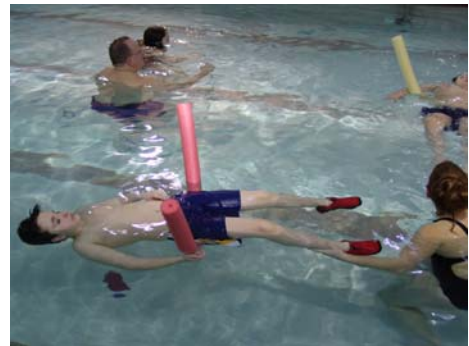


Sensory Based Students

An area of difficulty in autism is the integration of sensory messages. There are studies to indicate sensory levels are extremely high in one or more area with autism. Some individuals may have unusual reactions to touch, pain, and input from the senses of sight, hearing, smell, and taste. Care should be given to each child's sensory issues. While these characteristics are normally associated to a child with autism, they are not limited to the autism audience. Many children have some sensory defensiveness. Instructors will need to use methods to help overcome these to increase learning for the student.

Signs of sensory defensiveness include:

- Avoid letting others touch them
- Over or under-reaction to pain
- Frequently resist hair washing or combing
- Irritated by some types of clothes
- Agitated by people accidentally bumping into them
- Dislike getting their hands or feet dirty
- Avoid certain textures, colors or types of food
- May startle more easily
- May avert their eyes or avoid eye contact



Sensory Integration focuses on the sensory processing needs of the child as critical to the learning process. This program utilizes the effect of the warm water environment to assist the child in meeting proprioceptive, vestibular, and tactile needs.

Auditory Integration Training is a treatment for some individuals with autism who are oversensitive to sound. It involves listening to a variety of different sound frequencies. Splashing of other swimmers or generally louder noises in the facility may affect the child with auditory issues. If music is played during the sessions, it should be instrumental or vocals that are comforting and not pounding, and kept at a volume where it is pleasing to the students. Some students will find that placing their heads back in the water will provide a dulling level to the noise of the class or surroundings.