

SENSORY ACTIONS FOR INFANTS



The first two years of life are thought of as the sensory motor stage of development. This means that infants, babies and toddlers learn about their environment, their family, and themselves through their physical senses and their movement experiences. Crawlers and toddlers can move around a room using their natural curiosity to explore and manipulate everything in their path. Infants, who are much less mobile, rely on caregivers to provide them with sensory stimulation and movement experiences. Adults become the educational consultants for infants! They can enrich the learning experiences by providing appropriate toys and props to stimulate the infant's visual, auditory, and tactile capabilities. Motion and touch are exceptionally important types of sensory stimulation which provide infants with information about their bodies, the location of their bodies or body parts, communication from the caregiver, and can be either soothing or stimulating. Sensory actions can be maximized in the following ways:

Visual

Most infants prefer looking at people, rather than things. They can focus and follow slowly moving objects. They can distinguish shapes and forms, especially faces. For the best visual inspection, mobiles should be hung about twelve inches from the infant's eyes and could include the upper half of a face, bold patterns, or an unbreakable mirror. Change visual orientation by repositioning the infant in the crib or by various holding positions.

Auditory

Infants can recognize and discriminate sounds. They usually quiet to the sound of a familiar voice and will respond to sounds and voice characteristics. They enjoy the sounds that **they** can make through their own noises and babbling. Adults should identify and talk about what the infant is attending to during alert movements. Talking, reading, singing and humming

are great ways to vary and enrich the auditory stimulation of an infant. These are especially good strategies for diaper changing, bathing, and playtime.

Tactile

Tactile stimulation is one of the most important ways to communicate to an infant. It is essential that an infant feels secure and develops a basic sense of trust. It is the adult caregiver who determines the nature of the interactions. Playful touching and massaging will convey tenderness, security, and attention. As parts of the body are touched or stroked, the brain maps the location of body parts. In this way, the infant develops a sense of body awareness which will be essential in babyhood and toddlerhood.

Vestibular

Vestibular (or motion) stimulation is powerfully comforting. Rocking or swaying is a universal soothing technique which spans across cultures. The infant's vestibular system is very responsive to motion stimulation. The motion should be gentle and slow. Fast paced movements or sudden stops and starts can cause injury or distress in the infant. Motion can be provided up and down, like bouncing or lifting the infant. Side to side motion can be provided by holding the infant and gently swaying side to side. Rocking motion can be provided in a rocking chair or rocking cradle. Circular motion can be provided by placing the infant over a large ball and slowly moving the ball back and forth.

Suggested equipment, Toys and Props for Sensory Stimulation:

Mobiles	Rocking chair
Pictures	Floor or crib gym
Unbreakable mirrors	Infant seat
Sturdy books	Bath toys
Music tapes	Soft ball
Soft rattles	Cradle
Large ball	

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