

Daily Activities for the Sensitive Child

Bathing Consider time of day: Baths are usually calming but can be alerting. Deeper water provides deeper pressure to calm. Consider room temperature – warm is calming. Place mats in room to dampen sounds & open door to decrease echoes. Liquid soap can be applied firmly to calm. Limit busy tub toys; provide squeeze toys. Let child wear a bathing suit to start.

Dressing Be flexible and honor child's choices. Respect child's temperature regulator. Turn socks inside-out. Cut out tags; layer clothing. Give child a firm hug before dressing. Provide visual or auditory distractions during dressing. Use wipe warmers for babies. Try cotton clothing or spandex items. Develop a dressing routine. Consider hoods & mittens instead of hats & gloves. Play dress-up games with costumes.

Eating Prepare the mouth before eating by rubbing the inside of the cheeks, gums and tongue with a toothbrush. Consider texture and appearance of food. Consider utensils. Introduce new foods in small amounts and ones similar to those already liked. Try dips. Make food "fun." Wait until the child is hungry to try a new food. Make sure child has good dental health so that it doesn't interfere with eating. Consult a nutritionist about supplements.

Brushing Teeth Allow your child some independence/control over the situation. Passively finger massage gums/teeth, or have child brush with his finger and paste first. Use hand-over-hand assistance if needed. Use a timer. Consider type of toothbrush and flavor of toothpaste. Try an electric toothbrush.

Brushing Hair Allow child to do much of it himself. Massage scalp before brushing. Experiment with brushes. Keep hair short, and brushing to a minimum.

Sleep Avoid use of bedroom for stimulating activities. Create a bedtime routine. Exercise 4-6 hours before bed. Give child a warm bath and firm towel rub before bed. Listen to sleep CDs or classical music on a continuous play loop. Add white noise to sleep environment. Layer blankets for deep pressure & neutral warmth.

Ideas from: *Sensory Integration Strategies for Parents* by Jeanne Sangirardi Ganz, OTR/L, BPC
Published by Biographical Publishing Co., Prospect, Connecticut, 2008
Chapter entitled: "Practical Task Strategies for the Sensory Defensive Child"