

ORAL SENSORY ACTIVITIES

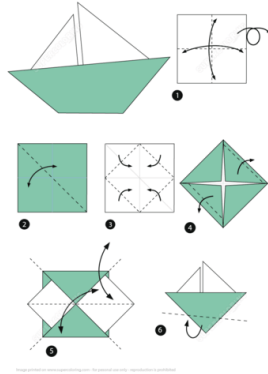
Description: Oral sensory problems arise due to how the muscles in the mouth function. These problems have to do with the act of eating and the way in which mouth tissues perceive sensory information of the foods that are being consumed. Some of the ways in which oral sensory problems can be seen is through: slow and inefficient chewing, gagging, vomiting, weakness in cheeks, strong reactions to certain foods and textures and coughing or choking.

Purpose: Oral sensory activities are important for learners with oral sensory problems because they can help decrease existing harmful coping mechanisms. It is also important to practice such activities to ensure that oral sensory problems slowly decrease.



Activity 1: Gum Massage

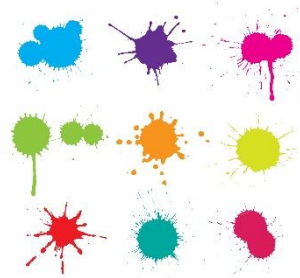
Description:	Accept oral stimulation over a large surface in and around the oral cavity
Purpose:	This activity helps the learner normalize awareness within the oral cavity in order to improve speech and feeding development. Also helpful to decrease drooling, mouth stuffing, and/or the need to chew objects.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Place your index finger just above the learner's upper front teeth. Slide it along the gums to the back right molars and back to where you began. Repeat about 3 times. Then repeat the same motion on the lower gums.</p> <p>Step 2: Use your thumb to repeat the same movement on the other side of the learner's mouth. Start above the upper middle teeth and move your thumb along the gums to the back left molar area. Repeat about 3 times. Then repeat the same motion on the lower gums.</p> <p>Step 3: During each step, notice the learner's response and adjust accordingly. Try adding more/less pressure and observe the learner's response. For a learner who is hyposensitive, try dipping your finger in ice water before beginning gum massage.</p> <p>*You may repeat this exercise several times throughout the day, as often as possible.</p> <p>**If the learner does not allow any gum massage at all, you may start on the cheeks or on the jawline, moving from the sides of the face towards the mouth.</p>



Activity 2: Sailboat Races

[Link](#)

Description:	Caregivers will take paper boats and sail it in a tub/bucket. The learner will blow on the boat with a straw in order to move it forward.
Purpose:	This activity will help to improve stamina for speech production and feeding.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Create 2-4 paper sailboats and fill up a tub or bucket with water.</p> <p>Step 2: Model blowing the sailboat across the water. Then instruct the learner to do so.</p> <p>Step 3: Repeat until satisfied.</p>



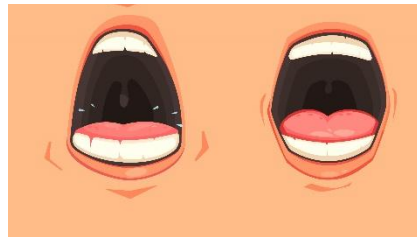
Activity 3: Blow Painting

Description:	Use a straw to move paint on a paper.
Purpose:	This activity will cause the oral muscles to get stimulated. Learners will also develop concentration.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Splash some paint on a large piece of paper – make sure the consistency is more watery</p> <p>Step 2: Find a straw that you can use.</p> <p>Step 3: Blow through the straw at the paint and watch the paint move around the paper.</p>



Activity 4: Cotton Ball Fun

Description:	Use some cotton balls, straw and a tape or colors to set up a maze on the floor. Blow cotton balls with a straw along the path treated on the floor/table.
Purpose:	This activity helps improve stamina and breath support for speech production and feeding.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Create a maze or a football goal on any table using masking tape or markers. You can also just use paper cups or any objects to create a maze</p> <p>Step 2: Get a cotton ball or you can crumple up a piece of paper into a ball-shape. Model blowing and show the learner how to blow the cotton ball forward and make it move.</p> <p>Step 3: Now have the learner blow the cotton ball towards the “goal” or through the maze.</p>



