Collaboration for Early Childhood

Sensory DIY Recipes

Cloud Dough

Supplies

- 8 cups flour (You can also use rice or other gluten free flour if gluten allergies are present, but adjust until you get a consistency you like)
- 1 cup vegetable oil or baby oil
- A dash of vanilla, peppermint, lemon or other essential oils (check for oil scent safety around pets)

How to make Cloud Dough

Start off with 4 cups of flour and 1/2 cup of oil.

Steps

1. Scoop flour into the center of a large tub.
2. Create a crater in the middle of the flour.
3. Pour the oil into the crater.
4. Gently mix it all together with your hands.

The cloud dough will have a super soft feel and leave your hands soft. The dough should be crumbly, not greasy, and able to be molded into a ball.

Enjoy mixing and learning about the properties of the dough as it is, or add small silicone bowls, spoons, or measuring cups to make small structures, hills, or pretend cupcakes.

Store in a sealed container or ziplock bag. No refrigeration necessary - will last for weeks.

Bulk Birdseed

Birdseed (no nuts blend) is a great addition to any sensory bin. Just add to the bin. It has a great feel, especially for kiddos who don't like wet, slimy, sticky, sandy, or slimy feelings.

Scented Rice

Supplies

- Large bag of white rice
- Liquid watercolor (if you want to color your rice)
- Scent/seasoning - you can use dry seasonings like cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice or sage or rosemary. These could also be a liquid scent extract or oil.

How to make Scented Rice

1. *To color rice (optional)* - Put rice in plastic bags, add a squirt of color and your liquid scent (if using) and smush the rice around in the bag until it is all evenly tinted. Put the rice on a tray to dry.
2. Once the rice is dry, mix in your dry spices and scents.
3. You can also add in pine cones, shiny plastic ball ornaments, plastic easter eggs, or other fun sensory items to add more play options to the rice.

Tip: Make rice for each season! For example fall rice could be orange and have a pumpkin spice scent with pine cones and fabric leaves.

Smelling Jars

Place a cotton ball or cotton pad in a jar and add a few drops of an extract or essential oil to each.

Each jar should have a different scent.

Ask kids to identify what is in each jar (lemon, orange, peppermint, vanilla, and floral scents work great). Make some jars with dry materials like coffee, garlic powder, cocoa powder, and cinnamon, too.

Thank you to Tracy Patton of Once Upon Some Messy Fun for sharing these ideas and recipes.

Essential Oils and Safety

Scent is not an exact science and different scents may produce different reactions for each individual. Scent is personal! If we all responded the same way to each scent, there wouldn't be thousands of perfumes or candle options. We also know scent is a powerful memory trigger, so what should calm may have the opposite effect if it's associated with something negative, or a scent not often associated with "calming" might be a great comfort to someone. Be aware of this as your introduce scents into your early learning environments.

The recipes on the other side of this handout use only a small amount of essential oils and are safe for all with supervision. If you use essential oils in additional ways with young children, make sure that you are using them safely. The article, "Aromatherapy for Children: What's Safe and What's Not" from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia helps clarify best practices. Scan the QR code below to learn more.

If you have a furry friend in your early learning space, take precautions when using essential oils. Because the scents can be strong, most cats will naturally stay away. They are far more sensitive to essential oils than dogs. Dogs are a different story! They may think the scent means that something in your sensory bin is food and could get sick if they ingest it. As a preventative measure, keep all essential oils and scented sensory items out of reach of curious pets.

For more information about essential oils and pets, visit: https://spca.bc.ca/news/aromatherapy-pets/ or scan the QR code below.