



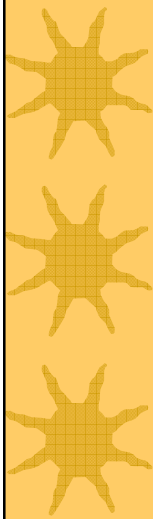
Sensory Sensitivities and the Church Experience



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Sensory Experiences in Church



- ★ Sights
- ★ Sounds
- ★ Smells
- ★ Taste
- ★ Touch/Feel
- ★ Movement






Our Sensory System

★ Name the 7 senses



The slide features a vertical yellow bar on the left with four sun icons. The main content area is light gray. It includes a title 'Our Sensory System' in a brown serif font, followed by a horizontal gold line and the instruction '★ Name the 7 senses'. Below this are several colorful illustrations: a pair of glasses, a human ear, a hand holding a smartphone, a pink cup of coffee with steam, a black rocking horse, a person in a blue shirt performing a handstand on a wooden beam, and a burger with a beer and musical notes.

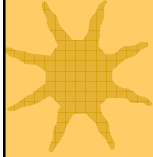


Why do we have senses?

- ★ Primarily to survive
- ★ Our sensory system operates and initiates our fight, flight, or fright response
- ★ Our sensory system also governs our level of alertness
- ★ Our enjoyment from our sensory system is secondary to our survival

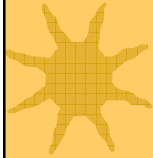


Sensory System Malfunctions



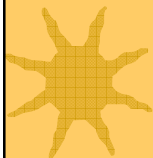
★ Strong sensory experiences trigger flight, fight, or fright

– We attempt to avoid such experiences

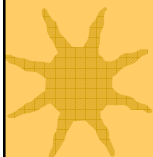


★ Weak sensory experiences trigger a craving for sensory information

– We seek out such experiences



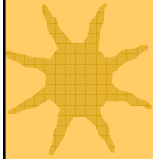
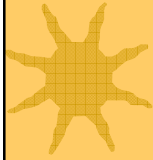
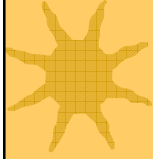
Sights



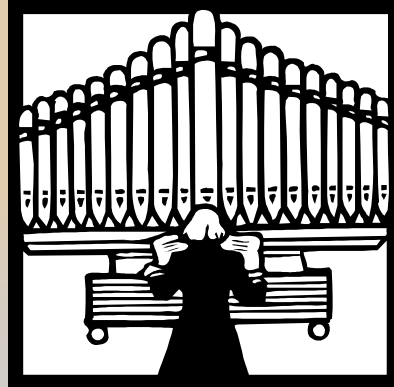
- ★ Dappled light
- ★ Real mix of light and shadow
- ★ Every seat is not a good seat
- ★ All seats are on the same level
- ★ If you are short behind someone tall . . .
- ★ The experience of being right up front
- ★ Hats in your way



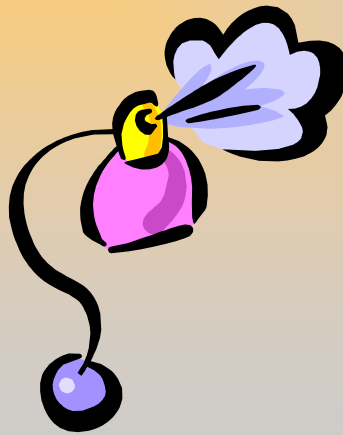
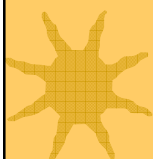
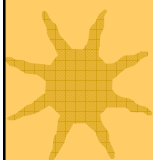
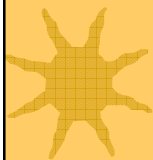
Sounds



- ★ Organ
- ★ Shuffling people
- ★ Squeaky seats
- ★ Books opening and closing
- ★ Singing . . . Some good, some not so good
- ★ Loud times and very quiet times



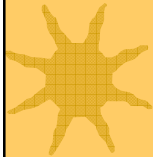
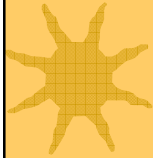
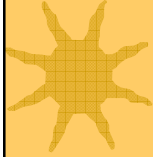
Smells



- ★ Perfume
- ★ The smell of people sitting close together
- ★ Old books
- ★ Old wood
- ★ Stone
- ★ Carpeting
- ★ Incense



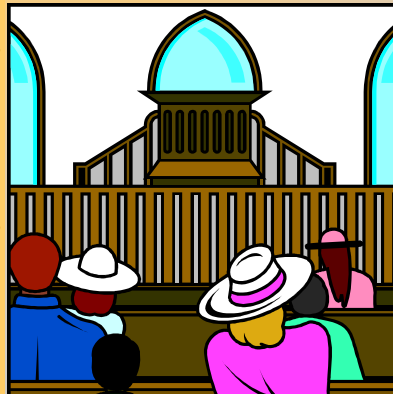
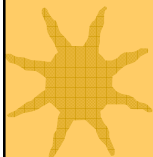
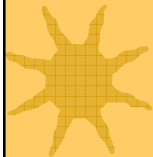
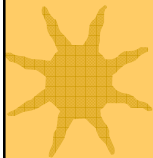
Taste



