses, and subtly trying to edge away.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child doesn't notice these non-verbal signs of disinterest or the desire to end the conversation. They continue their monologue enthusiastically, unaware that their listener is bored and trying to disengage.

Not Recognizing Facial Expressions:

- **Scenario:** During group work, the child suggests an idea that isn't practical. Other group members exchange brief glances, look slightly annoyed, or raise their eyebrows subtly.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child doesn't pick up on these subtle facial expressions indicating disagreement or concern. They might push forward with their impractical idea, confused later when the group doesn't adopt it, having missed the earlier non-verbal feedback.

Ignoring Body Language Cues:

- **Scenario:** The child approaches a classmate who is turned slightly away, has their arms crossed, and is giving short answers.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child fails to interpret this closed-off body language as a sign that the classmate doesn't want to talk right now. They continue trying to engage, perhaps standing too close or talking persistently, missing the clear non-verbal "leave me alone" signals.

Misunderstanding Personal Space:

- **Scenario:** Children are sitting together on the carpet for story time.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child sits extremely close to the person next to them, perhaps even leaning on them, despite the other child subtly shifting away multiple times. They don't perceive the non-verbal cues indicating discomfort with the proximity.

Taking Figurative Language Literally:

- **Scenario:** A teacher, seeing the child dawdling, says playfully, "Come on, shake a leg!"
- **Difficulty Example:** The child might look down at their leg in confusion or literally try to shake it, not understanding the common idiom meaning "hurry up."

Not Adjusting Behaviour to the Social Context:

- **Scenario:** The class transitions from noisy playtime outside to the quiet library for silent reading.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child continues talking in a loud voice or making playful noises as they enter the library, failing to 'read the room' and recognize the implicit social rule requiring quiet behaviour in that specific setting, even if other children have already quietened down.

Poor regard for (difficulty reading) the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of others

Difficulty Understanding Different Feelings:

- **Scenario:** A child (Child A) wins a classroom game, cheering excitedly. Their close friend (Child B) who lost looks visibly disappointed and sad.
- **Difficulty Example:** Child A continues to celebrate exuberantly right in front of Child B, perhaps saying "I won! I'm the best!", failing to notice or acknowledge Child B's sadness. They struggle to step outside their own happy perspective to recognize and respond sensitively to their friend's different emotional state.

Assuming Others Have the Same Knowledge:

- **Scenario:** A child is explaining something that happened at home to their teacher or classmates. They leave out crucial background information because *they* know it.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child might say, "And then *he* took *it* and went *there*!" without ever explaining who 'he' is, what 'it' is, or where 'there' is. They assume the listener shares their knowledge and context, making the story impossible to follow. They don't consider what information the listener needs from *their* perspective.

Misinterpreting Intentions:

- **Scenario:** During a busy activity, a peer accidentally bumps into the child's arm, jostling their work. The peer says, "Oops, sorry!"
- **Difficulty Example:** The child immediately accuses the peer, "You did that on purpose to wreck my drawing!" They struggle to consider the possibility that the action was unintentional and that the peer's stated intention ("sorry") was genuine. They interpret the event based solely on its negative impact on them, without considering the other person's likely perspective or intent.

Trouble Understanding False Beliefs (Classic ToM test scenario):

- **Scenario:** Child A watches as Teacher puts pencils in a blue box. Child B leaves the room. Teacher then moves the pencils to a red box. Teacher asks Child A, "When Child B comes back, where will they look for the pencils?"
- **Difficulty Example:** Child A replies, "In the red box." They struggle to understand that Child B, who didn't see the pencils move, will hold a different (and incorrect) belief about where the pencils are. They can't separate their own knowledge from what Child B knows.

Insensitivity During Conversations:

- **Scenario:** A child is talking to a peer who is clearly upset about something (e.g., they didn't get picked for the school team).
- **Difficulty Example:** The child might ignore the peer's feelings and launch into a story about their own success ("Well, I got picked! It was really fun...") They fail to consider the peer's emotional perspective and how their own comments might make the peer feel worse.

