

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.

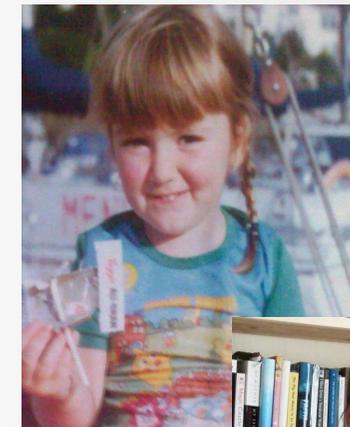


The Sensory Projects

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Rainbow Emotional Regulation



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Rainbow Emotional Regulation

Labelling the Rainbow

Labelling emotions from an early age helps promote an individual's ability to regulate their emotions. There is a tendency to simplify children's emotions into happy and sad. We mistakenly think this makes things easier for them. Yet at a similar age we expect a child to be able to name seven colours in the rainbow. Colours they see, emotions they feel, they are just as tangible and to be given the names for them helps them to understand and process them.

Ways to label emotions

You can label emotions with words, spoken or written.

You can label emotions with symbols, diagrams or photos (symbols and diagrams can be harder for a child to translate, photos of themselves genuinely expressing the emotion will be much easier for them to understand and more accurate in their representation).

You can label emotions with the tone of your voice or with sounds, you might be able to use Objects of Reference or figurines displaying different emotions.

Educative Emotional Expression

You can use your labelling of a child's emotions as a miniature opportunity to teach them emotional regulation.

Label their emotions as they experience them, try to always make this your top priority. So instead of "stop kicking the stairs" say "You are feeling angry" and save your instruction for further down the line.

Try to match their emotional state as you label it, for example the example above you would say "You are feeling angry" in a tone that matched the anger they were expressing. This helps them to feel understood. You are not being angry with them, you are demonstrating that you feel their anger with them. Angry, said as ANGRY generates a greater empathetic connection than angry said in a patronising cutesy way. When you do this quickly regulate your own tone, as you give the advice to help them. For example:

"YOU ARE FEELING ANGRY" said in an angry tone.

"You do NOT want to FEEL this way" said in an urgent tone.

"You are trying to get rid of your anger by kicking the stairs" said in an informative tone.

"But it is not working" said in a compassionate tone.

"Try X instead" said in an optimistic tone.

As you grade your expression like this you give the child a guide for their own emotional regulation. Show the transition in your facial expressions too. We all have mirror neurons in our brains that enable us to feel a little of the emotions we see in others. By providing strong input for their mirror neurons you gift them a little of your emotional state. You need to match the expression to form the connection at the start and then gently blend it into an emotion that will be better for their well being (and yours). For example if a child is crying, you might begin talking to them showing a high level of distress in your own face, "You are very sad," and then let this fade and your muscles relax, "But I am here with you" and introduce a smile that grows. "I will help you to feel happy again" big smile.

Label the rainbow as you see it.

As you would do with colours, take time to point out and discuss emotions as you encounter them in daily life.

