

B E S T P R A C T I C E S

hawai'i & pacific **DEAF-BLIND** *project*

Did You Know...The Nose Knows!

Do you spend time caring for or working with a Deaf-blind child? If you do, it is important to understand about the sense of smell; it has a significant role in helping Deaf-blind individuals interpret information about people, places, and things in their environment.

Did you know that the sense of smell is the only one of our senses that has a direct line to your brain? Some think that this direct path could be the reason our sense of smell can evoke strong reactions. Here are examples of physical reactions to strong smells--something that smells delicious (like fresh baked bread) may make us salivate. A terrible smell (like old rotting fruit) may cause us to gag. If something smells really strong, like perfume or a gas leak, it may cause a headache.

For many Deaf-blind individuals their “nose knows”. For example, they might not be able to see their favorite food, but they can smell it cooking and know what’s for dinner. They may know that their favorite Auntie has just arrived because of her special perfume.

Here are some fascinating facts about our sense of smell. As you read these facts, think about how it might be related to Deaf-blind people.

1. The sense of smell is the first of all our senses to develop. Even before we are born, our sense of smell is fully formed and functioning.
2. Your scent cells are renewed every 28 days, so every four weeks you get a “new nose”.
3. The human brain can process roughly 10,000 different smells.
4. Smell is the most sensitive of all of the senses.
5. The sense of smell gets “bored” easily. Here’s an example: When entering a bakery, you are very aware of the smells, but, by the time you are ready to leave the store, you won’t be able to smell the different scents around you.



Sense of Smell and Children who are Deaf-blind

When you work with a child who is Deaf-blind, think about using smells in a meaningful way to help the child know what is going on in their environment. Here are suggestions that can help:

- a. Smell is useful to help the Deaf-blind child become more aware of smells in their surroundings. Many environments have a specific recognizable smell. Regularly identifying these smells for the Deaf-blind child can be a useful thing to do. For example, when a child is getting close to a bar-b-que, they will smell the smoke and the food that is cooking.
- b. Smell is also helpful for Deaf-blind children to be able to identify important people in their lives. For example, wear the same perfume/cologne/aftershave lotion that let's the Deaf-blind child recognize you by smell.
- c. Deaf-blind people will often intentionally smell things within their reach. The custom of smelling things can be used to introduce an upcoming activity. For example, before having the Deaf-blind child brush their teeth, let them smell the open toothpaste so they can be ready to brush their teeth.
- d. Some people have hypersensitivity or do not like specific smells. Be sensitive if the Deaf-blind child shows an obvious dislike for smells of certain things.

Adapted from: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/lifestyle/health/20-fascinating-facts-sense-smell-1977351#ixzz2vyaw0JWo>
Brown, David. Utilizing the Sense of Smell in Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness. California Deaf-Blind Services. <http://www.sfsu.edu/~cadbs/Facts.html>



Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs #H326T130023. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

