

Sensory Experiences... Ooey Gooey Fun

Sticky, slippery, gooey, heavy, bumpy...that's what sensory experiences are made of. Learning and retention improve, depending upon how many of our senses are engaged. Many of our favourite memories involve multiple senses. When thinking about my grandma, for example, I remember the smell of the flowers in her garden; I can see her wearing her favourite outfit; I remember how her apple pie tasted; and even how the sofa felt.

Sensory activities provide children with another meaningful avenue for learning. Sensory tables or several tubs rotated regularly with wondrous sensory materials are worthwhile investments for hours of learning, exploring, and fun. Because children learn best by having "hands on" experiences with materials, sensory experiences are vital to young children's learning. Imagine trying to teach a group of four-year-olds about melting by having them watch an ice cube melt in your hand instead of theirs, or as a grown up, learning how to use a new computer program without actually working on it - not quite the same!

While sensory materials are very rewarding for young children, they also present unique challenges for carers, often afraid of 'the mess'! Supplies for sensory exploration are usually easy to gather and inexpensive. The following list provides suggestions for media to fill your sensory table or tubs with and materials to add to the experience. Select items that compliment your program and are of interest to children, as well as being safe for the ages of the children involved.

Media for Sensory Play

Water – cold and warm

Sand - dry and wet

Dirt - dry and wet

Fingerpaint with additives such as sand, or sawdust

Fingerpaint in sealed plastic bags

Scents (almond, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, mint extract etc)

Shaving creme (not mentholated)

Playdough

Clay

Confetti

Shredded paper