

**SIGHT IDEAS**

*Seeing is our most powerful sense. Seeing things is sometimes the best way to remember things and to become familiar with them. It is always fun to keep a picture album of favorite pictures or photos of people and places we enjoy.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Friends and Family Photos</b>	Go through an album filled with photos of a client’s family members, house mates, and caregivers describing each person to the client.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Magazine and Book Review</b>	Look through magazines and books describing each picture.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Contrast Picture Book</b>	Draw pictures that are of high contrast, such as black and white squares or purple and white circles for the client to look at. Create a book with the pictures.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Inspection Detective</b>	Examine different objects through a magnifying glass.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Water Waves</b>	Watch a desk top wave machine.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Picture Painting</b>	Encourage the client to paint a simple picture.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Lava Lamp</b>	Have a lava lamp available for the client to watch.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Kool Kaleidoscope</b>	Look through a kaleidoscope. Help the client turn the kaleidoscope so the colors and patterns change.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Stained Glass Window</b>	Hang a piece of stained glass in front of a window and watch the light come through the colored glass.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Look through Colored Glasses</b>	Look at different objects through colored plastic wrap or glass.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Disco Fever</b>	Use a black light or hang a disco ball.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Flower Power</b>	Look at a fresh or dried flower arrangement. Talk to the client about the different flowers, colors, scents.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Hide and Seek</b>	Have the client use his/her hands to search for objects hidden in a container of rice, beans, or dried elbow macaroni.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Dazzling Decorations</b>	Decorate the house with different colors of holiday lights: pink in the spring, orange around Halloween, red and green around Christmas, red, white and blue for July 4th.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Puzzles</b>	Help the client do simple puzzles.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>The World through a Viewfinder</b>	Help the client look through a viewfinder to see pictures of sites from around the world.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Collage Collection</b>	Gather materials from around the house and help the client paste onto a paper to make a collage. Frame it and hang it on the wall.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Blowin’ the Wind 2</b>	Hang a wind sock and watch it blow in the wind.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Fabulous Fiber Viewing</b>	Watch fiber optic toys and decorative objects.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Glow in the Dark</b>	Attach glow-in the dark stickers to the wall or ceiling. Use star stickers to create the night sky on the ceiling.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Mirror Mirror on the Wall</b>	Have the client look at her/himself in a full length mirror. Talk about body parts.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Eye Spy</b>	Use commercially available books to search for hidden pictures.

SENSational Ideas was partially funded through Contract # POJA-2005-R-RP05 from the Department of Disability Services to the Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development, UCEDD, 3300 Whitehaven Street, NW, Suite 3300, Washington, DC 20007.

# SENSational Ideas

*for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*



M. JANET THOMAS, Med, OTR/L ■ JAMIE M. HALL, PT, DPT ■ TOBY M. LONG, PhD, PT

*SENSational Ideas* are sensory stimulation activities that caregivers can do with clients. These activities will calm, soothe, relax, or energize the clients. Many clients will enjoy being stimulated through their senses. We all enjoy smelling pleasant scents, being gently massaged with lotion, hearing music, and other pleasant sounds. Our clients also enjoy these activities.

*SENSational Ideas* are grouped according to the primary sensory system involved (touch, movement, sight, smell, hearing). A caregiver may use one of the activities or combine ideas. For example, massage a person’s arm while playing gentle music.

Prior to starting any of these activities, the client’s team should discuss any precautions or contraindications. For example, older clients with fragile skin may not be able to tolerate being massaged or some clients may not like

certain types of music. Also, the team may have suggestions on which activities would be most appropriate.

*SENSational Ideas* are arranged in a checklist format to make documentation easy for the caregiver. Several activities can be done each day. The caregiver should check off the activities completed to make sure a variety of activities are done. This will prevent repeating the same ones over and over. Unless indicated each activity should be done for no more than five minutes.

When you first try an activity with a client watch his or her reaction. If the client doesn’t enjoy the activity he or she may make an unpleasant face or draw away or make an unpleasant sound. Stop it or modify the activity in some way if it seems like the client doesn’t like the activity. All these activities should be pleasant for the client, if not, don’t do it.

