

Summary Notes

Having fun – The Sensory Way: Party!

Through the use of simple activities it is possible to encourage meaningful engagement with people with PMLD. These activities can enhance communication, interaction, curiosity, initiation and good mental wellbeing through having fun with our senses! Through the joint participation of party activities, it is possible to create a sense of awe and wonder, anticipation, excitement and reflection.

SENSORY PASS THE PARCEL

You can't have a party without playing pass the parcel! This traditional game can include everyone, work on communication skills, turn taking, engagement, exploration, good mental wellbeing and awaken our senses.

- Use every opportunity to encourage the sense of belonging and being together. Celebrate the winner of each layer, use the names of others as the parcel gets passed by "Oh it wasn't X this time!" When offering the big mack to be pressed for the tune, congratulate them as they do so.
- Remember to allow plenty of time for processing all that is being explored. This can include the variety of sensory layers in the parcel and the surprise at the end. It can also allow for the processing of the activity and sense of anticipation which will encourage meaningful engagement.
- Enable the person you are working with to have some control within the activity. By encouraging them to unwrap the layers of the parcel themselves (only giving support when really required) they will have more desire to engage and therefore achieve.
- REMEMBER, the more excited and animated you are when sharing the activity, the more excited and animated the people you are working with will be too!

What are the benefits of allowing processing time?

WHO IS HIDING?

All you need is a large scarf, blanket or parachute. This game involves hiding one person at a time, singing a song about 'who is hiding?' and encouraging them to reveal who they are. This very simple game can become an extended session with plenty of opportunities for communication, anticipation, following instructions and awareness of peers.

- Remember the importance of how much our energy can help with the engagement of others. Sing with excitement and expression!
- Build up a sense of anticipation, awe and wonder! Count to three before the hiding person is revealed. By counting to three, you are giving everyone time to process and prepare for something to happen. Encourage the hider to remove their cover a little bit each time a number is counted (where required, support with the removal but allow time for them to respond first) Wait for a sign initiated by them before saying the next number (this could be through reaching out, moving their head, vocalising or another way specific to them) By doing this, you are enabling them to connect with the activity and become fully involved and keen to experience what is about to happen.
- Hiding under a blanket or cover and encouraging the individual to try and remove it will assist with their proprioceptive awareness.
- By taking the time to explore all aspects of this activity, you are assisting the person you are sharing it with to become fully immersed and engaged. This is really beneficial for their well-being and they can fully enjoy the sense of 'being in the moment'.

How can you enable the person you are sharing the activity with to feel independent?

MUSICAL STATUES

This game always goes down well either for the dancers among us or those who like to spectate! There are ways that everyone can be involved and this game can encourage a sense of belonging, good mental wellbeing, communication, awareness of others and anticipation.

- With a very simple game like Musical Statues, it is still possible to build up the sense of anticipation and awe and wonder which is so beneficial for engaging with the person we are working with. By interacting, keeping up an air of excitement and making eye contact, the whole idea of 'when will the music start or stop?!' will be emphasized.
- Repeat the game a few times in order to allow processing of what is happening which will then encourage anticipation, engagement and cause and effect.
- Enable the person you are working with to have some control within the activity. By encouraging them to be the DJ and control the music and therefore the reactions of everyone in the group, they will have more desire to engage and experience the sense of belonging.
- Look for opportunities in the game to strengthen their physical capabilities. By encouraging dancing or using the big mack/switch activated CD player, you will be working on; fine motor skills, hand/eye coordination, tracking and reaching out and stretching (according to the person's individual needs)

What are the benefits of creating a sense of awe and wonder in Musical Statues?

THE STAR GAME: 'SENSORY DRAMA FOR VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE' BY FLO LONGHORN

A wonderful game requiring some cardboard circles, pompoms or fancy hoop, a couple of hats and a mirror! This game is one that has been popular amongst my classes over the years. It promotes the feelings of belonging, excitement, anticipation, celebration (and being celebrated) It also encourages independence, interaction and communication.

This game can be found in the book written by Flo Longhorn called 'Sensory Drama For very Special People'

- Repeat the game a few times in order to allow processing of what is happening which will then encourage anticipation, engagement and cause and effect.
- Encourage the person you are working with to be fully involved in all aspects of the game such as the turning over of the circles. Can they reach out to tap the circle? Can they pick it up or hold it? Can they hold your hand and direct it over to where the circle is? If given time, they might be able to do one of these and, if given the opportunity will have a sense of satisfaction.
- Build up a sense of anticipation, awe and wonder! Count to three before the circles are turned over and the star is revealed. By counting to three, you are giving everyone time to process and prepare for something to happen. Wait for a sign initiated by them before saying the next number (this could be through reaching out, moving their head, vocalising or another way specific to them) By doing this, you are enabling them to connect with the activity and become fully involved and keen to experience what is about to happen.
- Repetition is key! The more an activity is repeated, the more the person you are sharing this with will anticipate what will happen. The excitement and happiness at someone becoming a star after the calm turning over of the circles, will become greatly anticipated!

What are the benefits of enabling independence?

CAKE!

What's a party without a cake?! A party Cake is not always about the eating but the anticipation of candles being lit/blown out, the colours, smells, sense of awe and wonder as the lights are turned off. There are a variety of ways a cake can be enjoyed at a party through extended sensory activities.

- Remember how a simple activity such as passing around a cake that might take only a few minutes, can actually be broken down and explored for a far longer length of time. By using the seven areas of engagement as a guide, you can break down the activity, offering the people you are sharing it with a much more meaningful experience.
- When passing around the cake, always spend time showing each individual even if it is not their birthday/celebration. Allow plenty of time for processing what they are being shown.
- If real candles are being used, offer everyone the opportunity to try and blow out their candle (even if you have to wait a long time) If they are unable to blow it out then let them know that you are going to do it with



their help. They could help you count to three before you blow it out so will still have a sense of control, independence and self-worth. As the candle is blown out, blow onto their skin to assist them with processing what is happening.

- The manner in which we conduct ourselves will play a huge part in how engaged everyone at the party will be. Being mindful of our expressions, gestures, volume and tone of voice to create a sense of awe and wonder, anticipation, excitement and celebration, we can ensure we'll be having the best party ever!

How can an activity like this encourage a sense of belonging?

WRAP UP

As each school year passes and with every new student I meet, I am constantly blown away by the inspirational manner that they live their lives and their approach to experiencing the world around them. A lot of my students, past and present have taught me so much about living in the moment and finding the joys out of the smallest of things. I hope the party ideas will bring lots of fun and joy between you and the people you share them with.

When sharing simple activities, it is useful to think about the areas of engagement. These can help to serve as a reminder for how we can get the most out of the session and ensure that it is meaningful.

1. Initiation
2. Awareness
3. Curiosity
4. Persistence
5. Investigation
6. Anticipation
7. Discovery

Enjoy the simplest of activities, have fun and make them meaningful!



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