

Meet

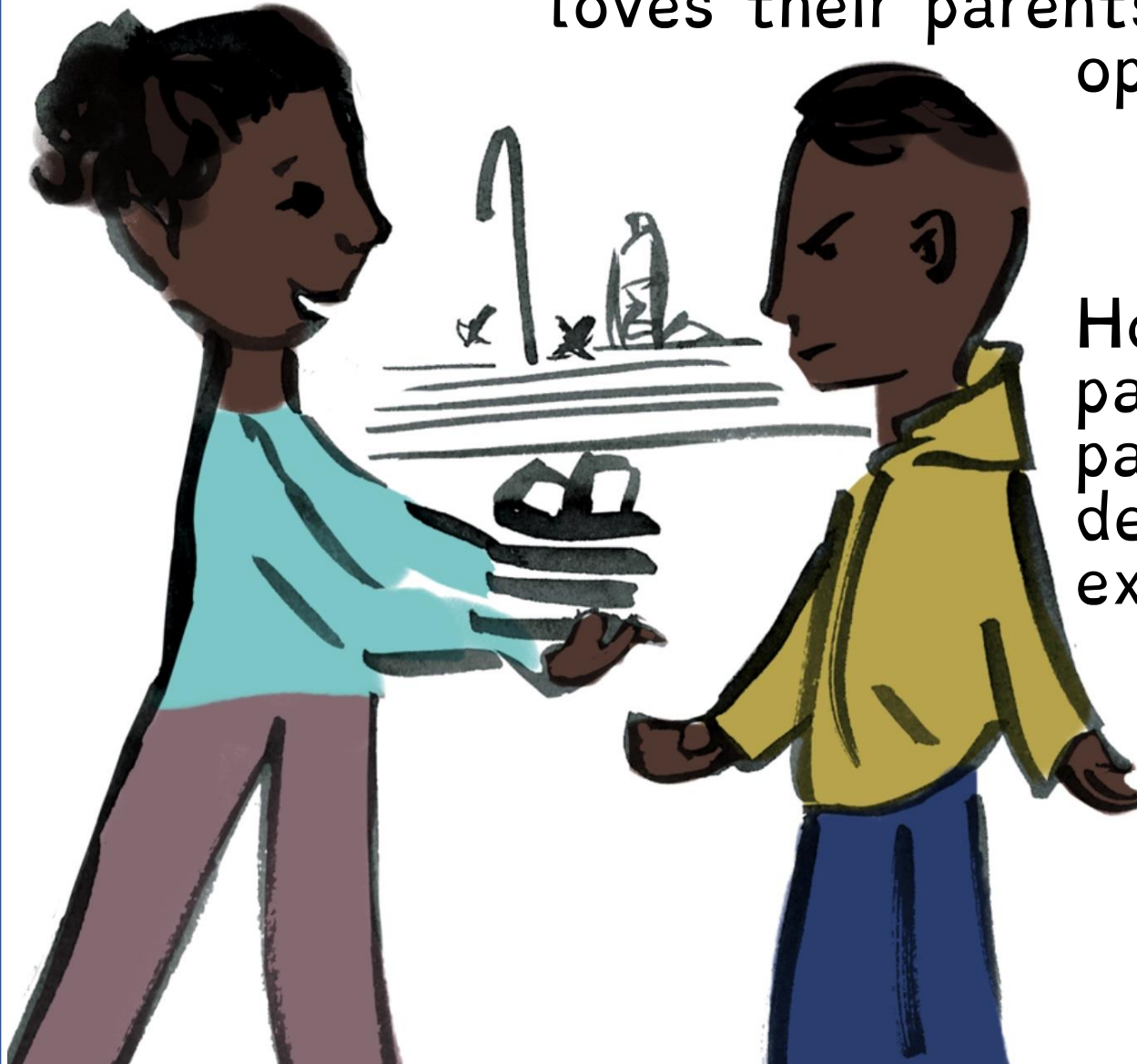
Georgie



*A story about sensory
over-responsivity,
relationships and
establishing a
sensory lifestyle.*

Illustrated by Jacinta Read

Meet Georgie. Georgie is 18 years old, they like hanging out with friends, playing Animal Crossing and eating a good burger. Their home life has always been chaotic and no one really understands why. Georgie loves their parents who are warm, open and caring.



However, Georgie's parents have found parenting hard, they describe Georgie as explosive, obstructive, oppositional and always on a hair trigger.

Georgie has been asked to do the washing up after dinner. They want to try, they want to be part of the family team. Dinner has already pushed Georgie to a pretty high state of stress. This always happens when activities involve a lot of noise, smell, taste and touch. Georgie prefers predictable foods (like burgers) and mealtimes with very little conversation. Being asked to do the washing up is hard for Georgie, the sounds, smells and gross feelings are all really stressful.





When Georgie's sister starts playing the drums in the background, it is just too much. Georgie explodes, "I can't take this anymore" and storms upstairs. Georgie's parents are dismayed that this has happened again, their youngest is now upset, the dishes aren't finished, and once again Georgie's temper has ruined a family meal. Georgie's parents are truly fed up.

Georgie is alone in their bedroom again. They know it doesn't have to be like this, that their parents are nice people, but it's so confusing.

Why is everything so hard? Why is there always a fight?

