

TEMPLATE FOR LETTER

To Friends and Family Explaining SPD

1. Introduction

Sample text (feel free to copy and paste):

As many of you know, _____ is affected by something called Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). I know most of you are not familiar with what this is, as even I hadn't heard of it before his diagnosis. So, I wanted to write a letter to: explain what SPD is, describe how it affects _____, and, in response to many of your inquiries, let you know how you can help.

2. Describe how you first recognized something was "off" with your child's development.

- Delayed milestones
- Problems in infancy (e.g. colic, reflux, prolonged crying, feeding issues, difficult self-soothing, sleep issues)
- Social/emotional problems (e.g. trouble engaging with other children, overly aggressive behavior, extremely shy demeanor, severe tantrums)
- Teacher observations

3. Describe Sensory Processing Disorder

Sample Text (feel free to copy and paste):

So, what is SPD? Well, it's complicated! Here's the most simple definition: SPD is a complex neurological disorder that affects the way sensations are experienced and processed. SPD exists when sensory signals don't get organized into appropriate responses and, as a result, a child's daily routine and activities are disrupted (Miller 2006).

I warned you- it's complicated! So, what does this actually mean? And how does it affect _____'s life?

We all know the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. There are also three *additional senses*, the "hidden" senses, that most of us aren't familiar with: proprioception, vestibular, and interoception.

Most of us have never given a second thought to how we process information from our senses because it happens automatically and seamlessly, hence the general confusion about what sensory processing disorder is and how it affects children.

What if when you tried to grip a pencil you couldn't feel how much pressure you needed in order to hold it, or when you were hanging upside down, you had no idea where your body was in space, or you couldn't tell when you had to go to the bathroom? The way our brains organize sensory information impacts how we move, how we feel, and how we experience the world.

Children with Sensory Processing Disorder are sensitive to and often misinterpret the information they receive from their eight senses which affects many areas of their emotional and physical functioning including: their ability to self-regulate (stay calm, focused and alert), their ability to cope with stress, their gross and fine motor skills (ability to do things like kick a ball or zip a zipper) and coordination.

It's important to understand that we all have unique sensory profiles. We all have our own sensory-sensitivities. You may be sensitive to noise and steer clear of concerts and big events. You might have certain preferences about textures. You might be sensitive to foods that are spicy or you might carry around your own tabasco sauce because you like your food extra spicy.

Sensory processing impacts everyone, it just affects those with SPD more.

4. Describe how SPD affects your child

- Your child's strengths
- Sensory systems that are affected (e.g. poor vestibular processing, over sensitivity to tactile input, poor proprioception, poor visual processing)
- Specific sensory triggers (e.g. loud noises, certain textures, noisy environments, new situations/people, transitions, certain foods, "unexpected" events)
- Behavioral implications (e.g. longer, more intense meltdowns, acting out aggressively, extremely shy/withdrawn, trouble "joining the group," can't sit still)
- Gross and fine motor difficulties (e.g. doesn't like to participate in team sports or playground activities because has trouble with coordination, struggles with getting dressed, difficulty coloring, doing crafts, and writing)

5. How friends and family can support you

- What's helpful (e.g. listening, asking questions, learning about SPD)
- What's not helpful (e.g. judging, making assumptions, offering unsolicited advice)

6. Closing

- What you've learned so far through this experience
- Offer to answer any questions
- Thank for taking the time to read