



Things to try ... Sensing

Exploring: 'Coming to our senses'

Context

'The mind makes a wonderful servant but a terrible master.'

Escaping the constant monkey chatter of thinking is both the easiest and most difficult thing to do. Achieving moments where we can be still, present and 'in the moment' enables us to be both more relaxed and at the same time more alert. If we are able to halt the constant train of thought, even if it is just for a moment, allows space for other abilities to shine.

Purpose

This activity is for a parent or teacher or early years professional to use with young children. The purpose of the exercise is to encourage children to focus on their bodies and in particular on their sensations. With practice, children will more easily relax and be able to concentrate for longer. This may be a good exercise to use at the end of PE or playtime or just before bed.

You will need

A moment to explain to children that they are going to do something special which will help them know about what goes on inside their bodies.

It may be helpful to have some suitable calming music playing at the start of the activity – equally, darkening the room may help.

Make sure the room is warm enough and that children can lie flat on the floor before you read out loud the following script.

Notice

... how you use your voice to slow the pace and create resonance. What sensations are you picking up and how are you feeling in your own body? How are the child/ children feeling and responding after the exercise? What do they share? What effect is this having?

What to do

Read the following script out loud to your child/children. Feel free to adapt it to suit the age and the context of the children.

Lie down on the floor and shut your eyes.

Calm your self and just listen to what I am going to say.

Notice your body lying on the floor, notice which bits of your body are touching the floor – your head and back and bottom and legs and heels perhaps.

Go over those parts again – just notice – try not to move too much.

Your head is touching the floor – it is heavy and supported by the floor.

Your back and arms are touching the floor – your arms and hands are floppy and relaxed.

Your bottom is touching the floor – your legs and heels are too – they are all relaxed and heavy – your muscles are relaxed.

Let's make sure we can feel the difference between relaxed and tense – clench your fists tightly – squeeze your hands and fingers – then let go of the squeeze – relax and let your hands and fingers flop – that is relaxed.

Now we are just going to go on a short imaginary journey round our bodies – stopping to visit bits of it.

First of all in your head visit your nose. Don't touch it – just focus on your nose and the fact that air is coming into your nose and out of your nose. That is your breathing. Don't change it – just notice it.

Keep breathing gently in and out. In and out. In and out.

And now notice that your chest might be moving up and down a bit as the air goes in and out of your body. Don't open your eyes and don't move your hands – just notice that your chest might be moving a little bit as the air comes in and goes out of your lungs.

Keep breathing gently in and out. In and out. In and out.

The air in your lungs is taking a special substance called oxygen to your blood – it is helping all the parts of your body to work properly.

Try to imagine the inside of your body. Feel how warm you are.

You are alive and special.

You are alive and special.

And now you know yourself a little bit better because you have imagined yourself from the inside as well as knowing yourself from the outside.

And now concentrate again on your nose and then think about your eyes.

And now without moving the rest of your body you can open your eyes.

Just lie there for a moment and remember the journey you have made round your body.

And now slowly turn over and slowly get up (or get into bed.)

Building on the experience

During the coming week repeat the exercise with your children in, whole or part, at key moments during the day or evening. Paradoxically, by relaxing more deeply, you will probably find they are happier and more alert at those times when they need to be.