**SMELL IDEAS**

*Odors can be very powerful. Some people do not like certain smells like perfumes or clothes detergent. Because smell involves inputs to the receptors located in the nose and mouth, sometimes smelling something can increase our appetites. If you use an activity with pleasant food smells like cinnamon you may want to have a treat with the same taste in it available for the client. Sometimes strong smells like dish detergent can make us feel queasy.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Essential Oils</b>	Put drops of different oils on cotton balls and hold up under the client’s nose.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Fresh Flowers</b>	Decorate the client’s room with nice fresh smelling flowers.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Potpourri</b>	Make your own potpourri by putting fresh flowers and herbs on a cookie sheet lined with foil and bake in the oven on warm for about 15 minutes and check for dryness.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Pine-Smell</b>	Gather pine branches from outdoors and bring the pine scent indoors to enjoy. This is very refreshing during the winter holidays.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Applesauce—Cinnamon Play Doh</b>	Mix equal amounts of applesauce and cinnamon to make doh.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Scented Finger Paints</b>	Put a few drops of essential oils or flavoring in finger paints.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Scented Paper</b>	Place perfume on pretty paper and draw, color or write.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Scented Markers</b>	Draw, color or write with store bought scented markers.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Scented Massage</b>	Buy lotions with different scents and massage into the client’s skin on hands and feet.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Orange-Clove Air Freshener</b>	Insert whole cloves all over an orange and place in the room to freshen the air.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Bakery Whiffs</b>	Bake fresh foods like bread, cookies, and brownies giving the house the smells of a bakery.

## TOUCH IDEAS

The skin is very sensitive to being touch. For most of us being touched is comforting, relaxing, and pleasant. The touch ideas listed here are different types of pleasant feelings that most clients will enjoy. Being touched on the skin will stimulate touch receptors letting the client feel the sensation. For clients who may be sensitive to lotions, use a hypoallergenic type of lotion.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Gentle Massage</b>	Warm lotion in the palm of your hand and then gently massage clients arms, hands, or legs.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Therapressure Massage</b>	Massage the client using deeper pressure than you would when giving a gentle massage. Go up and down the client's arms, hands, legs, and feet.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Weighted Blankets</b>	Place a weighted blanket over the client's body providing deep pressure. You can buy weighted blankets from a variety of internet sites or place several blankets on the client to provide deep pressure.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>You've Got the Remote</b>	Obtain an adapted universal remote control, one with large flat buttons. Guide the client in hitting the right button to turn on a TV, radio, change stations, etc.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Material Massage</b>	Cut up different textures of materials, like terry cloth, satin, cotton, etc. Rub the material gently over the client's hands, arms, feet, and legs.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>"Touch Me" Book</b>	Gather together materials and common objects like a zipper, sand paper, cotton ball, tin foil, feather, etc. Glue the materials to stiff paper and connect the papers to make a book. As the client touches each page, tell him/her about the material and its uses.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Texture Box</b>	Fill an empty shoe box with dry rice, beans, or elbow macaroni and place a client's hands or feet in the box.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Paraffin Bath</b>	Place client's hands in a paraffin bath.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Soak Feet in Tub</b>	Using a store bought foot whirlpool bath, place client's feet in tub and turn on jets.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Play-Doh (Scented)</b>	Take store bought or homemade play-doh and add a few drops of scented oils or flavorings to it. Help the client manipulate the dough by flattening, squeezing, etc.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Cornstarch Concoction</b>	Mix 2 parts cornstarch and 1 part water with a few drops of food coloring, help client manipulate the concoction by stirring with fingers or spoons, squeezing.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Goop</b>	Make Goop out of 1 cup water and 1 cup glue, add 1 tsp. powered Borax that has been mixed with 1/4 cup water into the glue and water mixture. Add food coloring if desired. Have fun by fingering, touching, squeezing etc. Store in a plastic bag. Some clients may prefer to squeeze the bag with the Goop inside.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Hot Packs</b>	Make moist heat packs by warming small, folded, lightly wet towels in the microwave for a few seconds. Touch the packs to make sure they are not too hot. They should feel like a warm towel.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Ice Packs</b>	Fill a water bottle or plastic bag with ice cubes, wrap in a small towel and place on different parts of the client's body.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Fidget Toys</b> (squish balls, beads, koosh balls, tangle toys)	Gather several types of fidget toys such as squish balls, beads, koosh balls, and tangle toys* and put them in a shoe box or bag. Help the client manipulate the different textures. *Tangle toys are flexible, bendable rubberized toys that can be manipulated into a variety of shapes.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Fun with Fans</b>	Fan different parts of a client's body with a battery-operated hand-held or paper fan.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Hand-Held Vibrators</b>	Vibration can be calming and relaxing for some people. Hold a vibrator on different parts of a client's body for a few seconds; move it around on the client's arm or leg.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Hand-Held Massagers</b>	Massage a clients arms or legs with a hand-held massager.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Bubble Wrap</b>	Help a client squeeze, pinch or pop bubble wrap.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Pet a Pet Therapy</b>	Guide the client to gently pet a gentle, good natured dog or cat.

