

"My Kid Has Sensory Sensitivities... Now What?"

A Sanity-Saving, Overstimulation-Reducing, Reality-Accepting Guide for Real Parents in Real Homes

Welcome to the Club You Didn't Know Existed (But It's Real, and You Belong)

So your child has been identified as having **sensory sensitivities** — maybe through an OT, a pediatrician, or just your own exhausted detective work.

You probably heard something like “Sensory Processing Disorder” or “sensory challenges,” or maybe just, “Wow, your kid really *feels* everything, huh?”

And now you're wondering:

Now what — at home, where hairbrushing causes tears, clothing tags are the enemy, toothbrushing is a full-body protest, and crowds are a guaranteed meltdown?

This isn't about therapy plans or diagnoses. This is about the **daily parenting reality** — helping your child navigate a world that often feels “too much” for their nervous system while also protecting your own peace and not losing your mind over mismatched socks.

Sensory Sensitivities 101: What You're Really Dealing With

Your child's nervous system isn't broken. It's just *louder*. Sensory sensitivities happen when:

- The brain processes sensory input (touch, sound, smell, taste, movement) in a way that's **intensified**, **muted**, or just plain overwhelming.
- Kids become **overloaded** — physically, emotionally, neurologically — often without warning.
- This overload can result in **meltdowns**, **avoidance**, **fear**, **aggression**, or **shutdowns**.

There are **two main flavors**:

- **Sensory avoiders**: “TOO LOUD. TOO BRIGHT. TOO MUCH. GET IT OFF ME.”
- **Sensory seekers**: “Let me crash into the couch 84 times and chew this shoelace for fun.”

Some kids are both. On different days. Just to keep you humble.

Common Sensory Behaviors at Home (And What You Can Actually Do About Them)

1. The Clothing Wars

Expect: Screaming over seams. Meltdowns over socks. Refusal to wear jeans.

Try:

- Seamless socks, tagless shirts, soft cotton everything.
 - Let them pick their clothes from a few sensory-friendly choices.
 - Give up on matching if needed — comfort > coordination.
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2. Toothbrushing Drama

Expect: Gagging, refusal, sobbing, full-body resistance.

Try:

- Let them choose a toothbrush (vibration or soft-bristle).
 - Try flavored-free or mild toothpaste.
 - Use a mirror and let them be in control — even if it's just the top teeth today.
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3. Hairbrushing Battles

Expect: Screaming, thrashing, negotiating every stroke.

Try:

- Detangler spray + wet brushes = miracle combo.
 - Let them brush first. Offer a “1-2-3-STOP” rhythm.
 - Try brushing in the bath or while distracted (TV, tablet, audiobook).
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4. Noise Overload

Expect: Hands over ears, shrieking in crowds, meltdowns at birthday parties.

Try:

- Noise-canceling headphones. Bring them everywhere.
 - Prepare for noisy events with a “quiet break plan.”
 - Allow opt-outs. Not all birthday parties are worth the crash.
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5. Food Texture Drama

Expect: Gagging, refusing entire food groups, crying over “weird” textures.


Try:

- Desensitize slowly — exposure without pressure (e.g., touch it, smell it, lick it, spit it out).
 - Stick to preferred textures when possible — variety isn’t king here.
 - Celebrate the *trying*, not the eating.
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The Honest Truth About What You’ll Probably Do (And Why You’re Still a Great Parent)

1. Lose Your Cool Over Socks

Because it’s the fourth outfit change and you’re late.

 *Fix it:* Breathe. Try again tomorrow. Keep extra shoes and socks in the car.


2. Feel Judged

When other parents or family say, “Just make them do it.”

 *Fix it:* Block out the noise. You’re parenting a nervous system they don’t understand.

3. Worry You’re Enabling

By giving in to their preferences or skipping sensory-challenging things.

 *Fix it:* You’re *accommodating*, not enabling. Comfort and regulation are step one to growth.



How to Parent the Child You Have (Not the One Who Tolerates Jeans)

- **Lower the sensory load** before increasing demands.
 - **Pick your battles:** prioritize hygiene and safety; skip the button-up shirt.
 - **Create calm-down zones** — weighted blankets, bean bags, chewy toys, fidget bins.
 - **Trust your gut.** If they say it hurts, believe them.
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You're Not Going to Ruin Them

They will survive — and thrive — even if:

- They only eat five foods.
- You carry noise-canceling headphones in your purse like a modern survival kit.
- You skip the school concert and go to the quiet trail instead.

Your job is not to make them “less sensitive.” Your job is to help them understand their body, build tools to cope, and feel safe in a world that often moves too fast and feels too loud.



Extra Tips by Situation

Mornings

- Visual schedules + clothing laid out the night before.
- Try “favorite clothes Fridays” or themed pajama days when possible.

School

- Request sensory breaks, movement options, and quiet corners.
- Use chewable jewelry, pencil toppers, or textured fidgets (with permission).

Outings

- Prep them in advance: “Here’s what it’ll sound like/smell like/feel like.”
- Bring a sensory survival bag: headphones, snacks, preferred toy, water, comfort item.

Bedtime

- Weighted blankets, blackout curtains, quiet sound machines.

- Avoid itchy PJs or tags.
 - Use a calming routine with consistent steps and timing.
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Final Note to You, Brave Parent

You're not making this up. You're not "babying" your child. You're advocating for a nervous system that feels the world differently — more intensely, more fully, sometimes more painfully.

This work is unseen. But it matters. You are *not alone*. And your child? They are lucky to have someone who doesn't just want them to behave — but wants them to feel understood, respected, and safe.

You've got this. And when you don't — come back, take a breath, and try again in the seamless socks.