Not Realizing Behaviour Impacts Others' Thoughts/Feelings:

- **Scenario:** A child consistently makes silly noises or interrupts during quiet reading time, causing the teacher to look annoyed and classmates to be distracted.
- **Difficulty Example:** The child seems genuinely unaware that their behaviour is bothersome or disruptive to others' concentration and the teacher's feelings. They are focused on their own impulse or amusement and don't think about the internal experiences (thoughts, feelings of annoyance) of those around them.

Has to control all interactions

Dictating the Play Scenario:

- **Scenario:** During imaginative playtime (e.g., playing 'school', 'house', or 'superheroes').
- **Controlling Behaviour Example:** The child insists on assigning all roles ("I'll be the teacher, you *have* to be the student who gets told off"), dictates the exact storyline ("Now you say this...", "No, don't go there, go here!"), and gets upset or stops playing if others try to introduce their own ideas or deviate from the child's mental script. They need to micromanage every aspect of the game.

Dominating Group Work:

- **Scenario:** Children are asked to work together in a small group on a task, like designing a poster or building a model.
- **Controlling Behaviour Example:** This child immediately takes charge, insists the group must follow *their* idea exclusively, dismisses or ignores suggestions from others, might physically take materials away from peers or redo their work if it's not exactly as they envisioned. They resist collaboration and shared decision-making.

Controlling Conversations:

- **Scenario:** A group of children are talking during lunch or break.
- **Controlling Behaviour Example:** The child repeatedly steers the conversation back to their own interests. If someone else starts talking about their weekend, this child might interrupt to relate it back to themselves or change the subject entirely to something they prefer. They dominate the conversational floor and topic choices.

Enforcing Rigid Game Rules:

- **Scenario:** Playing a playground game (like tag, football, or a made-up game).
- **Controlling Behaviour Example:** The child insists on overly specific or complex rules that often benefit them. They might act as the sole judge, call others 'out' unfairly, change rules mid-game if they are losing, and become angry or refuse to continue if others question their rules or authority. The fun depends entirely on adherence to *their* structure.

Choosing Partners or Teams:

- **Scenario:** The teacher asks students to pair up or form small groups for an activity.
- **Controlling Behaviour Example:** This child might immediately grab the peers they want to work with, refusing to work with others, or try to dictate who else can be in their group, potentially excluding others based on their own preferences or perceived abilities. They try to control the group composition.

Resisting Any Deviation from Their Plan:

Scenario: A friend suggests a slight change to an activity they are doing together ("Let's use these blocks instead," "Let's walk this way").

- **Controlling Behaviour Example:** The child immediately rejects the suggestion ("No! We have to use these blocks," "No, my way is better!") They struggle to adapt or compromise, needing the interaction to follow their predetermined plan.

Difficulty sharing and taking turns

Difficulty Sharing:

Hoarding Classroom Resources:

Scenario: During a craft activity, there's a shared pot of glitter glue or special collage materials in the middle of the table.

Difficulty Example: A child pulls the entire pot of glitter glue close to themselves, trying to use it exclusively or keeping it nearby even when not actively using it. When another child reaches for it, they might cover it with their hands, say "No, it's mine!" (even though it's a class resource), or become visibly upset.

Reluctance with Personal Toys:

Scenario: Children are allowed some free play time, and one child is playing with a popular toy car set belonging to the classroom. Another child approaches and wants to play with one of the cars too.

Difficulty Example: The first child clutches all the cars tightly, refuses to let the other child have even one, and might turn their body away or yell "No! I'm playing!" They struggle to allow another child to participate or use a part of the set they are currently engaged with.

Sharing Attention:

Scenario: A teacher or parent is giving attention to another child (e.g., helping them with work, listening to their story).

Difficulty Example: A child struggling to share attention might repeatedly interrupt, pull at the adult's sleeve, make loud noises, or try to insert themselves into the interaction, finding it hard to wait until the adult is free or tolerate the adult's focus being elsewhere.

