

DARWIN, 11, EXPLAINS SPD



from *The Out-of-Sync Family: A Story about Sensory Differences*
(formerly titled, *The Goodenoughs Get In Sync*)

By Carol Stock Kranowitz, MA • Illustrated by Durell Godfrey

Are you an out-of-sync kid?
Me, too.
Here's what being out-of-sync feels like to me. I don't like it when someone nudges me or touches my hair. I'm choosy about clothes and food. My stomach gets upset when I move fast. I fall down a lot. Bright lights and loud sounds hurt my eyes and ears. I hate it when people think I'm not a good sport and say, "Don't be so touchy," and "Stop letting things bother you so much."

Is it that way with you, too?

Listen, lots of people I know are out of sync. My brother and sister, my parents, and even my dog are out of sync.

You need to know who's in our family. You will meet them all soon. Dad, or Andy, works for the federal government. Mom,

or Betsy, is a high school math teacher. My sister Carrie is in ninth grade. I'm in sixth grade, and my brother Edward is in first grade. Our dog is Filbert, the best dog in the world—usually.

Dogs can get out of sync, too. When Filbert really needs to move, he goes wild and tries to run outside, and that is not OK because he has no street sense. I'll tell you about that later.

Anyway, the good thing is that our family mostly has good sense, and we work and play hard to get back in sync. Here is a story to show you how we do it. Everyone in my family is going to tell part of the story. My chapters are the longest because I talk the most, and besides, I have a lot of very important things to tell you. When you are done reading this book, maybe you and your family will

have some new ideas about getting in sync.

OK, let's go.



Do you have a favorite fidget thing? I do. Mine is a macramé friendship bracelet. I like to fiddle with the beads.

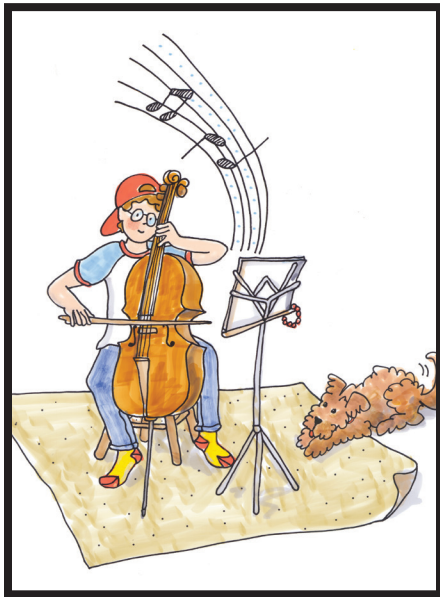
Yesterday Filbert ran off with it. He is usually a very good dog, but he was very bad yesterday. I freaked out, because what he did was not OK.

When not-OK things happen, I have a **MELTDOWN**. This is when too much

sensory stimulation makes me totally lose control. I collapse. I shudder and scream and sob. Mom calls this a **FIDDLE** response.

Now, I need to explain that in our family, FIDDLE is a word that means three different things:

1. One meaning is to fidget, like when your fingers twiddle with a bracelet.



2. The second meaning is a stringed instrument, usually a violin. Guess what? I play a big violin, called a “violoncello,” or “cello” for short. (Say, “CHEL-lo.”) I like to practice musical scales. Most kids think scales are boring. I like them because they are orderly. You always know how each note fits with the others. You know what came before and what comes next and exactly where you stand.

When I practice, it is very important to stick to a routine and to finish what I start. It’s hard not to get upset when things don’t go my way or when I’m interrupted. Do you feel that way, too?

I have perfect pitch. When I hear a note, I know it is E flat or C sharp, for instance. Not many people in the world have perfect pitch, but a lot of extra sensitive people do, like me. Dad says it’s one of the sensory processing differences that makes me special.

3. FIDDLE has a third meaning, with each letter standing for an aspect of a meltdown.

F – FREQUENCY (how often something happens)

I – INTENSITY (how strong something is)

D – DURATION (how long something lasts)

D – DEGREE (how far something goes)

L – LONELINESS (how all alone you feel)

E – EXHAUSTION (how used up and emptied out you feel)

Listen, I can’t help having meltdowns. I have one when something really bothers me, and everything bothers me. So I need my bracelet. I fidget with it a lot. It comforts me. At school, when we’re lining up, if somebody touches me and I don’t expect it, I feel like I’m being hurt. The touch feels like a burn or a bee sting, and I react right away with a **FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, OR FRIGHT RESPONSE**.

