

Elements - Earth : Sensory Games

Stimulating the senses can take many forms and help young people to connect with their surroundings and others.

Ideas & Strategies

Foundation skills

- Sensory skill development, even in a basic interpretation, helps young people to engage with their environment and peers. For example:

Tracking (start in a quiet area/corner free from distraction)

- *Visual* – begin within field of vision then extend; for example, in a darkened environment, shine a torch on an interesting object; then move slowly to search for another, and so on.
- *Aural* – move around the young person with a jingle ball, tambourine, squeaker or similar (quietly at first); what kinds of sounds does the student prefer or react to most?

Exploration

- *Tactile* – tactile walls, constructed from available materials, can help a young person to explore texture, shape, opening/closing, objects that make noise and much more. For example:
 - hang small quoits or rings on a light rope or string; young people try to move the rings by raising or lowering the string;
 - pull strips or material from a box or through holes in a tube.
- *Taste and smell* – young people can experience new flavours or smells as part of a ‘treasure trove’ game; for example:
 - use very small pieces of dried fruit or sherbet powder on the tongue,
 - food essences or scented candles (unlit!)

Think about – Themed games based on the senses; for example, a young person moving/walking over different surfaces, such as a rope ladder taped to the floor, or a smooth mat, or a rough path outdoors experiences different tactile sensations.



STEP

Space

- Young people can begin by experiencing sensory stimulation in their own personal space; then progress to a wider environment. For example:
 - hearing or making a specific sound on a small drum or tambourine; then
 - moving around a bigger space to listen to a variety of sounds; do they recognise or react to the first sound?

Task

- Senses can be stimulated by letting a young person smell a specific food essence, for example, before encouraging them to search amongst (safe) materials impregnated with a variety of smells.
- A variety of small objects in a box can enable a young person to reach, feel and select something interesting.

Equipment

- Many commonly-available materials, foods and household bric-a-brac can be used to create sensory activities, such as sensory trails. For example, small mirrors (visual) or cushions, scarves and ribbons (tactile). Seeds or rice can be placed in containers and shaken or hung where they can be pushed or grasped, to create a variety of sounds.

People

- A key aspect of sensory game activity is to excite the young person's interest and curiosity. Letting them work with a small piece of equipment and then concealing it in a box attached to the wall or amongst other random items can stimulate movement as they search for a favourite toy.
- Encourage young people to exert some control of their environment. This can be through sophisticated sound beam equipment, where movements influence sound reproduction, or by selecting from a range of options and them devising a game around their choice of object or implement.

Safety

- Food allergies and other intolerances must be understood before trying tasting activities.
- Supervision is essential at all times where small items are used.

How to improve

- Use sound or visual stimuli to develop eye and head movement in young people whose movement is inhibited.

Communication

- Music, sounds or rhythms can accompany an instruction or explanation. For example, colours can be associated with specific sounds.



Links

For more information, see the Links section.