CPD REFLECTIVE PRACTICE WORKSHEET

Episode 20: Somatosensory Processing: Tactile, Proprioception and So Much More

Hosts: Tracy Stackhouse · Cory Dundon · Michelle Maunder

LISTENER NAME	DATE LISTENED
TOTAL LISTENING + REFLECTION TIME (MINS)	CPD HOURS CLAIMED

Episode Summary

We promised ourselves we would not race to praxis, and we very nearly made it. This one slows right down on the somatosensory system: what it actually is, why it is so much bigger than tactile and proprioception alone, and how the body senses sit quietly underneath everything from listening to swallowing to picking up a cup without spilling. This is an episode we had been looking forward to, and also one we had to keep wrangling, because somatosensory processing wants to run straight to praxis and we kept pulling it back. We start where most of us start, with tactile and proprioception, and then Tracy widens the lens: the somatosensory system also takes in the interoceptors, and it quietly mediates our vision, our listening and our swallowing, far more than we tend to give it credit for. From there we get into how you tell modulation from discrimination, and tactile from proprioceptive, when in real life they work as partners. There is a lovely run through reach, shape and grasp, a metal water bottle that one child would not drink from, and a baby learning to bring a cup to her mouth. Before we finally let ourselves arrive at the praxis clusters, we land on why naming the systems matters: if you have ever stood in a session unsure which system is actually driving what you are seeing, this one is for you.

Resources & Mentions

- Somatosensory is bigger than tactile and proprioception, it also includes the interoceptors and the body receptors that quietly mediate vision, listening and swallowing.
- Modulation versus discrimination, and the two pathways: the discriminative dorsal column medial lemniscus system, and the valence-based anterolateral system that reads comfort against discomfort.
- Phasic and tonic, and the weight shift that looks like avoidance, why some children resist holding a position through vestibular unsurety rather than true reluctance.

Reflection Prompts

Take a few quiet minutes to consider each prompt and write freely. Add or remove a prompt block to suit the episode.

1. Tracy widens the somatosensory lens well beyond tactile and proprioception. Which of the body senses, interoception, the role in vision, listening or swallowing, do you tend to overlook in your own reasoning?

2. Modulation is easy to spot, but proprioceptive modulation is subtler. Think of a child you're working with: how confident are you that you can tell modulation from discrimination in what you observe?

3. We describe a weight shift that looks like avoidance but is really vestibular unsurety. Where might you have read a child's behaviour as reluctance when a body sense was actually driving it?

4. Tactile and proprioception work as partners, but pulling them apart sharpens assessment. For one child, what would you learn by separating which system is contributing to their reach, shape and grasp?

5 **We land on why naming the systems matters. Recall a session where you were unsure which system was actually driving what you saw. How would naming it more precisely have changed your next step?**