

The Sensory Kit

The Sensory Kit provides an experiential method for you to learn about some of the sensory changes that may occur with the aging process. Gather the materials listed in the box to make a sensory kit. Then follow the directions as you use it.

Use your sensory kit to explore these sensory changes:

Items for the sensory kit



- Plastic sandwich bag
- Pair of vinyl gloves
- Piece of yellow cellophane or vinyl
- Piece of phone book, newspaper, or map
- Small button
- Needle and thread
- Piece of sandpaper
- Handful of split peas
- Pieces of white, light yellow, blue, & green paper
- Piece of chocolate



Vision

Plastic sandwich bag

- Remove the contents from the sandwich bag.
- Look through the sandwich bag (two layers of plastic). This represents 20/60 vision and one is still legally able to drive during the day.
- While looking through the sandwich bag (two layers), try reading the phonebook, a map, a newspaper (included in kit) and a prescription bottle.
- Fold the sandwich bag in half (four layers of plastic). This represents being legally blind.

- **Yellow cellophane or vinyl**

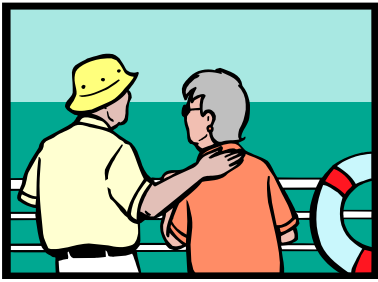
- Look through a single sheet of yellow cellophane or vinyl. This represents yellowing that occurs with the lens of the eye.
- While looking through the yellow cellophane or vinyl, look at the colored pieces of paper (white and yellow, blue and green). This demonstrates the difficulty

encountered by older adults in distinguishing some colors from one another. This is why we need to avoid instructions such as, "Take the yellow pill in the morning and the white one at night", or "Take the green Coumadin pill on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and the blue Coumadin pill on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday."

- **Sandwich bag and yellow cellophane together**

- Now look through both the sandwich bag and the single layer of yellow material. Look at the pictures of medications found in a nursing drug handbook. Notice the difficulty a person might have differentiating medications.

Touch



- Put on the vinyl gloves and pick up the sandpaper. Notice the diminished sensation you have. This simulates a peripheral neuropathy.
- While you have the gloves on, try picking up the button and try threading the needle. While doing this, imagine you also have vision difficulties.
- Place several dried split peas in the sole each of shoe and walk around. This simulates pain and loss of balance associated with bunions and corns.

Taste

- While holding your nose, eat the piece of chocolate. What do you notice?
- Another way to experience taste changes is to eat a food item labeled "No Added Salt" such as crackers or a can of vegetables or soup.
- Try mixing a container of unsweetened powdered drink mix without the sugar and drink it.



Van Son, C. (2005). *The Older Adult Focus Project*, OHSU School of Nursing, Portland, OR.