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MISOPHONIA

For teachers

*YES, IT IS A REAL
THING!*

How you can support
children with the condition
you probably have not
heard about...yet!

WHAT IS MISOPHONIA? It is an understudied brain disorder condition affecting between 6% to 20% of people (US sample) characterized with a decreased tolerance to specific sounds or stimuli associated with such sounds. It is **NOT** the same what sensory sensitivity.

These stimuli, known as “triggers,” are experienced as unpleasant or distressing and tend to evoke strong negative emotional, physiological, and behavioural responses that are not seen in most other people. The most common trigger sounds relate to **eating and breathing**, and the most common overwhelming feelings experienced by MISO people are **anger, anxiety, desire to escape and disgust**.

REMEMBER: Misophonia is **NOT** a sensory sensitivity disorder.

(Swedo et al., Consensus Definition of Misophonia, 2022).

THE MAIN TRIGGERS:

Eating/drinking noises:

- ✓ Smacking lips,
- ✓ chewing (especially with mouth open) food or gum,
- ✓ crunching sounds,
- ✓ slurping,
- ✓ loud swallowing or gulping,

Breathing noises:

- ✓ snoring,
- ✓ sniffing or nose blowing,
- ✓ heavy breathing.

SO.....HOW CAN YOU HELP?



BELIEVE!

When a child shares about his/her struggles with sounds, believe it. My practise as therapist showed that MISO people are often not understood with their condition by their close ones, and often experience gaslighting, mocking, being ignored or laughed at for their experience.



Look for signs!

Complaining about specific, everyday life noises other people make, usually oral noises. Visible anger/frustration towards classmates in response to noises. Sitting separate from other children outside of the school duties, for ex. at lunch. The physical reactions towards other kids like hitting/pushing. Fleeing outside suddenly from the class. Blocking ears even when the sound is not loud.



TALK ABOUT IT TO A KID and PARENTS!

Take a seat and have a chat with a kid. Use compassion and kindness. Try to learn about their struggle, what particular sound is a problem for him/her so you will know what to be aware of. Remember, you will not always be able to attend their needs perfectly and some challenge will have to be put at place. Yet your help is of a tremendous value. Talk to parents and recommend signing their kid for few sessions of therapy with misophonia therapist. The kid must learn to help yourself first but an extend of it depends on an age.



IMAGINE!

Imagine experiencing sudden cortisol rush and hyperactive heart beat triggered by a minor aspect for a regular people. The feeling of being trapped and intruded is sudden like a slap in the face and your body goes into fight/fly/freeze response within seconds. Try not to underestimate severity of those responses. Remember that brain disorder is named as a DISORDER for a reason.

FLEXIBILITY!



Be open for flexibility and creative approach. There are few things that are helpful for people with misophonia and they can discover them through therapy. To point few of them here they include:

- ✓ background noise/music/tv that will mask eating noises,
- ✓ distant seat far from triggering person/noise,
- ✓ option for MISO person to leave when needed,
- ✓ ear phones that are available online,

Your help as a teacher can include:

Ask a child is it a sound or loudness causes a trouble, talk to parents to check it with therapist, allowing earphones use, prepare some specific space/seat away from the centre of the class but not too far to not isolate a kid, introducing no gum/eating policy in the class, allowing a kid to leave a class if necessary, allowing to skip certain tasks that would be a high exposure for a kid in terms of noise, sit with a kid after the class and ask about feelings/thoughts around the noise, teach a kid 5 mins breathing technique to use in the moments of stress (check YouTube for ideas), tell a kid to distract yourself when he/she hears noise, allow the kid to have some distraction in his/her hands such as stress ball etc, if the child is in therapy give thoughts/feelings records to parents, that will be very helpful for a kid's work, talk about lunch time to see how the kid manages noises there, and if he/she doesn't isolate too much from friends, encourage child to talk about it to you when needed, in particular in exam make sure to accommodate a child, simple pen noises can be a trigger, allow earphones and put a kid away from the centre of the room, give the child a warning before starting an activity that includes triggering sound.



DON'T STRESS OUT!

You are trying your best. MISO kids need complex help and your part starts and finish at school. Keep communicating with parents so they can give you more ideas about specifics in regard to their child. Every MISO person has some individual ways of acting/reacting/coping and it is important to learn about those specifics.



RESOURCES

Here are few resources you can find on the internet to read more about misophonia:

<https://allergictosound.com/>

<https://misophonainstitute.org/>

<https://hashirtinnitusclinic.com/>

<https://www.loopearplugs.com/>

**CBT Therapy and Education for
Misophonia**

<https://www.rebornclinic.ie/>