



Notre Dame Catholic College
Sensory Activities in the Great
Outdoors

What is this pack?

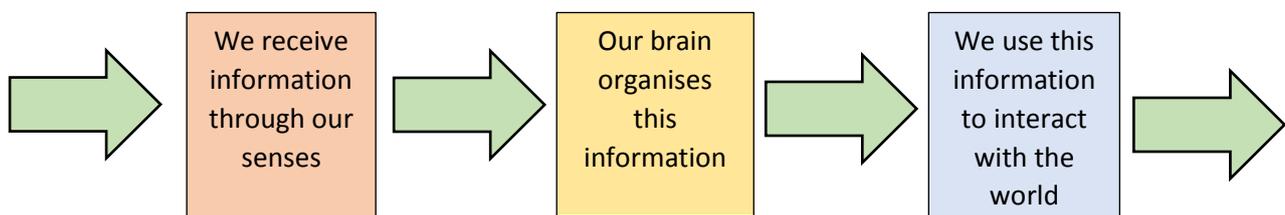
This pack is to provide you with some of the activities that you can do to help you with your senses and sensory input using the great outdoors. It gives you a brief overview of your senses and the process your brain and body goes through when our sense are in action. It will also give you some activities to try at home.

Our Senses

As humans we are all sensory seeking and need sensory input, our senses are something that we do not think about all of the time, we just get on with the world around us, but sometimes things can bother us and this is because of our senses and our different needs. Did you know that we actually have 7 senses, some people only think we have 5. Our 7 senses are:

- **Taste** – our taste bud sense the food and smells that enter our mouth
- **Sight** – the things we see and the light that enters our eyes
- **Smell** – the smells around us
- **Touch** – what we touch and things touching us
- **Sound** – what we hear
- **Proprioception** – this is our body's awareness of its individual parts
- **Vestibular** – this is our body's movement and balance sense

The way that we process sensory information is shown in the diagram below;



Sensory Overload

Sometimes our brains get too much information at the same time and we cannot process it all at once. This is called sensory overload and can lead to our bodies and minds becoming deregulated. When we are deregulated we cannot focus on things and sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the world around us and that is okay.

Sensory seeking

Other times we need that sensory input and if we do not have it, then we need to seek out. Again this could cause us to be under stimulated and if we are needing that input we can again become deregulated until we seek out what we need and again, that is okay.

Nature and the great outdoors

Nature and being outdoors is one of the greatest sensory experiences that we can have. Do you know that plants help your brain release Serotonin, which makes you feel happy?

There are so many things outside that we can do to fulfil our sensory needs, here are a couple of activities to try and they are also good for your mental health.

Birdsong

Birdsong is one of nature's miracles and everyone is drawn in when they hear a bird, but how many times have you just found a quiet space, sat down and just listened. We miss things in our busy lives, but try it, even for a short period of time and as you do, let your mind wonder and clear.

In the table below, draw or write down the thoughts that you are having, both positive and also the things that you are worried about. With the things that you are worried about, it is good to get them down onto paper and make them real and unlock them from your mind, at least then you can deal with them and come up with strategies to deal with them.

Have a go and see what you come up with.



My positive thoughts

My worries

Walking Through a Wooded Area

Have you ever walked through a wooded area, somewhere that is overgrown, or somewhere that you have not explored before? There are so many things that our bodies go through when we do this and they can give us a positive experience and positive sensations.

Things such as;

- The change in the ground that we are walking on; sometimes it is hard, sometimes it is soft and sometimes it is really wet and muddy.
- Think about navigating your way through fallen trees or over grown areas and how you have to change your body position to move through the area.
- The sensations of standing on twigs and the feeling of them crunching and cracking as we move over them.
- Or the feeling as you brush past leaves and bushes with the morning dew or last night's rainfall flicking and hitting your skin

Your task is to find an area like this, it could be in a park or an area close to your home. Walk through it and complete the table below. Chose four of the senses and then write down how the experience of that sense and aspects of the environment make you feel.

Sense 1	How do you feel? 	Impact on you
Sense 2	How do you feel? 	Impact on you
Sense 3	How do you feel? 	Impact on you



Gardening and Planting

Gardening and planting seeds or bulbs is a great sensory experience and all of our senses can be exposed through this activity. The sheet below explains what to do and then also asks you to think about which sense you used and how it made you feel.

Your task is to plant some seeds or bulbs and to do this task you will need;

- A pot or a container with some holes in the bottom
- Some soil or compost
- Some seeds or bulbs
- Some water

<p>Activity</p> <p>1) Get you container and pot and half fill it with compost using your hands</p> 	<p>Which sense/s did you use the most?</p>	<p>How did it make you feel?</p>
<p>Activity</p> <p>4) Wet the compost slightly and press it down once it is damp</p> 	<p>Which sense/s did you use the most?</p>	<p>How did it make you feel?</p>
<p>Activity</p> <p>3) Press your finger into the compost and make a hole for the bulb or seeds</p> 	<p>Which sense/s did you use the most?</p>	<p>How did it make you feel?</p>
<p>Activity</p> <p>2) Cover with more compost and water again, pressing the compost down</p> 	<p>Which sense/s did you use the most?</p>	<p>How did it make you feel?</p>



Nature Hunting

Nature has a great way of healing us and it draws us in, a nature hunt is a great way to explore our senses and also explore what is out there.

This activity is to go outside, in your garden or a park and explore what nature is around you. You can simply just sit there and watch or you can be a bit more adventurous and turn over rocks and see what is underneath them.

Remember though, if you do this, put everything back the way it was.

When you are doing the activity, fill in the sheet below.

What can you see?



What can you hear?



What can you feel?



What can you smell?



What thoughts are you having?



What is the impact on your thoughts?

If you need any support or any additional resources then please contact Mr. McVerry
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