

BUSINESS SECTION

Business Profile

The Sensory Center

by Eric Michael Stitt

Jennifer and Daniel Hoffiz have created a unique center that helps improve the lives of people who suffer from such things as autism, attention deficit disorder, dyslexia or brain injuries. It's called The Sensory Center and after four months of being in business, they're already helping clients in many ways.

The Hoffizes' son was diagnosed with autism at the age of 2 and the family participated in countless therapy sessions and interventions to try and help his situation. Finally they went to a treatment center in Michigan that worked with sensory integration. Their son responded very well, which gave them the idea to create their own center in Manhattan Beach.

The Sensory Center offers a program that helps improve the quality of life for people who are suffering from numerous disabilities, particularly autism.

"It's a fundamental intervention using a multimodal approach, which encompasses light, sound and motion to retrain the sensory system," said Jennifer Hoffiz.

She said most, if not all, individuals on the autism spectrum have some form of sensory processing disorder, whether they are oversensitive or undersensitive to stimuli such as light, sound or touch.

The first phase of the program works with motion. The Hoffizes created a bed that is the main key to their "Vestibular Stimulation" phase. Jennifer Hoffiz said

their "Oscillating Motion Bed" gently stimulates the vestibular system by moving the individual through a series of controlled and coordinated rotations. She said this calms down the individual's sensory system.

The second phase is "Auditory Training" and it uses all kinds of music to change how sound frequencies are being received by the individual as they listen through headphones. Hoffiz said this can cause auditory perception to become normalized and allow more natural behavioral responses to develop.

The third phase is called "Photo Therapy" and Hoffiz said they use color and light to retrain the brain to process more efficiently. She said this part of the program is very beneficial for those who suffer with visual conditions such as crossed eyes, double vision, blurred vision or lazy eye.

Holly Mendence, of Torrance, began taking her 6-year-old son to The Sensory Center a couple of weeks ago. He suffers from autism.

"Sensory needs continued to be the one thing we couldn't tap into," she said. "We couldn't see any reason not to try it."

Prior to visiting the center, she said her son could not listen to music or be around people singing whether at school or birthday parties. But after more than two weeks into the program, now the "Auditory Training" phase, she's seen significant improvements in her son. She added that be-



Daniel and Jennifer Hoffiz from The Sensory Center.

fore they visited The Sensory Center, he would not put a pair of headphones on.

"He's able to tolerate music," Mendence said. "He started singing himself. After a few days it was really exciting to see him do that. Now he's able to listen to music in the car and sing in group activities in school. He's doing so good with the music thing. That's an immediate change."

She said he has responded best to the classical music. But because tolerating music is "just a small part of what he's battling," they are looking forward to beginning the "Photo Therapy" soon.

The Sensory Center offers two types of programs, standard and accelerated. The standard version takes about 3-1/2 weeks and requires one treatment per day. The ac-

celerated version requires two treatments per day for about two weeks. After the program is finished, then clients can opt to do the 19 days of "Photo Therapy," which they are able to take home.

Hoffiz said clients will see noticeable changes nine months after they finish the program. She said 95 percent of their clients report improvements.

"It's a leap of faith," Mendence said. "When you see it working, you say 'this is something he has to benefit from.' We can't wait to see what happens over the next nine months," Mendence said.

For more information about The Sensory Center, visit www.sensorycenter.com. It is located at 819 N. Meadows Ave. in Manhattan Beach.