



Accessible Arts & Media Resource Guide

Sensory Resources

www.aamedia.org.uk



About Accessible Arts & Media

We're a charity based in York and we've been running inclusive arts and media learning projects since 1982. We're a small charity with a big heart and our work's built around the belief that everyone can learn, everyone can be creative, and everyone can connect with and contribute to their local community.

We run a range of fun, inclusive creative learning programmes, from singing and signing choirs to specialist sensory activities that support wellbeing; accessible music making groups; creative media projects; and creative sensory activities including fabulously glittery arts and crafts, messy play, sensory stories and music and movement.

A lot of different people take part in our projects. From disabled adults and young people, to older people with dementia and memory loss and people with mental ill-health. We also work with schools, community groups and local businesses.

Our work is centred around co-production - we level the playing field by providing everyone with the support and space they need to have an equal say. And we make sure that everyone has a lot of fun along the way!

If you've downloaded and used any of our resources, we'd love to hear more about how you've been using them, you can drop us an email at info@aamedia.org.uk or tag us on social media.

If you've enjoyed using our resources and you'd like to make a donation to support the cost of creating them, you can [donate via our website](#). As a small charity, we really appreciate your support.

Introduction to Accessible Arts and Media's sensory resource packs

Our sensory resources are designed for support workers, teachers, carers and family members to use with young people and adults with learning disabilities and complex needs.

The resource packs are a guide to getting creative, exploring the senses and having fun. Each resource pack contains a video link so you can watch a facilitator demonstrating the activity. It will also give you some ideas of how to adapt the activity for the needs of the individual(s) you're using the activity with.

The Accessible Arts and Media (AAM) approach to sensory activities

Here are a few tips to help you and your participants get the most out of the sensory resources for creative and music activities.

Total Communication

Total Communication means using as many types of communication as possible and is always user-led. This means using speech, signing, body language, facial expression, and tone of voice. Where appropriate, and if the participants can use them, you could also use additional objects of reference, or choice cards, communication aids and touch.

Observation is the key communication method used by a facilitator. This is especially the case if it involves the use of touch as you will need to observe how the participant responds to this.

Interaction and Intensive Interaction

Throughout the activity, it's important to stay focused with the participant and always interact with them. Their engagement with the activity will improve if there is constant focussed interaction. You can do this by getting involved in the activity with them - get your hands in the messy play, get covered in paint together and sing out loud and proud! Playing, exploring and music is great for people of all ages.

Intensive Interaction goes back to the basics of communication - enjoying small interactions, celebrating eye contact, facial expressions and taking turns in vocalising. It's about going to the participant's world, rather than making them come to yours.

Allow time

When working with children or adults with learning disabilities or complex needs, it's important to allow time to enable the individual to process what's happening. Don't be afraid of silence or stillness, wait for them to process and then engage.

Really take your time with each element of the activity and use all the senses where possible. Explore the senses - feel the paint with your fingers and then feel the paint brush, look at the different colours, does it have a scent to it? Take time to explore the musical instruments by feeling the textures, how they sound played quietly, and loudly and fast and slow. Is there a different way of playing the instrument to hear a different sound?

Hand-over-hand

Sometimes using physical touch is necessary to help someone get engaged in an activity. The activity might initially seem strange or scary to the person you're working with. You could try demonstrating the activity yourself and then using hand-over-hand, or hand-under-hand, to help them experience the activity first. Then once you've experienced it together, you can work to encourage independence and try and get them to do it themselves. Again, it's important to use the skills of Total Communication to observe how the participant responds to touch.

Choice

Always allow the participant to have the choice. Let them choose the colour of the paper, or the instrument they want to use. Let their creativity flow! Remember it's their experience, artwork or song; there's no right or wrong way of doing it.

Adapt

There aren't any right or wrong ways of doing these activities. You may need to adapt them by making them simpler or by using different materials, or by trying one item of messy play each day. The important part of these activities isn't the final product, it's the process and the interaction involved in doing the activity together.

Repetition

Don't be afraid to keep doing the same activity. The more we do things, the easier they become. You develop your skills a bit more each time, and the activity becomes familiar to the participant so they might engage for longer each time.

Copyright Information

Accessible Arts & Media's Sensory Resources

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Contact Us

If you have any questions, require any additional training or support, or would like us to run taster workshop with your group to get you started, please contact:

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