

Elements - Water : Sensory

The water environment can be the ideal playground in which to stimulate the senses.

Ideas & Strategies

Beneficial effects of movement in water

As seen in the *Water Movement* card, just being in water can be a sensory experience in itself. Benefits of moving in water include:

- positive effect on the cardio-respiratory system; water pressure can improve exhalation;
- improved blood circulation;
- enhanced kidney function (water pressure);
- potential increase in flexibility and range of movement;
- encourages emotional response;
- social interaction.

Sensory activity

Water play can enable young people to interact with the aquatic environment in many ways.

- Use water toys, plastic watering cans or bottles, plant sprayers and colanders to make water flow in interesting ways; young people can react to or interact with the moving water.
- Encourage young people to use the hands, arms, feet and legs to ripple and splash the water surface – or watch others do so.
- Helpers can swirl the water around the swimmers; moving in a group can create exciting whirlpools and eddies.

Rhythm and music

- Use a tambourine or small drum to lead young people in rhythmic splashing, kicking or bobbing.

Think about – ways in which young people can influence their environment, eg, by splashing or blowing on the water surface.



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STEP

Space

- The space around the pool can be used to create specific environments; for example, potted plants, or friezes and papier mache sculptures made in the art room can create a jungle theme.

Task

- Sensory activity can be built into game scenarios; for example, young people can travel to stations around the pool where different sensations can be experienced:
 - soft sponge or cloth washed over limbs or face;
 - young people can squeeze water from floating sponges;
 - plastic bottles or water cans which can be poured over or around swimmers;
 - interaction with floating toys or materials of different textures.

Equipment

- Floating sculptures can be devised to enhance the pool area itself; floatation aids can be decorated with other materials to create 'islands' around which young people can move or with which they can interact (leave or retrieve objects).
- A calming conclusion to a session can be achieved by enabling young people to float freely supported by lots of floatation devices (under supervision of a nearby helper); lights can be dimmed and soft music played in the background.

People

- Activities experienced on land can be transferred to the pool environment.
- For example, interactive sensory games can bring young people together to create water turbulence, collect floating objects, or achieve moments of stillness.
- A country dance can take place in the water with young people and their supporters moving in formation (eg a line dance).

Safety

- Ensure that young people are comfortable and secure; sensory interaction will be promoted if young people are relaxed.

How to improve

- Try using sensory stimulus in the classroom or on the poolside before transferring it into the water; for example, experiment with different sounds or smell sensations.

Communication

- Action songs or soothing music can provide a contrasting soundscape to accompany or guide water activity.



Links

For more information, see the Links section.