

SENSORY Minute

June 2018

Behavior Is Communication

Last month we learned **ways to investigate if a behavior is due to behavioral or sensory issues**. This month we are exploring **behavior as a means of communication**.

I want you to sit quietly, close your eyes and imagine all of a sudden being dropped into in a foreign country. You don't know the language or the culture. You need to communicate your needs. What do you do? You'll probably use actions and behaviors. You may become frustrated, maybe even overwhelmed. You can even see the frustration on the faces of those you are trying to communicate with.

Now think about what it would be like if you knew you needed *something*, but didn't know what it was... something inside you wasn't right, something felt out of place, uncomfortable, wrong... How are you going to communicate that to your foreign friends?

Behavior IS Communication.

When babies cry, we check a few things...are they hungry, do they need their diaper changed, or are they tired. If all of those needs are met, then we think about other things like their tummy hurting, or are they teething. Their behavior gives us clues.

If I scratch my arm, it tells you that I have an itch. If I keep itching all over, you may investigate and find that I have spots all over! Chickenpox!

If I bite my fingernails before a test, I just communicated to you that when I'm anxious I bite my fingernails. However, if I bite my fingernails down to the quick and they bleed, but there are no apparent stressors, my behavior may tell you there is something more serious going on. I communicated that to you simply by my behavior.

Individuals with sensory processing disorders may have a difficult time communicating what is going on with them. You have to remember, how they are is *all* they've known. Be patient, become a detective, and try to put their behavior clues together to figure out what is going on. You'll make wrong guesses, it's okay! As long as you don't give up!

For a great explanation of what it's like to live with a sensory processing disorder, I invite you to read this! Very eye-opening! <https://adifferentneurotribe.wordpress.com/2018/04/25/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-child-with-asd-using-the-coke-can-explanation/>

