

Sensory Risk Taking

Sensory Risk Taking - More than just the five senses

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"Nature inspires creativity in a child by demanding visualisation and the full use of the senses."

(Louv, 2005)

Multi-sensory experiences are vital for healthy brain development. Nature provides positive sensory opportunities and creates memorable learning experiences. It engages creativity and problem solving, promotes relaxation and the development of affection for nature.

Beyond the Five Senses & Sensory Integration

Sensory Integration is the body's ability to:

1. Receive or take in sensory stimuli
2. Interpret the stimuli
3. Process the stimuli into a response; and
4. Adaptively respond to the stimuli (Ayres, 1989)

There are more than just five senses, including:

- Equilibrioception – vestibular balance
- Proprioception – body part positioning
- Nociception – sensing of pain
- Thermoception – sensing temperature
- Temporal Perception – sensing passing of time
- Interoception – awareness of internal organs

The Issues - SPD, ADHD & ADD

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) is a complex neurological condition that impairs the functional skills of 1 in 20 children (Ahn & Miller, 2004). People with Sensory Processing Disorder misinterpret everyday sensory information, such as touch, sound and movement. They may feel overwhelmed by sensory information, may seek out sensory experiences or may avoid certain experiences.

"The manmade environment does not require adaptation and therefore does not engage sensory awareness in the same beneficial way."

(Linzmayr, 2011)

Health & Learning

"If we want children to flourish we need to give them time to connect with nature and love the earth before we ask them to save it."

(Sobel, 1996)

Health is optimized when we live in harmony with our biological and evolutionary background. These behaviours allowed survival for thousands of generations. Disorders often occur when we neglect our evolutionary background during infant, toddler and childhood stages of development.

Diabetes, obesity, allergies, asthma, attention deficit disorder/attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD) and other illnesses are more common in our modern lifestyle.

To optimize healthy brain development, the following factors need to be supported:

- Breastfeeding
- Face to face contact to develop empathy
- Routine attention, following circadian rhythm
- Integration of vision, touch and movement by playing in nature
- Face to face reassurance when overwhelmed with rapidly changing visual/auditory stimuli (Peper 2014)

There is a strong connection between memory and the senses. Sense of smell can be a provocative memory trigger. A lot of our senses evoke memory. Senses can be used in learning to recall and hold on and keep information. Our sensory experiences are linked to emotion and create opportunities for sticky learning, hooks; for learning which have emotional connection.

Sensory Risk Taking

"Children need to take different types of risks in order to develop and learn."

(Louv, 2005)

"Children should be able to do their own experimenting and their own research. Teachers, of course, can guide them by providing appropriate materials, but the essential thing is that in order for a child to understand something, he must construct it himself, he must re-invent it. Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself."

(Piaget, 1972)

As educators we need to provide diverse sensory opportunities, allow children control, trust they are capable, allow time to watch and observe and be present to support and encourage sensory risk taking.

References

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