Key Points:

- These difficulties are normal to some extent in very young children but become more problematic if they persist significantly compared to peers.
- They can stem from impulsivity, anxiety, a strong need for control, or simply not having fully learned or internalized the social rules and benefits of sharing and turn-taking.
- Consistent difficulties can lead to peer rejection and challenges participating effectively in group activities.
- Strategies often involve clear rules, visual timers, adult modelling and facilitation, positive reinforcement, and practicing these skills in structured, supported ways.

Difficulty Taking Turns:

Playground Equipment:

Scenario: There's a queue for the popular playground slide or swing during break time.

Difficulty Example: The child repeatedly tries to cut in line, pushes other children out of the way, or complains loudly and dramatically about how long the wait is. They might try to run up the slide before the person ahead of them has finished. They struggle with the patience required to wait their turn.

Games (Board Games, Digital Games):

Scenario: Playing a simple board game with dice or taking turns on a classroom computer game.

Difficulty Example: The child grabs the dice as soon as the previous player finishes, without waiting for their actual turn. They might get very fidgety, bounce in their seat, or make frustrated noises while waiting. If playing a computer game, they might protest loudly when their time is up or try to physically prevent the next child from taking over.

Conversations and Group Discussions:

Scenario: During circle time or a class discussion where children should raise their hands or wait for a pause to speak.

Difficulty Example: The child frequently calls out answers, interrupts the teacher or other students, or starts talking over others without waiting for their turn. They struggle with the impulse control needed to wait for a conversational opening.

Using Shared Equipment:

Scenario: Only one pair of special 'observation goggles' is available during a science activity.

Difficulty Example: The child who has the goggles refuses to pass them on after a reasonable amount of time, perhaps hiding them or saying "Just one more minute" repeatedly. When they finally do give them up, they might hover impatiently and demand them back almost immediately after the next child starts using them.

Difficulty coordinating, back and forth interaction

Minimal Response in Conversation:

Scenario: A peer approaches the child at lunchtime and asks, "Did you like the pizza today? What did you do at playtime?"

Difficulty Example: The child might give very brief, closed answers (e.g., "Yes." "Played.") without elaborating, asking questions back, or using non-verbal cues (like smiling or nodding) to encourage further interaction. They respond, but don't contribute to keeping the conversational ball rolling back to the other person.

Lack of Initiation:

Scenario: During free play time or group work, the child rarely starts an interaction or conversation with peers or adults.

Difficulty Example: They might play alongside others contentedly but won't typically initiate a greeting, ask a question, suggest a game, or share an idea unless prompted or directly approached. The 'serve' part of the 'serve and return' interaction is missing.

One-Sided Information Sharing:

Scenario: A child is talking to a teacher or peer about something they are interested in.

Difficulty Example: The child talks at length about their specific interest (e.g., listing facts about trains) but doesn't pause to check if the listener is interested, doesn't ask the listener related questions, or fails to notice cues that the listener wants to speak or change the subject. The interaction becomes a monologue, lacking the back-and-forth exchange.

Difficulty Building on Others' Contributions:

Scenario: During a class brainstorming session or group discussion, one child shares an idea.

Difficulty Example: When it's their turn, this child might state an unrelated thought or repeat their own previous point, rather than acknowledging the previous speaker's idea or adding a comment that builds upon it ("That's interesting, and maybe we could also..."). They struggle to connect their contribution back to what was just said.

Trouble with Non-Verbal Reciprocity:

Scenario: A classmate smiles and waves hello as they pass in the corridor.

Difficulty Example: The child might not return the smile or wave, or might do so only after a noticeable delay, perhaps without making eye contact. The expected immediate, reciprocal non-verbal exchange doesn't happen smoothly.

Disjointed Collaborative Play:

Scenario: Two children are meant to be working together to build a single structure with blocks. Child 1 places a block.

Difficulty Example: Child 2 ignores Child 1's placement and starts building their own, entirely separate small structure next to it, or places their block in a way that doesn't logically connect. There's no back-and-forth adaptation or shared goal evident in their actions.

