



Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition August 2012 Issue 66



The five senses - Touch

Getting ready

The next five issues look at the five senses of touch, smell, hearing, taste and sight.

The senses play a vital role in a child's overall development. A baby is stimulated by sights and sounds around, by new tastes and smells. A baby responds to touch and contact with parents. A child who is deprived of these stimuli will fall behind in his or her development.

Touch is a way of communicating - a soothing stroke when a child is distressed, a helping hand when learning to walk. Regular cuddles and affirming of love is reassuring and helps a child feel safe and secure.

A child learns through touch to recognise hot and cold, to understand pain when for example having a fall or a headache.

Negative touching such as a rough push, hitting or smacking will make a child distressed or wary. Sometimes the learning here is to hit back.

There is a whole world of discovery available through touch - feeling different textures, feeling warm sand between the toes, the soothing feel of a warm bath, the rough bark of a tree or the soft feel of velvet.

As adults it is important to be aware of the impact of the senses. The following sessions will help to explore ways of enhancing the experience of our senses.

Journeys in the Spirit offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5–12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.

Gather

Prepare the room by setting out chairs and have any resources ready that you need for the activities you have chosen

Prepare a bag or box containing objects that have different textures or feelings - some smooth pebbles, something soft like wool, some moss, leaves, smooth wood, something rough like bark, a small cuddly teddy or soft toy.

Begin by asking everyone to say their names, especially if there are people in the group who do not know each other, and something they have done this week.

Pass the bag or box round and ask people to choose an object. Sit quietly for a minute or two feeling their object. Is it hard or soft? Is it nice to hold or stroke?

Have time for the children to describe their object and what it feels like.

Underpinning references

"Touch is the vehicle through which we comfort one another and are comforted, via hugs or clasps of the hand"

Howard Cutler



Engage

The story of the woman who touched Jesus' clothes

This activity is about the power of touch.

Read the story from New Testament Bible, Mark 5 verses 21 – 34. You might prefer to tell the story in your own words. Jesus was aware of the woman touching his clothes despite the big crowds gathering around Him. He was aware of the power of touch. He felt weak after the woman touched him. Most of us have had an experience of helping someone in a difficult situation and felt tired or washed out afterwards. Perhaps this is how Jesus felt. You may want to adjust the language according to the age of the children.



Thinking about different types of touch and what this teaches us

This activity is about helping children realise how much we learn through touch.

You could read a book on touch to start conversation (see sidebar for suggestions) or just talk about how we use our hands a great deal to explore the world through touch. The skin covers the whole of our bodies and every bit of the skin is sensitive to the different things that touch it.

The story of Louis Braille

This activity is about touch as a way of communication.

Read the story of Louis Braille – this is on *Additional Resource 66.A* along with an example of what Braille looks like. There is a lot in this story but the point to draw out is that Louis was desperate to read and found the best way to do this was a system that involved careful touching. Show the picture of Braille – better still if you can find some Braille for them to feel. It looks very strange to us but for blind people it means they can read anything – even Harry Potter!

Talk with the children about how touch is used to communicate. What can we learn through touching? We learn when something is very hot it hurts to touch it; likewise with something prickly. Encourage the children to think of other ways they can discover or learn from touching.

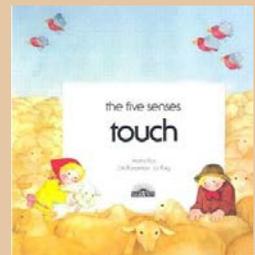
You might want to play a simple game – pass the squeeze. Everyone stands in a circle holding hands. One person starts by gently squeezing the left hand of the person on their right. This person then passes the squeeze to the next person through their right hand. Children like to watch where the squeeze is and this can be made more exciting by passing more than one squeeze. You can also play 'race the squeeze' – sitting or standing in a circle, a squeeze is sent up either side of the circle and the race is to be the first squeeze to reach the top of the circle.

All age worship

Try the all age worship in this issue that offers ways to think about touch a little more deeply. We can feel touch on the inside as well as the outside. Words and actions can touch our hearts and we will feel a variety of emotions. Unkind words can make us feel sad or hurt. A kind act will make us happy. We live in a world where we have to communicate with each other so we are open to the touches both on the outside and the inside.

