

## TOUCH AND SMELL APPROACH – MULTISENSORY ART EXERCISES

### General Objective

The purpose of this practical sheet is to provide educators with a pedagogical tool to guide them in creating content about art and culture for a special needs audience.

The pedagogical tool put forward in this practice sheet is the multisensory approach. This approach can allow dependent people to be introduced to art and to develop new skills.

In this practice sheet, you will

- ✓ Learn more about the multisensory approach in general,
- ✓ Learn more about creating a multi-sensory environment,
- ✓ Learn more about activities that can help develop the sense of touch.

### What you'll need:

**Art materials:** artwork (painting, sculpture....); objects related to the artwork.

**Various objects:** wooden board; various objects (soft, hard, colored, rough); glue; scotch tape; scissors; design sheets; painting objects (stencils, stamp balls, paint brushes, etc.); box (cardboard or glass) ; blindfold ; dish.

**Digital devices:** computer + internet access; camera.

**Various:** fruits, vegetables, spices.





Have access to a neutral space.

## Challenges and issues

Our well-being depends on a good sensory perception. Our 5 senses, such as sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste, allow us to understand the environment that surrounds us, to communicate and to feel different emotions. It is therefore necessary to stimulate them permanently.

For some people, these senses are not developed or not very well developed, so the stimulation is done with tools adapted to their handicaps.

The multisensory approach is inspired by the Dutch “Snoezelen” approach developed by Jan Huelsegge (music therapist) and Ad Vertuel (occupational therapist) in the 1970s. Its name is a contraction of two words that mean “Snuffelen: to snuggle, sniff, explore” and “Doezelen: to doze, snooze, relax.”

It is a form of therapy particularly adapted to people with intellectual disabilities, autism, Alzheimer's disease, and neurological learning disabilities. It is based on the well-being and the stimulation of the 5 senses that we have. Namely smell, sight, hearing, touch and taste. The main objective is to activate the senses through stimuli. This approach consists in placing the dependent person in a soothing environment and bringing them to their needs. There are several types of multisensory environments, namely the snoezelen room, the psychomotricity room and the discovery courses.

Sensory stimulation, for people with disabilities, allows the development of gross and fine motor skills. It helps to reduce anxiety and promotes relaxation. Moreover, it helps to improve self-esteem and helps to develop autonomy.

In this context, the multisensory approach, used as a pedagogical tool, allows people with disabilities to participate in cultural life and thus reduce the inequality of access to culture for all.



“Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”

## Adaptation

There is not only one way to learn or to discover our environment.

### Active pedagogy

This method of learning was founded by Friedrich Fröbel recognized as the German master of early childhood education in the early nineteenth century and Johann Hienrich Pestalozzi who is a “Swiss pedagogue considered the pioneer of modern pedagogy and the true founder of what was called active pedagogy.”

Active learning is a learner-centered teaching method. It advocates assimilation through appropriation and discovery by the person himself. The person thus becomes an actor of his learning and develops new competences according to his aspirations and preferences.

### The stimulation of the senses

*Tactile activities:* touch is the first sense that we develop. Indeed, most of the first learning is done by touching. touch is the first sense that we develop. Tactile activities allow us to have information about objects, materials, textures. They also promote sharing and exchange as well as the development of emotions and sensations.

*Visual activities:* allow us to awaken and stimulate the sense of sight. It allows us to analyze our environment.

*Sound activities:* Sound is related to the areas of voice and listening. It helps to develop mobility and concentration.



*Olfactory activities:* olfactory memory is considered the best. When our memory records a smell, it keeps it almost permanently. In people with amnesia, smells can bring back memories.

## Practical examples and inspiration

Here are some examples of sensory environments adapted to people with disabilities.

### **Activity 1 - Creation of a multi-sensorial discovery path - Inspired by Alphonse Mucha's painting \_ Salammbo.**

Within this path, it is interesting to emphasize the different textures (fabrics, cushions, gold objects, carpets ....) and smells (perfume, flowers, incense...) in order to recreate the universe that represents this painting. This course allows people with disabilities to discover art at their own pace and in a way more adapted to their disabilities.

During this activity, it is important to place objects related to the art along the route. The person will be able to walk at his own pace in the room adapted to his handicap. This course can be set up for a small group or individually. It allows people with disabilities to discover art at their own pace and in a way more adapted to their disabilities.