Sometimes a surprise touch makes me fight, and then everyone says I’m a troublemaker, although it’s never my fault. Sometimes a touch makes me run away, or “take flight,” like a dodo bird, and then everyone says I’m a sissy. Sometimes I freeze and can’t move or talk and just stand there frozen to the spot. I don’t know what everyone says about that, but I probably wouldn’t like it. Sometimes I feel so scared that I cry. Then everybody laughs, and that is the worst.

I twiddle my bracelet at other times, too, like when I’m riding in the car, which makes me want to throw up. It makes me feel calm. If the tag in my shirt is scratchy, or the muffin has raisins, or the door has screechy hinges, see, those sensations are

not OK. I need to close my eyes, breathe deeply, hug myself tightly, do a few knee bends, fidget with my bracelet, and then I feel better.

OK, OK, I’m getting to the story, but first I have to tell you why some sensations make me overreact. I have a problem processing sensations. This problem is called Sensory Processing Differences, or Sensory Processing Disorder. The acronym is SPD (say, “Ess-Pee-Dee”).

“Sensory” has to do with the senses.

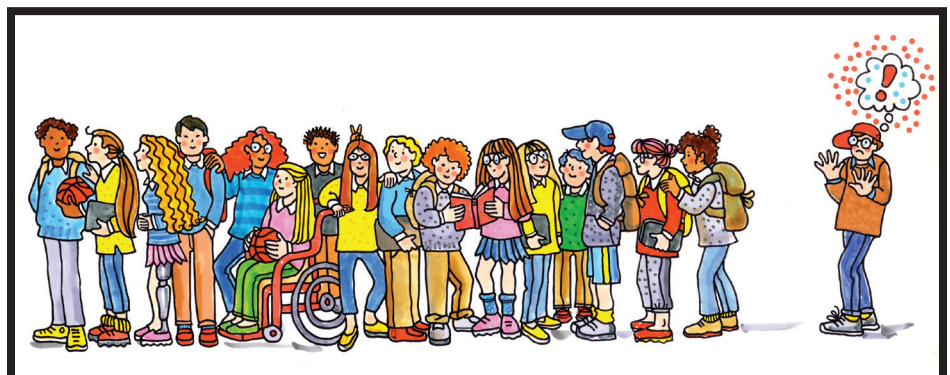
“Processing” has to do with how the brain takes in, makes sense of, and uses sensory messages coming from inside and outside your body.

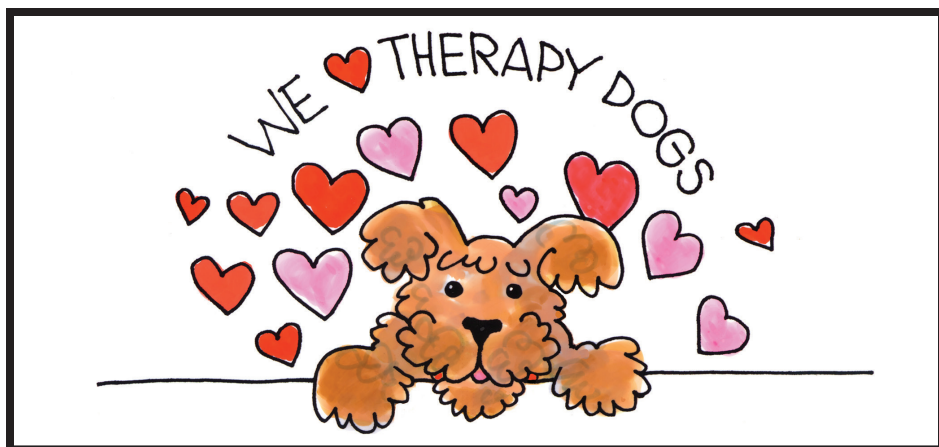
“Differences” means that a person’s brain is processing sensations in his or her own way, not in the way most people do. For example, a person with a sensory processing difference may have the extra-sensory talent of hearing sounds or seeing details that most people miss. Or the person may be clumsier than most and need more time to get things done. “Differences” may be mild or moderate.

When a person’s differences are severely challenging, that is, big enough to cause problems with everyday life, then we are talking about Sensory Processing Disorder.

DR. A. JEAN AYRES, the occupational therapist who first explored and explained the condition, called it Sensory Integration Dysfunction, a term that some therapists, doctors, or teachers still use. “Integration” is the word for senses fitting and working together, deep inside your brain.

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Dr. Ayres found that explaining sensory processing challenges helps identify people who have SPD. Then therapists, teachers, and even kids like me can suggest sensible ideas to help them be more comfortable and function better in their daily activities.