## SOUND IDEAS

Sounds are made by objects in the environment vibrating, causing sound waves to move through the air to our ears. Some sounds are very pleasant, others can be harsh. Usually we like to hear one sound at a time. It is easier for us to hear them that way. When we are bombarded with sounds it can become unpleasant or sometimes painful to our ears.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Talk is Sweet</b>	Talk to the client. Describe what is happening, what you are doing, what is coming up.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Soulful Sounds</b>	Play a variety of music types on the radio or on CD. Listen to talk shows on the radio or TV for a change of pace.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Reality Orientation</b>	Several times a day tell the client what the date is, the time, the weather.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Read Books</b>	Read books to the client.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Books on Tape</b>	Play a book on tape. Play it the same time everyday for 15 minutes so client may learn to anticipate that time. During other times talk to the client about the book he/she is listening to.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Relaxation CDs</b>	Play relaxation CDs on the CD player.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Recite Poetry</b>	Read or recite a favorite poem.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Music Makers 101</b>	Encourage the client to play or sing along with you a variety of musical instruments (guitars, harmonicas, drums, tambourines).
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Music Makers 102</b>	Help the client hold a sound making toy or instrument (shakers, clappers, and castanets) and help her move it to make noise.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Talking Pictures</b>	Talk about pictures from photo albums or magazines.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Current Events</b>	Read the newspaper or news magazine to client.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Blowin' in the Wind 1</b>	Listen to wind chimes blowing in the wind.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Talk, Talk, Talk, Talk</b>	Listen to talk radio or speeches.

## MOVEMENT IDEAS

Movement stimulates receptors in the inner ear so we feel when we move. If we didn't feel how our body is moving we may lose our balance! Movement also makes us stronger and more energetic. Encourage the client to move as much as possible on their own. We get stronger when we move on our own more than when some one else moves us.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Creative Movement</b>	Encourage the client to move as much as possible. Be creative—use balls, ribbons, balloons. Play all types of music-soft and slow to encourage slow movement or fast to encourage quick movements
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Reaching for the Sky</b>	Encourage the client to reach up as high as possible. If possible have the client help you get objects down from a top shelf-reaching up above his/her head
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Bend and Straighten Arms and Legs</b>	If the client doesn't move very much on his/her own, gently move the arms and legs in the variety of directions in which they normally move.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Mix it Up-Change Positions</b>	If the client doesn't move very much make sure you put him in different positions several times a day. The client should stay in the position for no more than twenty minutes. Place on his side, or his stomach or over a wedge or blanket roll
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Shake It Up—Create Sounds through Movement</b>	Help the client hold a sound making toy or instrument and help her move it to make noise or march on bubble wrap to pop the bubbles
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Rock it Up-Rocking Chair</b>	Place the client in a rocking chair or slider and gently rock him/her
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Cruising</b>	Take client for a ride in a wheelchair or a car
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>Hammock Heaven</b>	Swing in a hammock