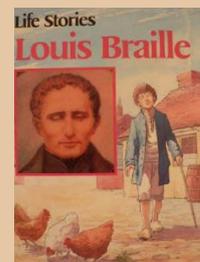
References & other resources

Touch (the five senses) by Maria Rius and Jose Maria Parramon
ISBN-13: 978-0812035674



There are five books in this series – 1 on each sense.

Louis Braille (life stories) by Peggy Burns and Jon Davis
ISBN-13: 978-0750204811



Books on this page can be ordered from the Quaker Bookshop 0207 663 10130 or www.quaker.org.uk/shop

Additional Resources mentioned in this issue can be found at: www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children

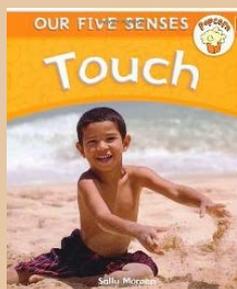
References & other resources

“The things that matter most in our lives are not the fantastic or the grand. They are the moments when we touch one another”

Jack Kornfield



Touch (Popcorn: our five senses) by Sally Morgan
ISBN-13: 978-0750257688



This can be ordered from the Quaker Bookshop
0207 663 1030
www.quaker.org.uk/shop

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Respond

The story of the woman who touched Jesus' clothes

After you have told the story ask the following questions.

- What do you think happened in this story?
- What made the woman better? Perhaps it was touching Jesus' robe.
- Think of people like doctors and nurses who help to make people feel better. They touch people to wash them or help them dress. Doctors do operations or give medicine to make people feel better.
- Ask children what touch they like. Perhaps they like their hair stroked, or back rubbed. Does this make them feel better when they are upset or feeling unwell?

Give plenty of time for discussion. Older children and adults might like to do simple hand massage – just gentle stroking movements using a little baby oil or cream. Younger children could draw or paint pictures of the story.

Thinking about different types of touch and what this teaches us

When we touch something all the nerve endings in the skin send messages to the brain that tells us what the touch is about. If we touch something hot the brain says - “take your hand away quickly”.

Encourage the children to think along the same lines and come up with other kinds of touch and our response to the touch.

Make simple “touch books”. Collect some materials of different textures and stick them in to the books. See the *Additional Resource 66.B* for instructions of how to make these.

An alternative fun activity is to make a game along the lines of snakes and ladders. See *Additional Resource 66.B* for instructions.

The story of Louis Braille

It must have been very frightening for Louis Braille to damage his eye and then not be able to see at all.

Use clay to enable children to get a sense of what it feels like to do something when they cannot see. Ask children (and adults) to pair up and sit opposite each other, either at a table or on the floor. Give each pair a lump of clay and with eyes closed fashion the clay into any shape. After a short while ask people to open their eyes and look at their shape. Younger children might be better doing this with the help of an adult.



Reflect

At the end of the session have some time for the children to ask any questions. There may be issues that have arisen as a result of the subject and children need clarification if there are things they have not understood.

There may be specific things that come out of this session on touch. Adults need to be aware that not all touch is good. Some children may have experienced a touch that hurt or upset them and might want to talk about this. It is important to have at least two adults for this session so that there is someone to be with a child who is upset. Always listen carefully and sensitively to what children have to say.

Children may like to share with the adults what they have been doing in Children's Meeting. Decide what you want to share with the rest of Meeting and how best to do this.



Review

The review can happen at the time or later but volunteers may well feel they need to speak to someone immediately after the session, especially if there are any issues around touch that have particularly affected any child.

It may be good too to let parents know the theme of the Children's Meeting in advance in case there are questions that come up later or children want to continue discussions at home.

For yourself reflect on how you feel the session went. Did the children participate well? Did they learn about the sense of touch? Are there things you might have done differently? It is worth discussing these things with other volunteers and at Children's Committee.

This issue was written by Madeleine Harding and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. The Topical activity was written by Chris Nickolay.

Issue 67 is about ways to explore our sense of 'Smell'. Available 3 September 2012

Issue 68 is all about different ways to explore our sense of hearing. Available 1 October 2012.

Issue 69 offers all sorts of ways to explore and think about our sense of hearing. Available from 1 November 2012.

Materials available online are:

Current issue Additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use plan for a Children's Meeting

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity – this time about Palestinian child prisoners

Also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special issues; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

All these are available at:

www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren

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