Poor awareness of how his actions affect others

Physical Disruption:

Scenario: Children are sitting on the carpet listening to a story. One child is constantly fidgeting, tapping their feet, or leaning back into the child behind them.

Poor Awareness Example: They seem genuinely unaware that their constant movement is distracting the children nearby, making it hard for them to see or hear the story, or that bumping the person behind is annoying. If asked to sit still, they might look surprised, having had no awareness of the effect they were having.

Emotional Impact of Comments:

Scenario: A classmate proudly shows off a drawing they worked hard on. This child looks at it and says factually, "The legs on that horse are too skinny."

Poor Awareness Example: They deliver the comment as a neutral observation and seem oblivious when the classmate looks crestfallen or quickly puts their drawing away. They lack awareness that their critical comment, even if perceived by them as simply 'true', had a negative emotional impact on their peer's feelings of pride or accomplishment.

Impact on Group Progress:

Scenario: During a group task where each child needs to complete their part for the group to move on, this child rushes through their section carelessly to finish first.

Poor Awareness Example: They announce "I'm done!" without checking their work, seemingly unaware that their sloppy contribution might contain errors that will hold the entire group back or require others to fix it later. They don't consider how the quality of their action affects the group's shared goal.

Consequences of Messiness:

Scenario: After finishing lunch in the dining hall, the child leaves their tray with spilled food and wrappers on the table, instead of taking it to the clearing station.

Poor Awareness Example: They seem unaware that this action means a dinner lady or another student will have to clean up after them, or that it makes the table unpleasant for the next person. They don't think beyond the immediate action of leaving the table to consider the impact on others or the environment.

Interrupting Important Activities:

Scenario: The teacher is giving crucial instructions for homework or explaining something important to another student. This child repeatedly interrupts with unrelated questions or comments.

Poor Awareness Example: They seem unaware that their interruptions are making it difficult for the teacher to communicate effectively or for the other student(s) to receive the necessary information. They are focused on their own immediate thought or need, without awareness of its disruptive effect on the communication flow for others.

Unintentionally Excluding Others:

Scenario: The child is excitedly talking about a weekend party they are having, listing who is invited, in front of a classmate who they know isn't invited.

Poor Awareness Example: They seem completely oblivious to how hearing these details might make the uninvited classmate feel sad, left out, or awkward. They lack the perspective to understand the potential negative emotional impact of their words in that specific social context.

Seeks out frequent attention

Constant Questioning or Interrupting:

Scenario: During lesson instruction or independent work time.

Example Behaviour: The child frequently raises their hand to ask off-topic questions, questions where the answer was just given, or questions simply to engage the teacher in conversation. They might also call out the teacher's name repeatedly ("Miss? Miss? Miss?") or interrupt the teacher while they are speaking to the class or another child, primarily seeking interaction.

Class Clown Behaviour:

Scenario: During transitions, carpet time, or less structured moments (and sometimes during lessons).

Example Behaviour: The child makes silly faces, purposefully falls off their chair, makes loud or funny noises (animal sounds, sound effects), tells jokes at inappropriate times, or does anything to provoke laughter or reactions from peers, even if it disrupts the class. This seeks peer attention and often teacher attention (even if negative).

Excessive Need for Praise or Validation:

Scenario: While working on any task (drawing, writing, maths).

Example Behaviour: The child constantly needs the teacher or assistant to look at their work after every small step ("Look what I did!", "Is this good?", "Watch me write this letter!"). They seem to require ongoing commentary and praise to stay on task or feel noticed.

Minor Disruptions (Negative Attention Seeking):

Scenario: During quiet work periods or lesson input.

Example Behaviour: The child might repeatedly tap their pencil, drop things "accidentally," hum just loudly enough to be heard, kick the chair legs, or make other small, irritating noises. These actions often stop when the teacher looks or speaks to them, achieving the goal of getting attention, even if it's negative

Feigning Helplessness:

Scenario: When asked to do a task they are likely capable of (e.g., finding a page number, tidying materials, starting a familiar type of worksheet).

