

Story Parks At Home

Making a Sensory Discovery Map with artist Elaine Winter

Introduction to the Activity

Use pencils and paper to go on a sensory walk around the space you have available and draw a map of what you discover. The space can be an internal space in your house or, if you have a garden you can include that too, or, if suitable you can include an outside space such as a short walk near your home. With a piece of paper resting on a bit of cardboard or similar to make a makeshift drawing board, the activity will be based around making a map of the sensory environment around you and may provide you with a way to build a story of your own.

What materials will you need?

On the ‘Walk’:

Piece of sturdy cardboard or large (but not too heavy) book to rest on to make a makeshift drawing board

If you go outside and it is breezy a clothes peg or two will help keep the paper on the ‘board’

Piece of plain paper, can be any type you have

Pencils

Optional – small bag to collect ‘specimens’

After the Walk:

If you have them at home – coloured pencils or felt tips and any other art materials available can all be used to add colour but if none available, don’t worry, a pencil and paper will still work fine.

A glue stick if e.g. you would like to stick some things on (e.g. leaves).

What do you do?

Decide where you are going to do your ‘walk’. It can be as small as one room in your house or as big as a walk in the local area.

On the journey around your chosen space keep asking each other questions like: What can you smell? What can you touch/feel the texture of? Have moments of silence...and then ask what can you hear? And, of course, what can you see? This is really good for speaking and listening skills with younger children and it is also a good way for us all to start noticing things around us in a new way. If it is safe to do so it would be good to do some collecting (with respect to the environment and health and safety of course, so would advise against this outdoors) and mark on the map where these 'specimens' were collected and then how they trigger the response you had at that moment on the walk. Specimens aren't needed, so if easier not to do that leave it out as the main purpose of the map is to draw/represent what you find as you go along and e.g. if you find an amazing texture then try doing a rubbing of it to capture it, if a smell makes you feel happy you can draw a smiley face to remind you of that moment.

Count your steps between and mark them on

During the walk the number of steps between each sensory discovery location can be counted and marked on the map with arrows and simple direction instructions between each location, to practice numeracy skills. The journey, and therefore the map, can follow any direction and it can be great to let children and indeed adults follow their instincts about what captivates them at that moment, which is a mindful way of experiencing what is around us and gets us moving around and noticing things in a different and new way.

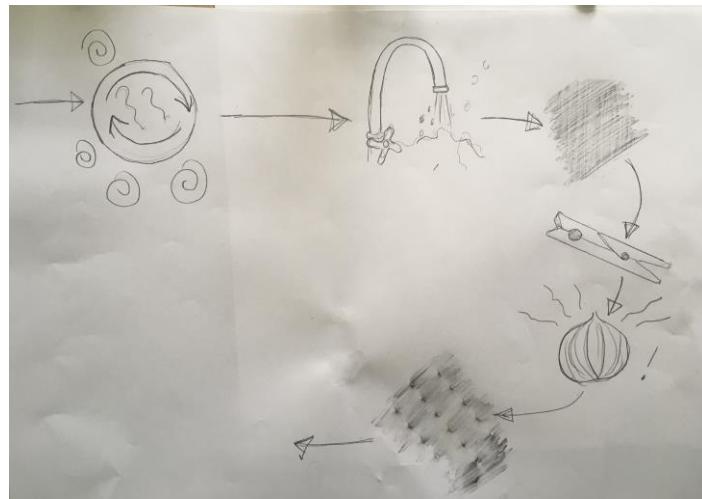
After you have finished the walk add to it

When the walk is complete you can then look at the map you have made together and talk together about what you experienced at each sensory location and add some words to the map too, or some symbols, anything that gives it meaning to you. If you have got some art materials at home such as coloured pencils or felt tips you can add some extra colour to your very personal sensory map. You can give it a title and if you wanted to can make a story up about who/what else might take that journey. Imaginations only needed for this!

Keep Making!

There's no limit to the number of Sensory Discovery Maps that you make. Start with a journey around one space and then try somewhere else either in your house/garden or a bit further afield. Have fun and when you have finished you can share your art online too @StoryParks

Here's an example of a Sensory Discovery Map in progress as we took a walk around a kitchen in progress, showing spinning washing, bubbles in the sink, texture of a cupboard door, a peg, an onion and the pattern a grater makes when you do a rubbing of it.



Here's another example of a finished Sensory Discovery Map from a small garden that has had colour added with pencil crayons and some notes added too.