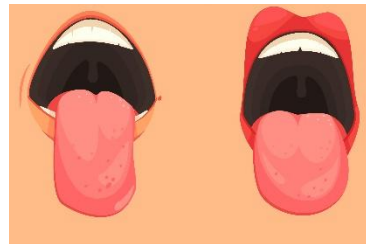
Activity 5: Oral Motor Exercises for the Jaw

Description:	Imitate a variety of oral-motor exercises.
Purpose:	This activity helps the learner refine jaw movements and in turn coordinate with the lips, and tongue for speech production and managing developmentally appropriate textures for feeding.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Tug-of-war with licorice. Place a long, stick-shaped piece of licorice or a whole, peeled carrot on the learner’s molars and instruct them to bite down. Then playfully pull on it as learner clenches their jaw like a tiger or puppy (the learner can pull on the licorice while you clench too)</p> <p>Step 2: Have the learner imitate you: a) Open mouth wide, b) Move jaw from closed to open to closed, c) Open mouth partially then close it.</p>



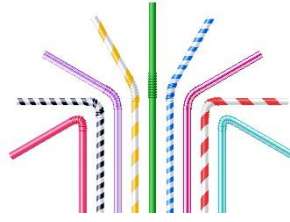
Activity 6: Oral Motor Exercises for the Lips

Description:	Imitate a variety of oral-motor exercises in front of a mirror.
Purpose:	This activity helps the learner refine lip movements and in turn coordinate with the jaw, and tongue for speech production and managing developmentally appropriate textures for feeding.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Tightly seal lips to say “mmmmmmmm.”</p> <p>Step 2: Put on “lipstick” or chapstick with purees (ranch dressing, applesauce) and pucker to make kisses on the table or on a mirror. Learner can also lick puree off lips using tongue only</p> <p>Step 3: Have the learner really round their lips and then push the lips back for a gentle smile.</p> <p>Step 4: Pick a nursery song that the learner likes and try humming it together.</p>



Activity 7: Oral Motor Exercises for the Tongue

Description:	Imitate a variety of oral-motor exercises in front of a mirror.
Purpose:	This activity helps the learner refine and strengthen tongue movements and in turn coordinate with the jaw, and lips for speech production and managing developmentally appropriate textures for feeding.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Have the learner say “lalalalala” without moving their jaw up/down or side to side. Rest and repeat.</p> <p>Step 2: Practice tongue tip sounds. Say “t-t-t-t-t-t,” “n-n-n-n-n,” and “d-d-d-d-d-d.” For a challenge try a combination of these sounds, such as “t-d-n.”</p> <p>Step 3: Practice licking food (something sticky like peanut butter, ketchup, jam) out of a bowl like a puppy.</p> <p>Step 4: Paint tongue with a dark coloured sucker (try to paint the back of the tongue if he/she can tolerate it)</p> <p>Step 5: Count teeth with your tongue.</p>



