

Top Tips: Sensory work with Children & Young People

Natalya Martin, a specialist sensory artist, gives some top tips on some sensory approaches that can be used when working with children and young people.

- Start from a sensory point and build from there. Most people experience the world through their senses.
- Structured free play can have a real benefit; just allow young people to be and explore.
- Foster an environment of curiosity, playfulness and creativity.
- Use puppets! Puppets are a great way to encourage creativity in a non-intimidating way, where young people can communicate wants and needs through characters and puppets.
- Create a safe space: Use wellbeing check-ins with young people at the start and end of sessions. Meet young people where they're at.
- Bring young people back to their comfort baseline after a workshop.
- Be aware of sensory overload and the need for quiet spaces.
- Less is more.
- Swap spoken language for our senses.
- Consider how to work with the energy of your group
- Letting go is so important. Make sure you have back-up plans.
- Remember the importance of repetition – and bookend sessions.
- Work with a theme. How can you connect this to more than one thing that is going on; for example, can you do something that connects more than one topic or subject? This is a really good way to allow processing time. So you're not just doing this one topic in English for 50 minutes or so, but this will spill over into drama, art and music - maybe even into science or geography. It's like looking at the same topic from lots of different angles, and not only does this allow for more time to process information and thoughts, but it gives a variety of "ways in" to a project for different young people who may be more inclined to science than music, or vice versa.
- Let the young people lead the session to a degree - allowing choice and agency.
- Sensory wellbeing is important for everyone, including adults and young people.
- Remember that energy shifts and moods can be so easily detected by young people, and in my own experience, especially people who communicate non-verbally.
- Explore sensory wellbeing and how this affects our arousal curve (see <https://www.blurtitout.org/product/free-download-your-sensory-self-care-toolkit/> for more information).

Natalya Martin is a specialist sensory artist with a passion for playfulness and curiosity. Her work explores sensory approaches to learning and engagement through live theatre and arts, digital and online, as well as in education and community settings. She has worked on a wide range of innovative and exciting projects with partners such as Oily Cart Theatre, and The V&A Museum of Childhood. Visit her website at <https://www.natalyasensory.co.uk/> to find out more.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at artsmark@themightycreatives.com if you have any further information or want to find out more.