

Sensory Engagement and the development of early cognition.

In the early stages of development sensory stimulation is critical to the wiring of the brain.

Early sensory experiences trigger the creation of neural pathways in the mind.

The more pathways created during this early stage of development the greater the potential for the brain in the future.



The Sensory Projects run on the principle that with the right knowledge and a little creativity inexpensive items can become effective tools for sensory inclusion.

Through the work of all the Projects founder **Joanna Grace** is seeking to contribute to a future where people are understood in spite of their differences.

To learn more about the projects, and to access free resources and information about bespoke sensory training visit

www.TheSensoryProjects.co.uk

Joanna's books: **Sensory Stories for Children and Teens** and **Sensory-being for Sensory Beings** are available on amazon, with more titles due for publication in 2018.



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The Star Jar Game from The Sensory Projects



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Publication dated/updated 15/10/17

To make your own star jar simply pop a string of red LED lights into a jar, or into a small frosted milk bottle.

Red is the first colour most children can see.

We learn our visual skills in the first few weeks of life, and they are critical to our ability to engage with the world and to give attention.

Although the world is in itself a dazzling visual environment, to those just learning to see it can be a bit confusing.

By offering learners the chance to practice their sight skills on a stimulus that is really easy to see we enable them to develop visual skills that they can then use to access other sight experiences.

Examples of visual skills:

- Look at an object
- Following the movement of an object.
- Scanning the visual field to find an object that you are expecting to see.
- Looking away from an object and back again.
- Looking from an object to a person and then back to the object.

How to play.

In essence you are going to sing the song Twinkle Twinkle little star whilst moving the star jar through sequence of moves that offer your learner the chance to practice their visual skills.

To begin place the jar somewhere within your learner's field of vision, this could be on the floor next to them or you could hold it for them. Their field of vision is likely to settle at a distance that is their own elbow's length from their head, so you may need to get quite close.

Sing

Twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.

Notice whether your learner looks for the jar, do they spot it? If you play this game a lot they may learn that you singing means the jar is around somewhere and become more active in their explorations. Once they are doing this you can play with them by positioning the jar to the side so that they have to turn their head a little more.

Now sing

Up above the world so high

As you sing this line raise the jar upwards so that their eyes must follow a vertical line to keep watching the jar. (Make sure they've spotted it before you lift it up.)

Then sing

Like a diamond in the sky

This time move the jar from left to right, or right to left across the sky, inviting your learner to watch it move along that horizontal line.

Then finish by singing

Twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.

As you sing this place the jar down somewhere or bring it to rest in a different location from it's starting one.

When you stop singing you can encourage your learner to look at you. Perhaps by switching the lights off. And then it's great to play the game again. Have fun!