Activity 8: Drinking through a straw

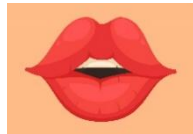
Description:	Use a straw to drink water, juice or any other liquid from a glass.
Purpose:	This activity uses the sucking motion while drinking from a straw to provide strong sensory input which may be calming for the learner. It provides good foundation for eating and speech skills
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Cut a regular straw in half. A shorter straw is easier to handle and takes less strength for the learner to suck liquid up from.</p> <p>Step 2: Dip the straw into a liquid that the learner enjoys (i.e., juice, ice water). Place the tip of your index finger over the top of the straw to keep the liquid in the straw. Remove the straw from the cup, keeping the top of the straw covered with your fingertip.</p> <p>Step 3: Place the straw on the learner's lips, slightly tilted down (so that if you release your finger, the liquid will flow into the mouth).</p> <p>Step 4: Remove your fingertip, allowing the liquid to flow into the learner's mouth. The goal here is for the learner to comprehend that they are getting liquid from the straw.</p> <p>Step 5: Once the learner understands the idea of getting liquid from a straw, instruct them to close their lips around the straw. When the lips are closed around the straw, release your fingertip for the liquid to come out. Pinching the lips together may help.</p> <p>Step 6: Once the learner is able to close their lips around the straw with ease, it is time to work on sucking liquid from the straw. Place the straw just inside the mouth without releasing your fingertip from the top of the straw. When a sucking response is initiated, release the liquid. Quickly repeat so the learner understands the idea of continuous sipping.</p> <p>Step 7: As an extension, experiment with thicker textures like milkshakes and even applesauce to make sucking more challenging.</p>

***Disclaimer:** Caution with food allergies and the learner's oral motor skills as these foods may be a choking hazard in some cases. This activity should be done under constant supervision.



Activity 9: Icing

Description:	Use an ice cube for topical application on the mouth, lips and cheeks.
Purpose:	This activity helps increase sensitivity around the mouth, lips and cheeks.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Freeze some water to make ice cubes. If no freezer is accessible then buy an ice cream bar or small frozen food packets.</p> <p>Step 2: Take the ice cube or frozen item and place it on the hands first and then over the face, mouth, lips, cheeks.</p> <p>Keep the duration of application very short, just a few seconds and increase as they are more comfortable with the cold temperature.</p>



Activity 10: Lip Brushing

Description:	Use a soft bristle small toothbrush to brush the lips, both on the outside and inside.
Purpose:	This activity helps improve sensation on the lips.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Take a small, soft bristle toothbrush or a cotton earbud, if the toothbrush is unavailable.</p> <p>Step 2: First, without any water, brush the learner's lips on the outside and inside gently. Then, wet the brush or ear bud and repeat gently.</p> <p>Step 3: Repeat activity for a few seconds with intervals and continue for a minute.</p>



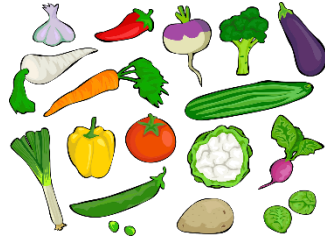
Activity 11: Chewing Gum

Description:	Chew a piece of fresh gum and then give the learner another fresh piece of gum to chew.
Purpose:	This activity helps develop the motion of the jaws, encourages chewing food and helps with development of speech.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Buy new, fresh chewing gum. (or substitute for any food item, which is can be chewed)</p> <p>Step 2: Show the learner how you put the gum in your mouth and chew.</p> <p>Step 3: Now have the learner do the same for as long as they find it comfortable. Repeat a couple of times every day and aim to reach five minutes of chewing each time.</p>



Activity 12: Candle Blowing

Description:	Keeping a candle at a distance, the learner is encouraged to blow at the candle and try to blow it out.
Purpose:	This activity helps improve stamina and breath support for speech production and feeding.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Light a candle at a safe distance from the learner.</p> <p>Step 2: Demonstrate how to blow at the candle and ask them to follow. You may increase distance between learner and candle slightly as they are able to blow at it with better force.</p> <p>Step 3: Give the learner at least ten attempts at the activity, or till they are tired</p>



Activity 13: Eating Different Foods

Description:	Add crunchy, harder to eat foods to the learner's diet for example: carrots, apples.
Purpose:	This activity helps the learner become either more alert and engaged, or calmer and more focused.
Steps:	<p>Step 1: Try adding harder foods to the learner's diet (carrots, apples, celery sticks etc.) during meals and snack times.</p> <p>*Chewy foods (i.e., pizza crust, chewy candies) may work, too, as they provide more resistance and make the jaw really work.</p>