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How can I Explain My Child's Sensory Needs to their New Teacher?

Your child's teacher may already be aware of autistic children's sensory needs. However, if your child does have exceptional needs, then it is important that you discuss these with their teacher. Sharing the information and resources below with your child's teacher will help them understand the importance of allowing them to stim.

Among the differences associated with autism to be acknowledged and accommodated are the sensory differences experienced by many autistic people. This means that each autistic child will have different sensory responses.

As a parent, you will be aware of your child's sensory responses and in what particular situations they display signs of anxiety and of being overwhelmed. They may be sensitive to particular sounds, smells, and textures. Some children are particularly sensitive to touch and can experience even a light touch as painful, with many children being very protective of their own personal space. Critically each person has a different sensory response, which you can only establish by carefully observing your child.

Once we are aware that specific sensory inputs are triggering a child's anxiety, we can, where possible, remove the inputs. Alternatively, we can re-direct their attention through allowing the child to stim, if this works for the child; or providing them with different sensory input such as Blu Tack, bubble-wrap or stress toys. This supports the child in self-regulating and coping with the sensory inputs in the environment.

Dr Emer Ring is the Head of the Department of Reflective Pedacology and Early Childhood Studies at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. As part of our *#BackToRoutine* series for beginning the new school term, she's answered a number of commonly asked questions and concerns families have when starting school.