- ★ Bread (or wafers)
- ★ Wine
- ★ Coffee hour foods
- ★ Occurs at or near meal time



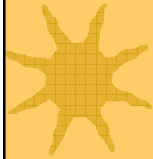
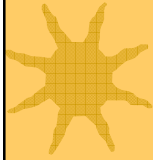
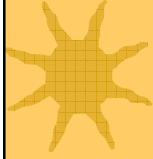
Touch/Feel



- ★ Scratchy Church Clothes
- ★ People touching you
- ★ Benches that slide
- ★ Seats without arms
- ★ Holding the books open to the right page



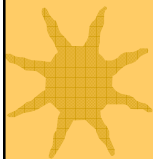
Movement



- ★ Moving in a line
- ★ Not moving at all
- ★ Then moving in odd ways (kneeling?)
- ★ Up and down at unpredictable times
- ★ Not able to eat or chew
- ★ Must be quiet



What to Do for people who have sensory sensitivities in church?



- ★ Exercise before church – really!
 - Jump on a trampoline
 - Take a long walk
 - Park far away from church
- ★ Chew something that will not be distracting
- ★ Increase ‘predictability’



What to Do for people who have sensory sensitivities in church?

- ★ Make a simple version of the service and tell people what will happen/what to expect/how to behave
- ★ Have a place to go when it gets too long
- ★ Have a child's service separate from the main service



What to Do for people who have sensory sensitivities in church?

- ★ Allow more movement in church
- ★ Stay within an hour
- ★ Avoid the very long services or the crowded services
- ★ Eat more small meals before and after church



What to Do for people who have sensory sensitivities in church?

- ★ Go get water, or go to the bathroom in the middle, especially the readings/sermon
- ★ Enlist the help of the others who need movement – teenagers!
- ★ Practice when church is not in session
- ★ Practice before you go how to whisper, how to take breaks, where to go, how to sit, how to color/read quietly, etc.

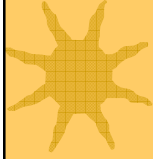


Simple outline of the service

- ★ Parade into church – Processional
 - You sit while the minister walks in to music
- ★ Story Time – Readings
 - Listen while someone else reads – you can color or read your book – if you need to talk to me, you have to whisper
- ★ The minister talks to us – Sermon
 - Listen to the message, read, or color

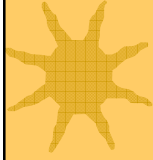


Simple outline of the service



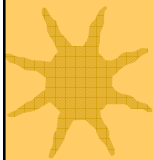
★ Prayer Time

- You have to be very quiet, but you can color. If you need help whisper to me

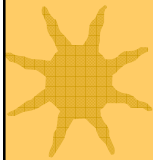


★ Line up for snack/communion

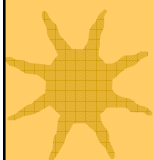
- When you are in line, move slowly, wait your turn, stay with me. You will get to eat a very small wafer. It is white and tastes a little like paper. If you don't want to eat it . . . (give church specific instructions)



Simple outline of the service

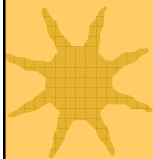


★ Come back to our bench/pew and sing quietly, you can color or read



★ Wait for the minister to say the last prayer

- Sit quietly

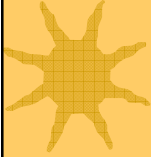


★ Sing the last song for the ending parade – Recessional

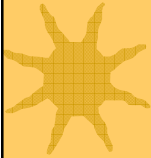
- Stay in your seat until I begin to move



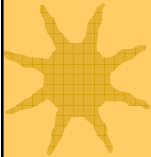
Some other Ideas for Church



- ★ Develop a visual schedule of what will happen from the child's point of view



- ★ Write a social story

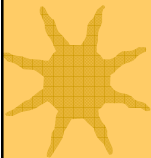


- ★ Enroll the youth group to help

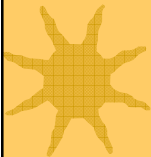
- ★ Start a service that has more noise and movement



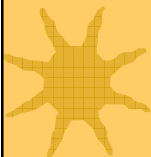
Some other Ideas for Church



- ★ Provide 'sensory boxes' with quiet activities for children with fidget issues



- ★ Publicize the approximate length of services and stay with that length

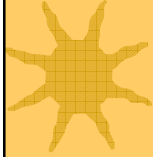


- ★ Think carefully about seating

- ★ Prepare folks in advance for changes in the regular church routine

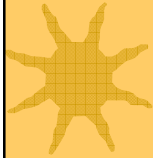


Don't . . .



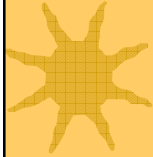
★ Use 'time out' rooms

★ Use restraint

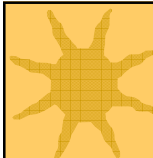


★ Have a separate program for kids with disabilities

★ Expect the parents to carry the full load of supporting their children



★ Deny others the opportunity to learn from individuals with disabilities



Other Ideas!

