

## Module 6:

# Education Of The Senses

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## Sensory Education in Montessori

The five senses of a human being enable people to interact with their environment in an amazing way. Each one of the senses works in a complex, fascinating manner. Through each sense, we are able to commune with the world.

Learning about the five senses is fun, and appropriate for all age levels, from preschool through college. Lessons can be as simple as a few experiments to introduce each sense or as involved as learning the mechanics of each sense and sense organ.

### 6.1 How Do Your Senses Work?

What are your senses? How do they all function together at the same time? This book explains how your body works with your brain to "make sense" of the world around you.

All five senses (taste, touch, sight, smell and sound) are connected to the brain. Each sense sends a message to the brain along different pathways in your body, called nerves. Once the brain receives the message, it then decides what to do about it.

#### Sight

Your eyes work a bit like a camcorder, taking moving pictures and sending those pictures to the brain. The black circle in the middle of your eye is actually a little hole, letting light into the eye. At the back of your eye are tiny things called receptors; one for sending messages about bright light and colour (cones), and one for dim light (rods). Only rods work in low light, which is why you can't see colours when it's dark.

#### Hearing

Because of their special shape, your ears draw in all the different sounds you hear every day. Those sounds travel along a little tunnel inside your ears, and bounce off a tiny piece of skin stretched across, the tunnel called the ear drum. Each sound makes the ear drum vibrate, and those vibrations travel up to the brain, which tells you what the sound is.

#### Touch

Like your eyes, your skin also has lots of tiny receptors, but instead of helping you to see, these receptors tell you if something is hot, cold, painful, and tickly and lots of other different things. Your hands, lips and the bottom of your feet are especially sensitive. For example. If you put your hand near a hot stove, the receptor sends a message to the brain and you know right away not to touch it or else you will get hurt.

## Smell

Close your eyes and imagine you have a yummy chocolate cake in front of you. How could you tell it was a chocolate cake if you couldn't see it?

When you have a big sniff, the air flows into your nose and over tiny hairs at the top of the nostrils. The hairs send messages about what you smell to your brain. If you have a cold, the hairs get clogged up with mucus, and you can't smell anything.

## Taste

Your tongue is covered in tiny little bumps called taste buds. Each part of your tongue can taste a different flavour-sweet, bitter, sour and salty. When you eat something, the taste buds send a message along the nerves to the brain, and the brain recognizes what you are eating. Like your skin, your tongue also has receptors, and can tell you if something is too hot to eat, or something that might be dangerous if you tried to swallow it, like a fish bone.

### 6.1.1 Defining Maria Montessori's Nine Senses

Maria Montessori further breaks down the five basic senses into nine isolated senses, each addressed in her sensorial curriculum.

It is traditionally taught that the human being experiences his world through five senses: visual/seeing, auditory/hearing, olfactory/smelling, and tactile/touch, and gustatory/taste. Maria Montessori expanded these five senses to include chromatic/colour, baric/weight, thermic/temperature, and stereognostic/tactile-muscular.

### 6.1.2 Purpose of Sensory Education

In Montessori training, it is taught that the direct aims of the Sensorial activities are to refine the child's senses so that he can differentiate even the slightest differences in order to truly observe and appreciate the world around him. The indirect goals are the mastery of the manipulation of the apparatus and of the terminology involved. Each exercise specifically isolates one sense at a time, to maximize its refinement.

## Visual Sense

The visual sense is interpreted by the eyes. It is what you can see. Exercises develop this sense by requiring the eye to perceive differences in size, form, and colour. Size materials include the Pink Tower, Brown Prisms, Red Rods, Knobbed and Knobbles Cylinders, which are graded by size. Materials teaching form include the Geometric Solids (three-  
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