Example Behaviour: The child quickly says "I don't know how," "I can't do it," or "Help me," looking to draw the adult over for one-on-one support and interaction, rather than making an independent attempt first.

Frequent Tattling on Peers:

Scenario: Throughout the day, during class or playtime.

Example Behaviour: The child makes numerous trips to the teacher to report very minor peer behaviours ("He's looking at me," "She used the red pencil I wanted," "They aren't playing the game right"). While sometimes genuine, frequent tattling can often be a strategy to engage the teacher's attention directly.

Invading Personal Space:

Scenario: When the teacher or assistant is working nearby, talking to another child, or simply present in the room.

Example Behaviour: The child frequently gets very close to the adult, leans on them, touches their arm, or holds up objects for them to see, seeking physical proximity and acknowledgment even when the adult is clearly occupied.

Seems anxious, apprehensive when interacting

Responding in Class:

Scenario: The teacher asks the child a question directly during a lesson.

Anxious/Apprehensive Behaviour: The child might freeze, blush noticeably, avoid eye contact, speak in an extremely quiet or trembling voice, stammer unexpectedly, fidget nervously (like twisting their clothes), or simply whisper "I don't know," even if they might know the answer. The prospect of being the focus of attention, even briefly, causes distress.

Playground Interactions:

Scenario: During playtime or lunch break when children are mingling and playing freely.

Anxious/Apprehensive Behaviour: The child might stay close to the supervising adult, hover near the edge of games without joining, watch peers intently but look away quickly if eye contact is made, or choose solitary activities consistently. They may look tense or worried when other children approach them.

Group Work Activities:

Scenario: The child is placed in a small group to work on a collaborative task.

Anxious/Apprehensive Behaviour: They might contribute very little, allowing others to take the lead entirely. They may keep their head down, avoid eye contact with group members, speak only when directly asked a question and give minimal responses, and appear physically tense (e.g., hunched shoulders, clenched hands). They worry about saying the wrong thing or being judged by their peers.

Initiating Conversations or Requests:

Scenario: The child needs help from the teacher or wants to ask a peer to play.

Anxious/Apprehensive Behaviour: They might hesitate for a long time, rehearse what they want to say silently, approach the person then turn away without speaking, or use very tentative body language (e.g., approaching sideways, looking down). They fear initiating or potentially being rejected.

Informal Social Chat:

Scenario: Peers are chatting casually about weekend plans or a popular TV show.

Anxious/Apprehensive Behaviour: The child might listen silently on the edge of the group, wanting to join in but looking too nervous to speak. They might laugh nervously at jokes they don't quite follow or agree quickly with everything said to avoid drawing attention or causing disagreement.

Performance Situations:

Scenario: Having to read aloud, present something to the class, or even just answer the register.

Anxious/Apprehensive Behaviour: They might show significant distress beforehand (e.g., complaining of feeling sick), speak very rapidly and quietly, tremble, sweat, or even refuse to participate due to intense fear of scrutiny.

Common Signs:

- **Physical:** Blushing, sweating, trembling, shaky voice, stomach aches, headaches, muscle tension.
- **Behavioural:** Avoidance of eye contact, quietness/mutism, fidgeting, clinging, avoiding social situations, withdrawing.
- **Verbal:** Hesitant speech, stammering, quiet voice, minimal responses, excessive apologizing, self-deprecating comments.

Tends to avoid social contact - school examples

Playground Behaviour:

Scenario: During lunch break or playtime when most children are interacting in groups.

Avoidance Example: The child regularly chooses a quiet, often isolated spot on the playground (e.g., by a fence, under a tree, in a corner). They might engage in solitary activities like watching insects, pacing, reading a book they brought outside, or simply observing others from a significant distance, actively moving away if approached by peers.

Classroom Free-Choice Time:

Scenario: Children have options to engage in different activities like board games, imaginative play areas, drawing, or reading.