### **Activity 2- Creation of a sensory wall.**

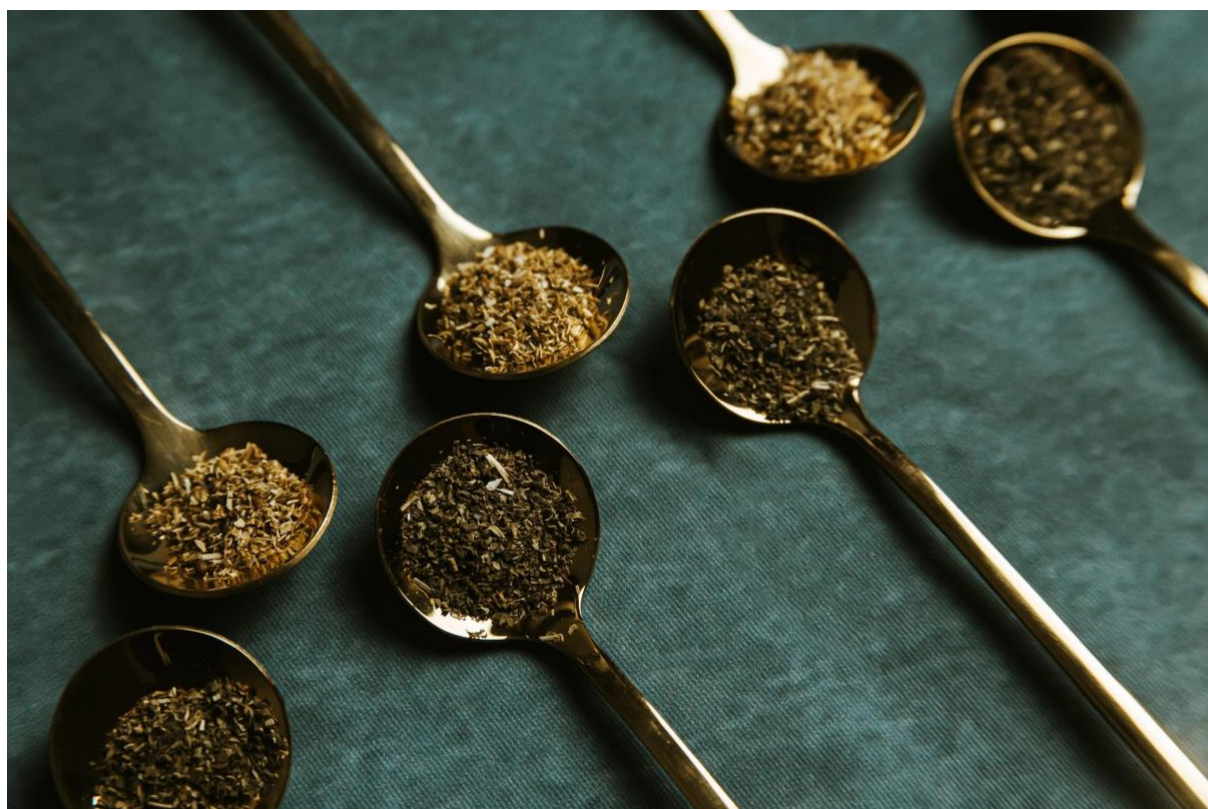
Set up a beautiful sensory decoration on a wall. On a wooden panel, glue different objects (or pieces of objects) from everyday life with different textures, colors and sounds. For example: beads, feathers, pieces of fabric (velvet, cotton, bamboo, silk...), felt, cardboard, aluminium paper, wood...

Thanks to sound, tactile or visual perceptions, this tool allows people with disabilities to discover their environment in a different way. It participates in the development of the senses and emotions.

### **Activity 3- Creation of a “taste and smell“ workshop.**

Place fruits, vegetables or spices on different plates. Blindfold the participants. They can touch, smell or taste the products. The goal is to associate a taste or a smell to the fruits, vegetables or spices on the plates.

The objective of this workshop is to recognize various edible products by using the senses of smell, touch and taste.



### **Activity 4- Creating a sensory bin.**

The sensory bin is a tool to help people discover different textures and develop their sense of touch. It can take different forms and themes. The principle is to gather in a box all the elements (different shapes, colors, textures, smells) related to a theme. This activity allows people to develop their fine perception and their sense of observation.

Example: Creation of a sensory tray under the theme of the seasons. We can also put them in value by taking pictures of them and make an exhibition.



### Activity 5- Painting workshop.

In small groups, provide drawing sheets and place brushes and various objects (stencils, paintbrushes, etc.) in the center of a table that can be used to create a painting. The participant is free to let his or her imagination run wild. This activity will encourage creativity, tactile and visual senses.



## Additional resources

- Multisensory Approach to Learning.  
The multi-sensory exercises proposed in this video aim to teach concepts and skills while stimulating our 5 senses.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8TQOv3NwWA>

- What are Multisensory Teaching Techniques ?

This resource will allow you to learn more about the different multi-sensory teaching techniques for an audience with learning disabilities.

<https://www.lexiconreadingcenter.org/what-is-multisensory-teaching-techniques/>

In keeping with the inclusive nature of the Team of art project, here is an additional resource in French

- Immersion through the relationship to the body: Sensory Spaces – Blog.  
This resource offers you various spaces or sensory scenography.

<https://bloghistoiredelartes2.wordpress.com/2018/11/12/espaces-sensoriels/>

