In teens and young adults, sensory-avoiding behavior may result in social difficulties. Individuals with sensory-avoiding behaviors may be viewed negatively as being picky, rude, or highly anxious. They may seem fussy with everyday activities (i.e. picky eating) and may avoid people and activities that overstimulate them even if they are interested in participating.

Strategies for Sensory-Avoiding Teens and Adults

Sensory-avoiders need the ability to control sensory input, in order to reduce their anxiety. Providing proactive ways to retreat from overwhelming sensations allows them to feel safe and secure, reducing ritualistic behaviors and decreasing social impact. Here are a few ideas to try:

- Create a safe place at home, school, and work
- Schedule quiet breaks proactively
- Allow use of a “chill pass” at school (safe place and safe adult)
- Reduce visual stimulation: decrease lighting, allow hats and sunglasses when possible
- Reduce clutter in the classroom and home
- Reduce complexity of worksheets and use simple lists for tasks
- Avoid heavy perfumes and candle warmers in the classroom for sensitive individuals
- Provide preferential seating or visual barriers for work as needed
- Consider sensory-friendly clothing (seamless, tagless, and soft)
- Choose sensory-friendly events for entertainment and relaxation
- Prepare in advance for stressful events (i.e. haircuts and grooming activities) with deep pressure and relaxation and try to choose sensory-friendly salons and dentists