Georgie is desperate not to be seen as a bad kid anymore, they long for connection with their family.



When your nervous system interprets everyday sensory data as intense, disgusting, too much, overwhelming or even dangerous, your brain and body tend to live in a constant state of fight or flight readiness.

Multiple studies have shown us over the last twenty years that a state of constant sensory-over-responsivity can have lasting negative impacts on well-being, sense of self and relationships.

Two 2004 studies showed that sensory anxiety relates to relational anxiety and depression, and a 2020 study showed that sensory sensitivity is associated with a lifetime anxiety disorder diagnosis and difficulties with emotion regulation.



Your sensory health, including the way you build your lifestyle around your sensory profile, matters. If sensory integration and processing are so pivotal for psychological and relational well-being, why don't more people talk about it? Why does it take some people until adulthood to hear about this important area of human development?

Sensory Health Supports Self Regulation

Georgie sits down and does some research. They come across a checklist for differences in sensory processing and check 80% of the statements. Georgie is able to share this with their parents, and they all agree to approach the local adolescent occupational therapist who specializes in sensory integration and processing.

Georgie's occupational therapy evaluation demonstrates significant sensitivities to touch, sound, taste, smell and movement in the field of vision. All of these sensations push Georgie into a heightened state of vigilance causing their nervous system to go into high alert. Any other stressors then quickly push Georgie into a state of fight or flight. This has never been something Georgie could control with mind-over matter.



Georgie starts seeing a mental health provider and an occupational therapist who work with the whole family to start building a nourishing sensory lifestyle that will enable Georgie to not just merely survive, but also to thrive.

Does Georgie's story sound familiar to you?

For support with sensory over responsivity, sensory anxiety and/or a sensory integration and processing assessment, reach out to your school, local sensory focused occupational therapy practice or contact us at **STAR** Institute and we'd be happy to guide you.

Sensory Health Transforms Lives



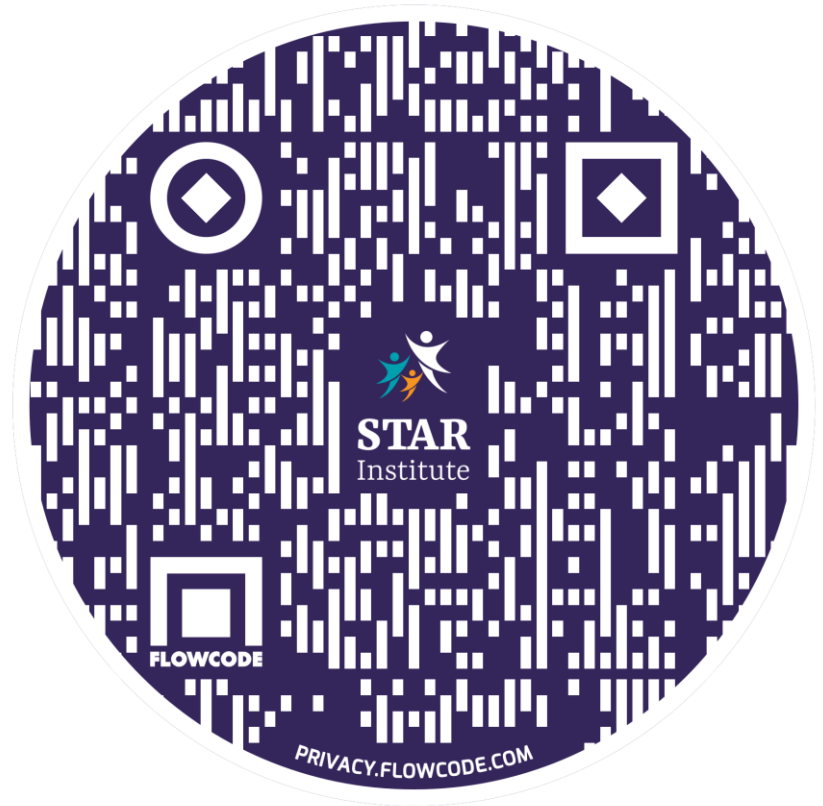
Unidentified differences in sensory processing can undermine health and well-being at any age and in any context. If you are over-responsive to the sensory data from the world around you and from your own body, everyday life can feel like a battleground. Simple sounds, smells and touch sensations put your nervous system into a state of defensiveness and hyper-vigilance. The extra effort it takes to operate in a world that is not designed to support your sensory systems can lead to chronic dysregulation, anxiety/depression, and problems forming relationships.

Every month at STAR Institute is sensory awareness month but October is particularly special as we share our passion with the world.

This year we are sharing the stories of five characters who are very dear to our hearts each character represents a different aspect of how differences in sensory integration and processing impact health and wellness. The characters are from different stages of life, contexts, and family backgrounds but they all have one thing in common discovering the power of sensory processing transformed their lives for the better. These stories are based on real life, real testimonies, real people.

Help us do more –this year we are raising funds for our education and advocacy work. So far in 2020, we have run free and pay-what-you-can parent workshops, trained school-based occupational therapists, educated educators, and more. With your support, we want to reach out to school districts, law enforcement agencies, more families and individuals, more clinicians, and educators. Your gift will be put to work immediately.

Give a little. Help a lot.



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Transforming health and wellness through the sensory domain