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DISCOVERING SENSES



OVERVIEW

Kids are naturally interested in their own bodies. Having five senses is something most take for granted, but kids are curious to understand what senses are and how they help us communicate with our environment. Animals have similar senses to ours and through learning about the five senses, your child can begin to compare human and animals senses.

Skills: Making observations; conducting a scientific experiment; collecting and recording data
Age Range: 6 – 8 year olds

WHAT TO DO

Set up the kitchen table with some of the following items: some different tastes (ex: sweet, sour, salty), some items with different textures (ex: smooth, soft, rough), some closed containers with different sounding items inside (ex: cotton balls, marbles, pennies), some cotton balls with drops of different food extracts (one extract per cotton ball).



Put a blindfold on your child and start with the different tastes. Have your child try to identify the taste without being able to see the food. As you move across the table (and the senses) be sure to talk with your child about using different senses to gather information. Ask questions about how the touch items feel, how the different containers sound. Have them compare and contrast how easy or hard it is to identify different items using one sense at a time. Afterward you can have your child test you in the same way. Mix up the items and see how well you do identifying each using only one sense at a time!

DISCOVERING SENSES



TAKE IT FURTHER

THE SENSE OF SIGHT

Inquire about visiting a local organization for assistance dogs to the visually impaired. If possible, try to set up a visit with someone who uses an assistance dog for help. Talk about how the dog aids the person to see in their everyday environment.

Some groups to contact include:

1. National Organizations of and for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
2. NFB - National Organization of Parents of Blind kids.

MORE WAYS TO DISCOVER AND LEARN

GO ON AN ADVENTURE!

Contact the local zoo and ask about arranging a free guided tour or for available information on how the different animals use their senses to live in their environment. Before visiting, find out if there are any animals at the zoo who have senses that humans don't have, this could be a new sense (such as electroreception in the platypus) or a heightened sense (such as the elephant's ability to hear infra-sound [a sound that the human ear cannot hear]). Have the guide point out that even everyday animals have senses that are a little different than ours. For example, dogs can hear frequencies much higher than most humans, and bees are able to see ultraviolet light, which we can't see! Bring a digital camera and have your child take pictures and/or video of animals you see at the zoo. At home, these can be used to create an online photo gallery or digital storytelling presentation which kids can present to their family and friends.



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DISCOVERING SENSES



LITERACY CONNECTION

Have your child draw pictures of different animals and point out what they use to sense the world. For example, elephant's use their trunk to smell just like we use our nose. Fish use their scales to feel just like we use our skin. Flies use their proboscis to taste, just like we use our tongue. Place the drawings around the room.

NEW WORD

Senses: A part of our body that is able to receive input from the environment



LOOK IN A BOOK

Use these books to help kids learn about the five senses and how we use them everyday:

My Five Senses by Aiki. Collins, 1989.

How To Really Fool Yourself: Illusions For All Your Senses. By Vicki Cobb. Illustrated by Jessica Wolk-Stanley. Wiley, John & Sons, 1999.

Five For A Little One By Chris Raschka. Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books, 2006.