

Making Sense

Sensory stimulation activities and tips.

NOTE: This page (listed in the left-hand column of the monthly index page as "Making Sense/One2One") alternates between sensory stimulation activities and one-to-one activities. Look for "One2One" next month.

A "Jewel" of a Sensory Kit

In celebration of Gemstone Month, here is a "jewel" of an idea. Put together a sensory kit with a jewelry theme.



Goals of the Sensory Kit

The goal of the sensory kit is to provide a variety of interesting, theme-oriented stimuli (for a variety of ability levels) which will enhance the sensory environment and encourage a memory tie-in to the sensory experience.

Begin with a jewelry box. It should be large enough to hold all your items. A musical jewelry box would be nice.

Fill your box with:

- Old jewelry. Check your local flea market for some interesting pieces. Include:
 - Pins and brooches
 - Rings of all colors and sizes
 - Necklaces - strands of pearls, pendants, locket, etc.
 - Bracelets of all sorts
 - Earrings - clip on type, pierced earrings, loops, etc.

- Hat pins, hair clips, etc.
- Don't forget the men. Add some:
 - Cuff links
 - Tiepins
 - Shirt studs
 - Old watches - wrist watches and pocket watches
 - Military ribbons, medals, and pins
 - Watch chains, coin purse, etc.



- Add other things that you might find in a jewelry box, including:
 - Foreign coins left over from a trip
 - Comb and brush
 - Small ring box
 - Favorite handkerchief

- So far, you have many things people can see and touch. What about something to smell? Although you might not normally find them in a jewelry box, add:
 - Small purse-size bottle of perfume (the roll-on type is nice)
 - Small bottle of cologne for the men
 - Small bottle of hand cream



In addition, have the following available:

- A tape of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend."
- Some jewelry polishing cloths. (You can also purchase pretreated cloths at your local jewelry store or use pieces of soft fabric.)

The Sensory Jewelry Box can be used in many different ways:

- Explore the contents of the box and ask questions. ("What are the different items and what are they used for?") Pass around the items and have each person examine them. (Look at it, hold it, feel it, and/or smell it.)
- Try on various pieces of jewelry.
- Put on some hand cream and perfume or cologne.
- Polish some of the pieces of jewelry.
- Sort the items by color, style, etc.
- Match a pair of earrings to a necklace or bracelet. ("What would you wear with this?")
- Wind and set the watches.
- Reminisce about:
 - favorite jewelry and gemstones. ("Do you prefer gold or silver jewelry?")
 - jewelry fashions over the years. ("Do you have pierced ears? Is it okay for a man to wear a necklace?")
 - birthstones. ("When is your birthday? Do you recall your birthstone?")



- Play "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend." ("Do you know who made the song popular? Do you think diamonds are a sign of love?")
- If you are using a musical jewelry box, discuss the song being played.

NOTE - Unresponsive Residents/Clients

Some of the props in this activity can be used when providing one-to-one sensory stimulation activities for individuals who are unresponsive (comatose, in the late stages of Alzheimer's disease, etc.). For example, play the music and look for any reaction or response. Pass the perfume bottle under the person's nose so they can smell it. Run the brush or comb through the person's hair. Always explain what you are doing, even if you are not sure the person can hear or understand you.

More Bang for Your Buck

Keep your sensory kit handy to use over and over again. The items in the box can make for an interesting activity even for people who are **not** impaired.

There's More!

Check out the [Alzheimer's Focus](#) page for more ideas for people who are cognitively impaired.
