



## Smell as a teaching tool

The sense of smell is powerful. Links are forged between smell and memory. Smell serves as a recognition function. The sense of smell begins in utero and at birth the infant has a high threshold for odor detection.

Smells/odors modify behavior and can control on a primitive level. In the brain, the odor pathway goes through the limbic system to the brainstem. Smells travel across the olfactory nerves in the nose and goes to parts of the brain that control mood, memories and learning.

### Purpose:

- Increase concentration
- Increase communication
- Decrease increased energy
- Increase relaxation
- Improve mood
- Improve sensory processing

### Precautions:

- Smell triggered seizure
- Severe Asthma

### Sensitivity to smells

#### Hypersensitivity To Smells (Over-Responsive):

- ▣ bothered by perfumes/colognes
- ▣ bothered by smells
- ▣ talks about/tells people how funny they smell
- ▣ avoids foods because of smells
- ▣ bothered by body odor or bathroom smells
- ▣ bothered by cooking smells or certain food smells
- ▣ decision made about person based on way he/she smells

#### Hyposensitivity To Smells (Under-Responsive):

- ▣ difficulty discriminating odors
- ▣ does not smell or ignores unpleasant odors
- ▣ comes in contact with poisonous things because noxious is not noticed
- ▣ unable to identify smell of markers or scratch-n-sniff stickers
- ▣ interacts with objects by smelling first
- ▣ unaware of odor that others complain about
- ▣ excessively smells new objects, people or places

### Aromatherapy - [www.gritman.com](http://www.gritman.com)

- Lemongrass - relieves anxiety
- Peppermint - alerting
- Citrus - improves mood
- Lavender - calm mind, relaxes the body
- Rosemary - stimulates or invigorates

### Inclusion of smells in the classroom

- Smell schedule
  - Create simple daily schedule
  - Pair smell to that picture or object
  - Place smells next to picture/object at the start of each day
  - Prepare child for transition using smell
  - Place in finish bag as task is completed
- Discrimination or match activity
  - Develop picture or object cards of familiar objects with smell
  - Place smell in container
  - Have child select correct smell or match smell to picture or object
- To anchor learning process
  - When a child is on task and performing well, use smell to "make strong" the newly learned task by slowly running under nose of student
- To change level of alertness
  - Place smells on cotton ball around the room
  - Place smell in small film container at desk of student
  - Aromatherapy necklace
- Allow as preferred activity for 15 seconds
- Aromatherapy diffusers to mask odors in classroom



### Common smells

- Vanilla
- Garlic
- Pepper
- Flavorings (banana, coconut, lemon, orange)
- Baby lotion
- Coffee
- Lemon or orange
- Cinnamon
- Mint

Evidence based research:

Sullivan, R. (2000). Review: Olfaction in the human infant. University of Oklahoma

Worwood, V (1991). *The Complete Book of Essential Oils and Aromatherapy*. San Raphael, CA: New World Library.

[http://www.aromasensations.com/aromatherapy\\_necklaces.html](http://www.aromasensations.com/aromatherapy_necklaces.html)

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