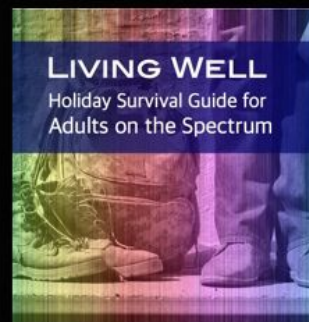




**Pay Attention  
to Your Body.**

**It's talking to you.**



# Physical Health: Listening to Your Body

As much diversity as there is on the spectrum we all have sensory regulation and processing challenges which can play a major role in how we feel and ultimately our physical health. We may be under-sensitive to some painful sensations and we may also have a processing delay which can last from anywhere to a few seconds to days and even weeks for some of us.

**Dee's Story:** *I was 44 years old before I realized that there was a delay between the time I felt physical pain and its onset. I would walk around with a tension headache for a couple of days before I recognized it and then it took me another day or two to remember that I could take medicine to relieve it.*

Pain is the way our body tells us something is wrong, and that an adjustment needs to be made. When we don't hear this message we continue to subject ourselves to environments or behaviors that can be harmful.

The results can be cumulative when we dismiss many of our body's messages at the same time. This is one reason the holidays can be so exhausting. Not processing a headache is one thing, but add exposure to bright lights, crowded stores and meeting new people and it's no wonder we shut down.

The key is that we don't always recognize that something is causing us discomfort, overwhelm or pain in the first place.

On the other hand, we may be so sensitive to certain sensations that they consume our thoughts.

**Jake's Story:** *I am hypersensitive to people coughing and paper cuts. I realize that most people don't react as strongly as I do to these things. When I get a paper cut the sensation can last for days until it heals and I have trouble focusing on anything else until it does.*

Just being aware that you have a tendency to ignore certain sensations or that you have a processing

delay between the time that your body experiences a sensation and the moment that you recognize it can help.

***Theresa's Story:** I have a long-standing neck injury from a car accident years ago. Lately I've started to realize that when I am in bed I don't think to adjust my body position properly to prevent it from hurting. I used to lay there for 30 minutes and then realize that my neck hurt. Now, before I go to bed, I remind myself to get into a good position and I'm finding with awareness and practice that I'm starting to notice the discomfort much sooner. It has actually made a huge difference to the point that my neck has started to heal.*

Here are a few more tips to help you pay closer attention to your body's messages:

- Set an alarm periodically through the day to remind you to check in with how each part of your body is feeling until it becomes a habit
- Learn more about sensory integration and how it may affect you. [Here](#) is a comprehensive article about sensory integration challenges.
- Encourage your friends families and colleagues to learn more about how you interpret sensations so they can
  1. remind you during times of stress to pay attention to your body
  2. modify your activities together so that you don't overdo it

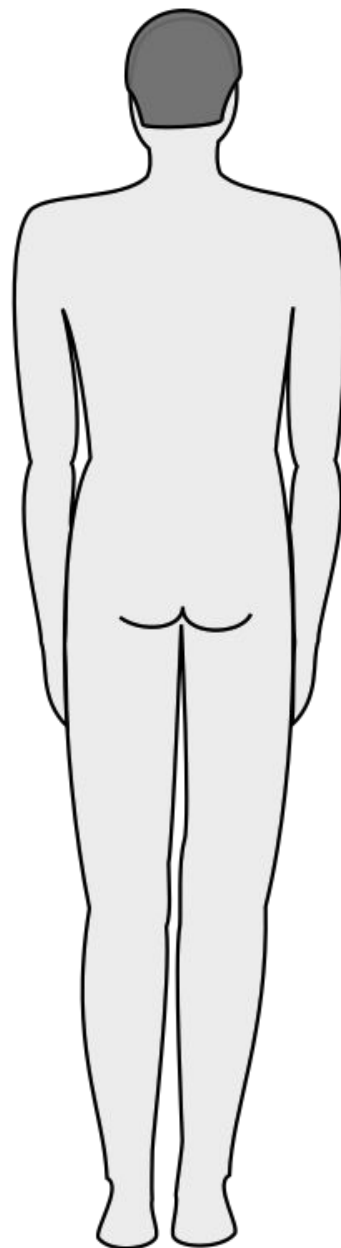
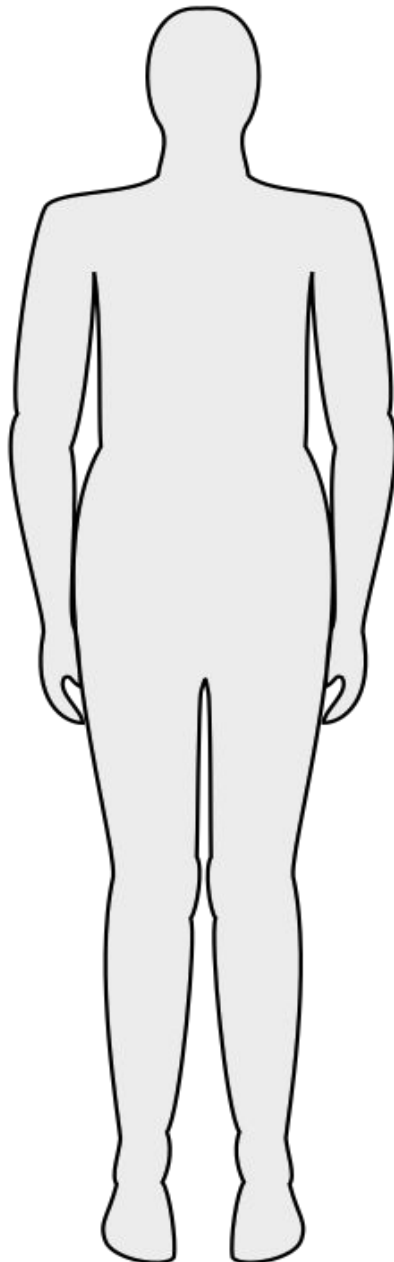
Here are a few tips to help you deal with hypersensitivity to pain:

- Avoid those experiences that cause you pain whenever possible. Yes, you can turn down activities that aren't healthy for you.
- Practice prevention by using a weighted blanket and exercising regularly.
- Share this [Sensory Toolbox](#) with your support network so they can adjust their behavior in support of you.

# Listening to Your Body Worksheet

Pay attention to how each part of your body is feeling at this moment and mark any place on the sketches below where you feel any discomfort, pain, numbness, tingling, tension, aching or other sensations. For example if you feel numbness in your left foot, put an X on that part of your foot and write "numb" next to it. *See the next page for Toni's example of how she is feeling right now.* *Tip: make extra copies and use during different activities throughout the day.*

Date, location and activity \_\_\_\_\_



**Toni's current physical status**

**Date, location and activity:**

12-15-2016 Sitting on the bed cross- legged for the past two hours typing on laptop.

