

# Emerge



A Child's Place

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Occupational Therapy  
Speech Therapy

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Serving children from  
birth to 14 years old

Using therapy to improve  
conditions such as:

Delayed Speech  
Developmental Coordination  
Disorder  
Speech Impairments  
Non-communicative Speech  
Oral/Verbal Apraxia  
Language Disorders  
Feeding Difficulties  
Autism/Asperger's/PDD  
Developmental Delay  
Cerebral Palsy  
Sensory Integration  
Disorders  
Sensory Modulation  
Disorders  
Handwriting Impairments  
Fine & Gross Motor Delays

A Private, Independent  
Provider

[www.EmergeAChildsPlace.com](http://www.EmergeAChildsPlace.com)

## Discipline Deficit or Sensory Problem?



Bonnie Hacker, OT  
Founder / Director

Embarrassment is a common theme in the stories told by parents of children with undiagnosed sensory processing disorders. Even though the parents have tried everything to curb future instances of their child acting out, the behavior continues. When it happens in public, they know other adults are looking at them and judging their parenting skills. People who don't know the child talk about discipline, punishment, consistency, and boundaries. The comments can be frustrating to parents who know they are providing discipline and boundaries to their child. They want the world to know that their child is not a "bad" child and they are not bad parents. The fact of the matter is that some children with sensory processing challenges require more than discipline and punishment to effectively improve their behavior in public.

Sensory processing disorder (SPD) is a condition wherein neurologic pathways in the brain prevent individuals from processing sensory input normally. Imagine that you are a child and the normal ruckus of a grade-school assembly in the gym hurts your ears like a row of NASCAR engines firing up. Imagine that you are a child and an asparagus in your mouth feels like you're eating a crawling bug with oozing intestines. When a child does not receive input from the world normally, non-productive behaviors develop. The behaviors are not easily corrected with discipline, because the behaviors do not come from a place of lacking discipline. For a child with SPD, the behaviors may stem from the fact that they perceive certain aspects of the world very differently than most people perceive them.

Left unaddressed, SPD often results in problems with social and family relationships, regulating emotions, self-esteem, learning, and general health. SPD may impact the comfort, engagement and development of some infants, while in other cases, it does not become evident until preschool age. Here are some signs of a possible sensory processing disorder:

- Overly sensitive / over-reacts to touch, movement, tastes, sounds, or bright light
- Is easily overwhelmed in group situations, which may result in overexcitement, meltdowns or shutting down
- Has difficulty regulating sleep/wake cycle--settling for sleep, staying asleep, and waking without irritability
- Can't get "enough" sensory input: touching, squeezing, moving, bouncing or mouthing
- Behavioral interventions not very effective

While Emerge - A Child's Place provides children with fun therapeutic work that helps them regulate their sensory input, an important part of the help provided at Emerge is training for parents. Occupational therapy assessments can help identify or rule out sensory processing disorder as a contributor to a child's behavior. Emerge teaches parents to recognize the difference between behavior that is about discipline and behavior that stems from a sensory processing challenge, because helping a child overcome a sensory behavior requires that understanding. Emerge gives parents tools and techniques that will be more effective than discipline alone for positively improving the behavior of children with SPD.

### Signs of Possible Sensory Processing Disorder



**Please tell parents about Emerge - A Child's Place  
Believing in a Child's Potential to Flourish**