

SENSE OF HEARING (5-12 Years)

Question 1: Does your child show distress at sudden or unexpected loud noises?



Strategies and Suggestions

- Children who are sensitive to noise might get upset with sounds that do not upset you, so this is worth considering if a child's behaviour has changed for no apparent reason.



- Warn the child if possible that a loud noise is going to happen. Visual symbols may be helpful to prepare your child.
- Allow your child to move away from the noise or use headphones/earphones before the noise happens for a short period of time with clear adult support/direction.



- Warn them if the noise will happen again so they can either move away from the source, or if this is not an option during activities such as school assembly or in the dinner hall use headphones/earphones with clear adult support/direction to help them cope with it.
- If possible involve the child in making the noise that distresses them e.g. turning on the washing machine, whilst they are wearing their headphones/earphones to help them get used to the noise on their own terms.

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Question 2: Does your child hold their hands over their ears to protect ears from sound?



Strategies and Suggestions

- When a child covers their ears it is usually because they are hearing a noise they don't like. Help them find out what it is and don't try and stop them covering their ears until either it has stopped or they can move away from the source. Allow them to calm down before you explain what the noise was.
- Warn them if the noise will happen again so they can either move away from the source, or if this is not an option, use ear defenders to cope with it.



- Certain situations such as busy shops may be more of a trigger; it may be best to visit venues such as shops at quieter times



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Question 3: Does your child not appear to hear certain sounds?



Strategies and Suggestions

- Use the child's name and ensure you have their full attention before giving instructions.



- You may need to touch them gently and focus them in on certain noises or sound sources but be aware that some children do not like unexpected direct touch.
- Some children respond well to visual cues such as picture cards or symbols to remind them to listen.



- Use an agreed gesture to get their attention e.g. tap your shoulder and get them to do a thumbs up to ensure they have understood that it is time to listen.



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Question 4: Does your child seem disturbed or intensely interested in sounds not usually noticed by other people?



Strategies and Suggestions

- Some children are able to hear certain frequencies that the rest of us are oblivious to such as the hum of traffic outside, other children's pencils rubbing on the paper, the noise of the central heating system as they are trying to fall asleep. Children can have difficulty filtering these noises out and ignoring them and this can prove distracting when they are trying to concentrate.
- A child might look distracted or become irritable if they need to concentrate but can't because of all the background noise they are hearing and trying to process, whilst also trying to pay attention to what the parent or teacher is saying.



- Try using ear defenders when you want the child to focus on a piece of work. Ear plugs and headphones can also help.
- Some children can concentrate better when they are listening to music. Allow your child to listen to music quietly using an iPod or MP3 and ear phones.





Question 5: Does your child find it hard to concentrate and is easily distracted by background noises?

Some children struggle to concentrate when they are trying to focus on completing written work and there are background noises. An example would be a child trying to do their homework and being distracted by the sound of the TV or radio. Some children are so sensitive to noise that even doing their homework in the kitchen can be a struggle because of the noise coming from the fridge's cooling mechanism.

In class there is always background noise such as other children chattering, the teacher talking to another child, the noise coming from the projector or the noise emitted by the neon strip lights overhead.

Strategies and Suggestions

- Please think about the noises that might be distracting to the child when you are asking them to sit still and focus on their work.



- If you can reduce the back ground noise for them this will help them to focus so make sure the TV or radio are off when they are trying to do homework.



- Switch off strip lighting which emits a high pitched hum that can be inaudible to us but distracting for the child. LED lights do not produce a sound so are a better option.

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Question 6: Does your child make noises, hums, sings or shouts out unexpectedly?

Some children generate their own noises in an attempt to 'drown out' the sounds they cannot control. This can include making noises 'internally' for example using their mouth and throat, or making noises 'externally' by drumming a pencil on a tabletop, clicking the end of a pen, or constantly tapping their feet on the floor.



Strategies and Suggestions



- Before you tell them off for disturbing the class or being too noisy ask them about the noises they are hearing and see if there is something you can do about changing the environment.
- Ensure one adult at a time is talking to the child
- Playing music quietly in the background can help reduce the effects of other more irritating noises.



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Question 7: Does your child not respond when their name is called, but you know their hearing is ok?



Some children seem unaware when they are being spoken to. You might say your child's name and not get a response from them even though you know they can hear perfectly well. This can happen if they are engrossed in an activity they really love, or because they know you are about to tell them to go to bed or do their homework. That is perfectly normal! If however it happens across lots of different settings you may wish to try the following strategy:



Strategies and Suggestions

- Get the child's full attention before you give them the instruction or action. Be aware that they might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision and getting eye contact will help them focus.



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Question 8: Does your child find it difficult to pay attention?

There are many reasons why children have difficulty paying attention and noise is only one of them. Are you sure that it is noise that is the major factor for your child? Try the suggestions below and see if any help, if not it is worth considering whether movement or vision may be contributing to their inattention.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Think about the noises that might be distracting the child when you are asking them to sit still and focus on their work. Are other children talking whilst carrying out group work nearby? Is there white noise coming from overhead lights or a projector that could be switched off? If you can reduce the background noise this will help the child focus.



- Get the child's full attention before you tell them the instruction or action. Be aware they might not like you touching them but standing in their line of vision and getting eye contact with them will help them focus.



- Getting the right amount of sleep can have a big effect on attention and concentration the next day.



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Question 9: Does your child find it difficult to determine the location of sounds or voices?

If your child cannot tell where a sound is coming from e.g. if you are upstairs and shouting on them and they are becoming increasingly upset trying to find you in the downstairs rooms, then their sound processing abilities are not as mature as they ought to be.



Strategies and Suggestions

- Have your child's hearing checked out by an audiologist to ensure that they can hear the full range of frequencies and that both ears are working together effectively



- When speaking to the child ensure that they are looking in the direction of your voice.
- Often children who are not aware of where a sound originated are not fully paying attention, because they are tuned into something far more interesting. Try using an exaggerated expression or a higher tone to draw your child's attention to the sound they should be listening to.



- Don't rely on the child's ability to listen alone; let them see where the noise is coming from.



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Question 10: Does your child like to cause certain sounds to happen over and over such as repeatedly flushing the toilet or repeatedly operating a musical toy?



Strategies and Suggestions

- A child who likes to create the same sounds over and over again can do so for one of several reasons; they like the sound and enjoy controlling it, they are trying to drown out other noises they don't like and can't control, they are stimulated by hearing the sound and enjoy repeating the pleasurable sensation, or they know it will annoy you!
- If you feel that your child produces this noise in times of stress, or to drown out other noises they can't control, try playing music through headphones to them instead.



- Although this is annoying for you it makes the child feel happy and they are unlikely to want to stop. They may need your support to help them stop and move on from the game/activity.
- Give them clear boundaries around when they can make their favourite noises and how often they can repeat them. Use visual countdowns such as egg timers or stop watches to help them if they need this.
- Be firm and be consistent. This will help them to learn to stop and move on to another task or activity, and gradually they will understand the rules.
- Allow the child opportunities at various points during the day to make their favourite noises; given them a couple of choices and use a timer to show how long they can play with their chosen toy or activity.

