



TACTILE

What is it?

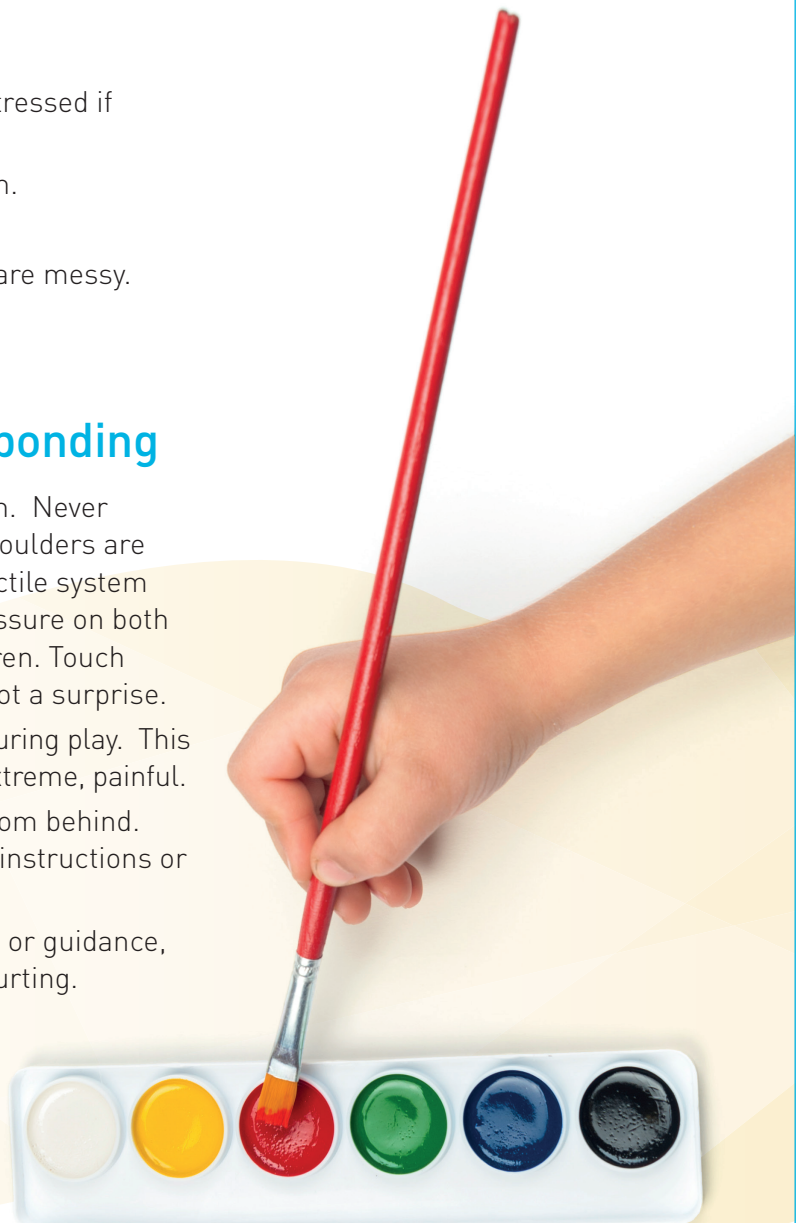
Our skin has receptors within it that respond to pain, temperature and light touch. This alerts us to potential threats and allows us to react appropriately. The information is interpreted and our brain decides how we should act. Through touch we gain information about where and how our bodies are positioned.

Problems you may see: over-responding

- 🚩 Avoidance of messy play (will become distressed if pushed to do it).
- 🚩 Becoming upset if others brush past them.
- 🚩 Avoiding feeding with their fingers.
- 🚩 Getting upset when their hands and face are messy.
- 🚩 Over-responding to unexpected touch.

Strategies to help: over-responding

- 🚩 Use firm pressure when touching children. Never use light touch. Pats on head, back or shoulders are not reinforcing for children who have a tactile system which is over-responsive. Downward pressure on both shoulders can be calming for many children. Touch should always be expected by the child, not a surprise.
- 🚩 Do not tickle children or touch their hair during play. This can be perceived as an irritant, or at the extreme, painful.
- 🚩 Avoid touching or approaching children from behind. Make sure children see you before giving instructions or asking for responses.
- 🚩 When using physical prompts, instruction or guidance, use as firm a touch as possible without hurting.
- 🚩 Be aware during messy activities, eg painting and glueing, that a child may become distressed if their hands get messy. Provide tools such as paint brushes and glue sticks and allow them to wash their hands if necessary.





Problems you may see: under-responding

- Child has messy hands and face but doesn't seem to notice.
- Clothes look dishevelled and child doesn't notice.
- Difficulty manipulating pencils and scissors.
- Excessively touches other people and objects.

Strategies to help: under-responding

- Encourage localisation of touch by using stickers on arms or legs, ask the child to find them.
- Allow the use of fidget toys. Permit them to use one object and set boundaries for them to use it and ensure it is not impacting negatively on their attention to the task.
- Provide activities that encourage tactile discrimination, eg finding objects in beans, sand or rice.
- Allow the child to engage in messy play, eg sand, paint, water play etc.
- Tactile items that vary in visual appearance, texture and resistance can offer a calming influence, improve tolerance of touch or reduce a child's need to touch items excessively.