Avoidance Example: This child consistently selects activities that can be done alone, such as drawing by themselves in a corner, using individual construction toys, or retreating to the book corner. They politely decline invitations to join group games or appear 'busy' to discourage approaches.

Partner or Group Activities:

Scenario: The teacher instructs the class to find a partner or get into small groups for an assignment.

Avoidance Example: The child might avoid making eye contact with classmates, hoping not to be chosen. They make little effort to seek out a partner themselves and may end up being the last one left, requiring the teacher to assign them a group, which they might join reluctantly and with minimal interaction.

Lunchtime Routine:

Scenario: Sitting with classmates in the dining hall.

Avoidance Example: The child often sits at the end of a table, keeps their focus entirely on their food, eats quickly and silently, and avoids participating in conversations happening around them. They may ask to leave the table as soon as they have finished eating to minimize social time.

Corridor Interactions/Transitions:

Scenario: Moving between classes or around the school building.

Avoidance Example: The child might walk quickly with their head down, avoiding eye contact with peers or adults they pass. If greeted, they might give a minimal response or none at all, effectively discouraging further interaction.

Response to Social Initiation:

Scenario: A friendly peer approaches them and tries to start a conversation ("Hi, what are you doing?").

Avoidance Example: The child might give a one-word answer ("Drawing"), fail to make eye contact, and immediately turn back to their activity, clearly signalling they don't wish to engage further.

Preference During Unstructured Times:

Scenario: If given the option during wet playtime to join a game or read/draw quietly.

Avoidance Example: The child almost invariably chooses the quiet, solitary option, even if they seem lonely at other times. They actively opt out of available social opportunities.

Tends to avoid social contact - home examples

Retreating to Their Room:

Scenario: After returning home from school, or during weekend downtime when other family members are in common areas (living room, kitchen).

Avoidance Example: The child consistently goes directly to their bedroom or another isolated space and shuts the door. They spend long periods there engaged in solitary activities (reading, gaming, drawing) and only emerge for necessities like meals or bathroom breaks, minimizing time spent in shared family spaces.

Minimal Engagement During Family Activities:

Scenario: The family is doing something together in the same room, like watching a movie, playing a board game, or just chatting.

Avoidance Example: While physically present, the child seems mentally absent. They might sit apart from the group, be deeply engrossed in their own book or device (if allowed), give only one-word answers or shrugs when spoken to, and rarely initiate conversation or react to shared jokes or events.

Shortening Shared Mealtimes:

Scenario: The family sits down together for dinner.

Avoidance Example: The child eats their food as quickly as possible, often silently, and asks to leave the table immediately upon finishing, while others might still be eating and talking. They avoid lingering for conversation or connection during the meal.

Avoiding Sibling Interaction:

Scenario: Siblings attempt to play with the child, ask them questions, or enter their space.

Avoidance Example: The child consistently says "No," "Leave me alone," or ignores the sibling's attempts to engage. They might physically move away, lock their door (if allowed), or complain to parents to make the sibling leave, actively avoiding shared playtime or conversation.

Brief or Dismissive Responses to Parents:

Scenario: A parent tries to engage the child in conversation about their day, interests, or feelings.

Avoidance Example: The child provides minimal, often vague answers ("Okay," "Fine," "Nothing"). They might avoid eye contact, continue looking at a screen or book while responding, or try to end the conversation quickly by saying they need to do something else or simply walking away.

Disappearing When Visitors Arrive:

Scenario: Relatives or family friends come to the house.

Avoidance Example: The child makes a brief, required appearance to say hello (perhaps reluctantly) and then quickly retreats to their room or another part of the house for the duration of the visit, avoiding further interaction with the guests.

Choosing Solitude Over Shared Fun:

Scenario: A parent offers a choice: "Do you want to play this card game with me or read your book quietly?"

Avoidance Example: The child consistently chooses the solitary option (reading the book), even if the game is one they usually enjoy, indicating a preference to avoid the social interaction component at that moment.