

A SENSORY OVERLOAD



GET INVOLVED



20 MINUTES



IN THE CUPBOARD



HOPE
FOR AUTISM

AIM

To learn about our senses and how we often feel things differently from each other. Autistic people often experience their senses differently. Understand this to help you support autistic people in the future. An activity in partnership with **Hope for Autism**.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- > Paper
- > Pencils
- > Paper Towels
- > Music

GET INVOLVED: A SENSORY OVERLOAD

THEME: HELPING OTHERS



LEADER PREPARATION

Have a plan for leaders so they know what their role is in the sensory overload (i.e. to bang the door, play music, flash lights, put paper towels on heads, sing etc). A leader will also need to think of a simple paper and pencil task to set.

For more information on Autism and the work of Hope for Autism, visit www.hopeforautism.org.uk



GETTING INTO THE ACTIVITY

- 1 Give paper and pencils out to the group and ask them to do a simple task e.g. draw a picture of something, answer easy sums, a writing task etc.
- 2 While this is happening and without warning, provide an overwhelming sensory experience. Flash the lights, put paper towels on heads, sing, bang the door, run around, play musical instruments, play loud sound effects etc. Continue this throughout the task you have set the group.
- 3 After a couple of minutes, ask the group if they managed to complete their task? What made it difficult?
- 4 Explain that our senses (sight, sound, touch) were flooded with information which made it difficult to focus on the task. Autistic people are often more sensitive to sensory information e.g. a little noise that you can ignore can be overwhelming for an autistic person. Sometimes sights and sounds can even be painful. If you know an autistic person, keep this in mind and find out what sights, sounds and textures they like and don't like so you can help them feel more comfortable in the future.
- 5 Follow this activity up by watching 'Can you make it to the end?' by The National Autistic Society (<https://youtu.be/aPknwW8mPAM>). This video helps appreciate what sensory overload feels like for an autistic person. You could finish the activity by exploring autism a little more by watching 'Amazing Things Happen' by The National Autistic Society (<https://youtu.be/RbwRrVw-CRo>).



DID YOU KNOW?

- Autism isn't an illness or a disease, it is something you are born with.
- It affects how you communicate and interact with the world
- It is not a medical condition with a cure.
- Like everyone, autistic people have things they are good at and things they need some help with.
- Autism is different for everyone.
- It is estimated that in the UK at least 700,000 people are autistic.



IDEAS TO TAKE THIS FURTHER...

Explore the senses in more details by tasting different foods (sweet, sour, salty), smelling different scents, or closing your eyes and touching different textures.



KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

Please be aware of any children with sensory needs. This activity may not be suitable for them, or they may require advance warning.