

# Sensory Smart Store

Top tips – the full article

Usually, people have been battling with 'sockitis' for some time before they find the Sensory Smart Store. Chances are you've tried everything you can think of to get the darned things on (no pun intended). So, if you're anything like me, when someone says casually 'Well have you tried.....?' you could cheerfully murder them!

However, we've had a few people request extra ideas of how to actually get the socks 'on' - so grab a cup of tea - here are a few tips we picked up along the way....

Preparation is never wasted. If a child is extremely tactile defensive or hypersensitive to changes in routine it's worth setting the scene in advance, and, if possible, introducing the socks at a low stress time (preferably not school run the first time they come out of the pack). I tend to recommend introducing the socks at a time the child knows there is no pressure to keep them on - say for example, just after shower at bed time. Mention that you found a special shop selling 'magic socks' (insert age appropriate wording here!) and that you want to try the socks on, count to ten, take them off, and then talk about them. This should take all of the anxiety out of the situation.

Massaging or brushing sensitive areas as part of the bedtime and morning routine (because let's face it, we all have oodles of time to spare!! haha) but also a firm rub in the morning before putting the sock on may help desensitize the foot, or walking over uneven sensory surfaces, a foot spa, or jumping up and down on the spot - all these things are worth a trial. Your child's feedback is your best guide.

How do YOU feel about these sock issues? Might sound an odd question, but Archie's sock problems brought out intense emotions for me that weren't helping. Sensitive kids pick up on parent's emotions, even those well hidden! Every time I picked up one of his socks I was dreading what was coming next. I was fretting about all the past attempts and feeling a failure, worrying about what it meant for his future if I couldn't even get a simple sock on his foot – it had turned from a simple activity into a massively emotionally charged event that made me feel hopelessly inadequate. So I had to be really aware of just being calm and 'in the moment' and

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not letting my mind and emotions wander. It had to be 'no big deal' for me before I could help make it 'no big deal' for him. What really helped me stay grounded was to remember that he was not being 'challenging', but that he was being 'challenged'.

Our boy was non verbal when we had the worst of the sock issues so we had to break the challenge up into micro-achievements and find incentives that didn't rely on language and could be administered quickly and easily on the spot. Good old chocolate buttons broken into tiny pieces to start (naughty but effective), and then once he started to get the idea we changed to other things. Though he couldn't bear light touch at the time, he liked deep pressure – pulls, squeezes, bear hugs. He was massively sensitive and hadn't worn a sock for the best part of two years so we broke it right down into tiny steps and started with rewarding him for just having a quick look at a sock - then the next day for touching one, then touching a sock to his foot, then putting just his toes in, then the sock quickly on and off, then the sock staying on for a count of three, then five, then ten. This happened over a couple of weeks in a holiday, was actually quite good fun in the end because he enjoyed the rewards (unbelievable eh?!) and after about ten days we finally had a time we put a sock on and he just didn't take it off! Well, for an hour or so anyway :) These days he happily pops his seamless socks on. We do still leave plenty of time for him to rearrange them if necessary, but he wears socks and shoes every day. He has even been open to wearing socks with seams from the school spares bin on a day he got messy, though they clearly drove him nuts! So, it can and does get better, I promise!

Anyone whose child is autistic will be familiar with 'Social Stories'. These are simple stories which can't be misunderstood that explain the context for simple activities and actions and events. For those who don't have kids quite so literal, it is still worth explaining the simple reasons why socks are important. I hope to upload an example of a Social Story soon..... just trying to find the time! But there are some very good examples on the internet and it's relatively easy to write one that applies to you and your family.

Get an Occupational Therapist do a sensory profile for your child - you will need a referral from your GP. Very often parents are dismissed as having 'fussy' children or ineffective parenting skills - when in fact there is a very good underlying cause for the child's distress. You can get invaluable input from an OT to help make better sense

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of the whole picture of the sensory needs of your child. There are some printouts in the 'Resources & Links' section that may help convince a GP and get the barrier down. If you can't get past those barriers to get NHS referral, you can go privately for an assessment.

The Out of Sync Child by Carol Stock Kranovitz is a very good book with tables that help you recognise easily what might be happening with your child's sensory processing. I hope to stock this soon, (also on my 'to do' list!). If you search for Sensory Processing Disorder on Amazon there are lots of books now – at some point I will pop reviews for them all on the site, I promise. In the meantime, another that I often recommend and do hold a small stock of is a lovely book you can read together with your child and that they can put their own comments in – called "I'll Tell You Why... I can't wear those clothes!" by Noreen O'Sullivan. There is a whole range planned and I will bring in new ones as they are published.

This is by no means intended to be a full list, or contain any particular expertise – it's just handy tips from one parent to another. If you find other ways to sock success (or pants, clothes, teeth and hair brushing, etc), do share! [sales@sensorysmart.co.uk](mailto:sales@sensorysmart.co.uk) We're all in this together. Also, look out for the free motivational chart you can download – we love to celebrate successes with you 😊

Very best to you and yours,

Mel x

