

## Sensory Stories

Sensory stimulation is vital for everyone.

Sensory stories convey narrative through experience & through words.

Sensory stories are for anyone, of any age, and any ability.

Sensory stories have been used with individuals with profound and multiple learning disabilities, dementia, autism and sensory processing difficulties, they've been used with babies and children in the early years, and with adults in their later years, they've been used in schools, care settings, heritage settings and homes, by specialist practitioners and by absolute beginners. They truly are for everyone.



Simple sensory resources are easy to find.

### Guides

Guides like this one, on a range of related topics, are available to download for free from :

<http://jo.element42.org/sensory-stories>

### The Sensory Project

The Sensory Project believes that with a little know how and creativity inexpensive sensory resources can become effective tools for including everyone.

### Sensory Stories from The Sensory Project

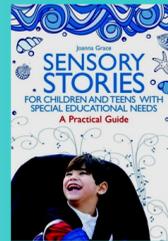
are available to buy from

<http://jo.element42.org/sensory-stories>

Stories come with advice on how to resource them, and extra ideas and information to support further engagement . A basic guide to sharing sensory stories is available to download for free.

### Sensory Stories for Children and Teens

is available on Amazon (and in all good bookshops).



### Sensory Project Training

The Sensory Project can create a bespoke training package for your setting. You can also access training from the Sensory Project at a variety of events nationwide, for details please see <http://jo.element42.org/training>

### Connect with The Sensory Project

<http://jo.element42.org>

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# What makes great for a great sensory experience?



Joanna Grace



# Finding great sensory stimuli

## What makes for great stimuli?

The greatness of a sensory experience is dependent on *who* it is for and *what* it is for.

Personally I find a well known brand of yeast extract to be a fabulous taste experience; not everyone agrees with me. If I was looking for a taste experience to represent Goldilock's porridge, however wonderful I feel said yeast extract to be, it would not be the right experience for the job.

Find experiences that really set your senses going.

Find experiences that are fit for purpose.

## Be alert

In the modern world it is easy to become sensorially unaware. We tend to only pay attention to a sensory experience until we have identified it, e.g. we hear a sound, and once we've worked out it is a bird calling we stop listening. By continuing to pay attention to experience past the point of identification, by re-tuning in to how things sound feel, smell, taste and appear, we become more alert to what makes for a great sensory stimulus. This has the added bonus of being good for our personal mental well being.

Begin to think with all your senses as you shop: have a feel of things, sniff them, lift them to your ear and see what they sound like. Explore the world with your senses. You may find some great sensory experiences in some unusual places.

## Think about *who* it is for:

If you are looking for sensory experiences for a particular individual try to build up an awareness of what they like and dislike, and what they might benefit from more exposure to. Also try to be aware of how they experience things, simple things like knowing whether their hearing is better on their left or their right, or whether they usually eat with a fork or a spoon will all help you to deliver experiences that are great for them.

## Consider:

**Strength** Strong experiences, e.g. high contrasting colours, sharp flavours, loud noises, may be easier for some story experiences to access, e.g. story experiences with profound disabilities, sensory impairments, or story experiences in later age as our senses can dull with age.

**Personal relevance** Sensory experience that have personal relevance to the story experiencer with whom you will be sharing the story may be particularly powerful. If you are creating a story for someone with dementia think about the sensory experiences they would have had in their early twenties.



A taste of sea water before facing the surf?

## Think about *what* it is for:

Hunt for just the right thing, don't be tempted to just use the first thing that comes to hand.

Consider using real, as opposed to artificial, experiences e.g. a sound recording of birds vs a musical instrument played to sound like birds.

## Explore

Have fun encountering things with your senses, ask yourself "Is this a big touch experience or does it feel like other things I've felt today?" Shake things, sniff things, get involved in experiences. Notice what draws your eye in. Ask your friends what works for them. This is a playful activity. You will find that once you get past the initial funny looks people will be happy to help you.

## Be safe

Be aware of allergies and sensitivities, and be ready to adapt accordingly.

## A few greats from the five famous senses to get you started:

**Taste**— Pineapple juice gets all your taste buds going.

**Smell**—Seal something smelly into a plastic tub, when you open the tub all the air inside will smell too.

**Touch**—Fill a large container with rice; push your hand into it.

**Sight**— Look through a piece of coloured cellophane .

**Sound**—Put a handful of metal bits and bobs, into a glass jar and turn it over for the sound of something smashing in an accident.

**You have more than just five senses. To learn more about your senses and sensory engagement come to a Sensory Project Training Day or have one created for your setting.** Details on reverse.