Practicing the cello—my big fiddle—is one of my favorite daily activities. What I like best about the cello is that it sounds like what you're feeling. When I'm sad,

the cello sounds sad. Or mad, or glad. I like to feel the vibrations coming through the strings and wood.

Filbert does, too. When I practice, he lies near my feet. He understands my feelings better than anyone, even better than Mom.

Filbert and I are in sync with each other. Actually, he's like a therapy dog, not just for me but for our whole family. We all take care of him. Edward rolls

around with him, Carrie brushes him, and I walk him and feed him. Taking care of him makes us feel good. ■



The Out-of-Sync Family (Sensory World, 2023), a revision of *The Goodenoughs Get In Sync*, has received a Mom's Choice Gold Award and is the Therapist

Recommendation Toy Winner in Autism Network's 2023 Autism Live Toy & Gift Guide for Caregivers. Carol is the author of the "Out-of-Sync" series about SPD and co-author of "In-Sync" materials about fun activities for all kids. Visit her websites www.out-of-sync-child.com and www.insyncchild.com to learn more.



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Autism Digest Features: Carol Stock Kranowitz



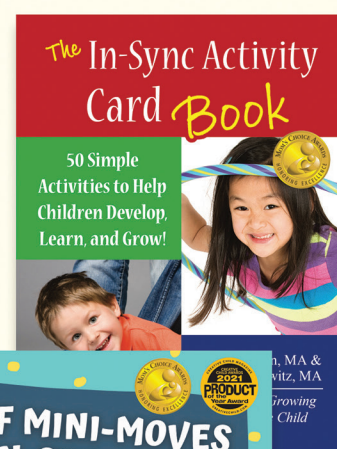
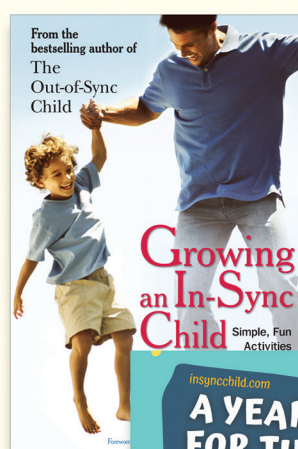
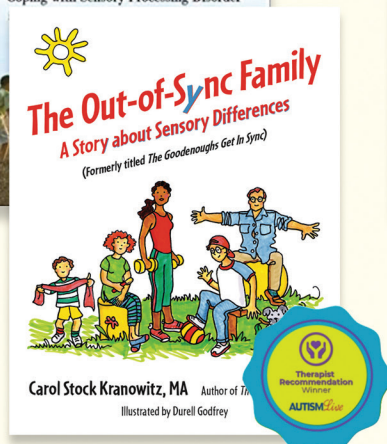
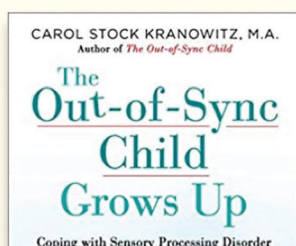
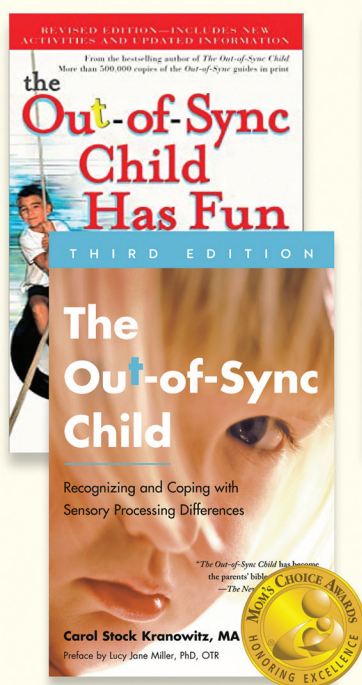
As a teacher, Carol specialized in helping preschoolers with Sensory Processing Differences (SPD). She continues to devise fun activities for “out-of-sync” children and to teach parents and educators about sensory issues through her writings and workshops. Carol’s influential book, “The Out-of-Sync Child,” has sold 1 million copies, and her books have been translated into 21 languages.

For more information: <https://out-of-sync-child.com>

The OUT-OF-SYNC CHILD Series



The IN-SYNC CHILD Series with Joye Newman



Mom's Choice Award and Oprah Magazine feature for “The Out-of-Sync Child” and Therapist Recommendation Toy Winner in Autism Network's 2023 Autism Live Toy & Gift Guide for Caregivers for “The Out-of-Sync Family”

All books available for purchase through: <https://out-of-sync-child.com/books>

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Ten webinars for home, classroom, and clinic about the In-Sync Child approach.



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