

Sensory Integration and Vision

Sensory integration is the process of organizing sensation to and from the brain to form a purposeful action. We use sensory information to shape our perception of the world and consequently how we can act on the world. When our sensory systems are working well we are much like a well oiled machine smoothly navigating and interacting with people and objects within our environment. When one or more of our sensory systems is out of sync we are more like rush hour traffic stopped, stalled, jammed and frustrated over our lack of control.

Our visual system is one of many sensory systems we need to act on our environment. There are two major modes of the visual system, visual acuity and visual perception. Visual acuity is how clearly we see and is usually addressed with glasses, contacts or surgery. Visual perception is how we interpret what is being seen and is dependent on other sensory systems including vestibular, proprioception and auditory systems. Visual perception provides us with important spatial information such as distance, foreground versus background, similarities/differences in forms/objects, texture and size. As visual information is processed our brain sends information to and from other sensory systems to initiate an action like whether or not we need to move our head or walk to or from an object. To really appreciate how much we use our vision with a partner, blindfold yourself and do something simple like brush your hair or wash your face or eat. Notice what other systems go into overdrive.

Visual acuity issues are typically addressed by an Optometrist. Symptoms of visual acuity issues include but are not limited to blurred vision, difficulty seeing far away or close up, headaches after reading or looking at the computer, or poor night vision. Visual perception issues can be addressed by many different professionals including but not limited to an Ophthalmologist and/or occupational therapist. Some symptoms of visual perception issues include but are not limited to the following:

Poor handwriting or reading skills

- Poor handwriting
- Poor reading comprehension
- Emotional reactions to handwriting or reading
- Poor puzzle skills
- Avoiding or hesitating going up/down stairs or curbs
- Getting overwhelmed in public places or new places
- Increased behavioral outbursts in visually stimulating environments.
- Inability to find things especially items that are in obvious visual fields.
- Excessive blinking or closing of the eyes when transitioning in and out of bright environments
- Shielding eyes to screen out sights, or covering or closing one eye

If you or your child exhibits one or more of the above listed symptoms talk to our doctor about having your vision checked and getting a referral for an occupational therapist

trained in sensory integration.

Leigh is the lead occupational therapist with Southeastern Physical Therapy's offsite division. She received her Bachelor's of Science with emphasis on Community Health Management and Rehabilitation Exercise from Virginia Commonwealth University and her Masters Degree of Occupational Therapy from Texas Woman's University.

Leigh's experience in Pediatrics includes a variety of settings including outpatient, early intervention, and in the school system. She is S.I.P.T. Certified through Sensory Integration International and has extensive training in auditory intervention including Hemi-Synch, Advanced Therapeutic Listening, and Level IV SAMONAS. Her passion is in treating children and adults with sensory integration dysfunction. She is also experienced in treating adults and children with neurological disorders, orthopedic conditions, feeding delays, and adaptive equipment needs.