

## OUR SENSES

**Vision** (Visual) – The visual sense provides us with details about what we see and helps us to define boundaries as our brain processes colour, contrast, shape and movement.

The most common use of a Snoezelen® room is for visual stimulation. It may be used to encourage awareness to light, tracking and other visual skills. For example bubble tubes may be used for tracking, and fibre optics to increase light awareness.

**Touch** (Tactile) – The sense of touch keeps us in contact with our surroundings. Touch is vital to our survival and is one of our modes of communication. From head to toe, our skin helps us feel temperature, light touch, deep pressure, vibration, pain, and so much more.

A Snoezelen® room provides multiple tactile experiences. Different textures on panels, products such as balls, sponges, and brushes, as well as vibrating mats and massagers, offer head-to-toe tactile stimulation opportunities.

**Smell** (Olfactory) – The sense of smell is very powerful. We use the sense of smell all the time. Flowery, pungent, musty, acrid, and putrid – we identify many things by their smells. We also develop strong memories associated with smells. The Snoezelen® environment is an excellent opportunity to experience smell. Use the tranquil environment to set the mood, along with smells from aromatherapy kits or real objects such as oranges, apples, or fresh flowers.

**Hearing** (Auditory) – This sense provides us with details about the sounds we hear such as volume, pitch, rhythm, tone, and sequence. Take advantage of music, instruments, or even movies to experience sound. Whether using a CD player, stereo, or data projector, remember to move it around the room to experience the differences in volume as a result of a change in proximity.

**Taste** (Gustatory) – This sense is located in our mouths and gives us feedback on the different types of tastes: sweet or sour, spicy, salty, bitter, etc. Our sense of smell is closely tied to our sense of taste. Although there is no specific equipment to stimulate this sense, you can include simple-to-eat foods that can be enjoyed once a state of relaxation has been achieved.

### Two senses with which we may not be as familiar are:

**Vestibular** – This sense puts balance into our lives. It provides information about movement, gravity, and changing head positions. It tells whether we're moving or still, as well as the direction and speed of our movement. We may even tell whether we are vertically or horizontally positioned – even with our eyes closed.

**Proprioception** – This sense processes information from our muscles, joints, and other body parts to provide us with an unconscious awareness of the position of our body parts in relation to each other – and their relation to other people and objects.

Walking across a floor covered with mats in a Snoezelen environment incorporates both the vestibular and proprioceptive senses. Use furniture to help experience senses. Beanbag chairs and other soft comfortable furniture are great for providing vestibular and proprioceptive stimulation.