

Sensory play and creative art ideas:

As well as being a fantastic way to enhance children's learning through play, sensory play can be an incredibly useful tool for calming and soothing the brain, especially in times of stress. Waking up our senses brings us in to the moment and can help us to 'reset' back to a calm place.

As always, if it isn't fun for your child or you it's ok to decide not to try something or to skip an activity. It is supposed to be fun not create more stress.

Easy slime recipe:

- 1 cup PVA glue
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tbsp Optrex eye wash or contact lens solution (must contain Boric Acid for it to work - I use Optrex eye wash from Tesco £3.50)
- Food colouring (optional - for really good results I use professional gel colours - I get mine from Hobbycraft)
- Glitter (optional)

Or add lavender for a calming sensory experience!

Mix PVA glue and bicarb together in a bowl.

If adding colour/glitter/lavender do so at this point.

Finally add the tablespoon of eye wash and mix - get your hands in! It will feel really slimey but will soon rubberise a bit.

Fluffy foam slime:

As above but add 1-4 cups of shaving foam to the glue at the beginning.

Best ever no cook playdough recipe (makes playdough in 5 minutes):

- 2 cups plain flour
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- Up to 1.5 cups boiling water (adding in increments until it feels just right)
- food colouring (optional - I use gel colours for a really bright, vibrant colour)
- Add spices; nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon etc if desired to the flour at the beginning.

Place all the dry ingredients in a bowl and mix together

Get your hot water ready

Add the food colouring to the hot water

Add the veg oil to the dry ingredients first and mix in
Next add the hot water bit by bit until you have it just right (you will likely need nearly all of the water) and mix together with a spoon. When the mixture is cool enough and about the right consistency you can use your hands to squeeze and knead the dough to make it smooth. This playdough lasts for months in an air tight container or bag.

Clean mud:

- Bar of white soap
- Grater
- Roll of toilet paper
- Warm water
- Mixing utensils

Adult carefully grates the soap into a bowl. Tear sheets of toilet paper to add to the soap and water and mix together with your hands! Add utensils to mix and move, spoons, whisk, masher etc

Colourful salt blowing:

- Salt
- Coloured chalks
- Paper
- Tray
- Straw
- Glitter (optional)

Place a small amount of salt on to the paper and choose a coloured chalk.

Colour the salt (easier than you think!)

Tip the coloured salt in to the tray.

Repeat 3 or 4 times.

Carefully blow the salt around the tray and watch how the colours merge and swirl around.

(You can also talk about the out breath and how we can use it to calm ourselves.)

Snow dough/cloud dough:

- 2 cups corn flour
- 1/3 to 1/2 of a cup vegetable oil
- 3-4 tablespoons glitter

Mix together in a bowl with your hands. You can mould the dough or sprinkle it. It packs together or crumbles just like snow... but warmer!

Dyed oats:

- 6 cups of oats
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of water
- A few drop of food colouring

Mix the food colouring and water together then add to the oats a bit a time so as not to saturate them. Spread out on paper and leave to dry in a warm place.

Foam dough:

- 1 cup cornflour
- 3 cups shaving foam
- Food colouring or powder paint for colour (optional)

If using powder paint add a small amount of paint to the flour (a pinch or two)

If using food colouring, work in to the dough once you have brought to together (N.B this will temporarily stain hands which some children may not like)

Foam paint:

- Zip lock bag
- Food colouring
- Shaving foam
- Glue

Put equal parts of foam and glue into the zip lock bag

Add in food colouring

Squish together until it is combined

Cut the corner off the bag and use it to paint a piece of card

Spicy paint:

- Paint
- Spices/flavourings such as: cinnamon, ginger, vanilla, lemon, garam masala, cardamom, cumin etc etc.

Mix a teaspoon of spice with poster paint and enjoy the aroma as you paint. Add more if needed.

Unicorn dough:

- Cornflour
- Hair conditioner

Mix equal parts of both, add food colouring and knead until smooth. NB when I have made this it has been too wet and needed more cornflour. It also doesn't last very long so good for a short play session!

Powder prints:

- Give a hand massage but leave enough lotion to keep the hand moist
- Gently print the hand onto dark card
- Sprinkle baby powder or flour on the print.

Floating chalk prints:

- Tray with a small amount of water to cover the bottom
- Plastic knife or scraper
- Chalk
- A4 paper

Carefully scrap the chalk over the water so the dust settles. Once you have enough colour dip the paper.

Raised salt painting:

- Card or paper
- PVA glue
- Salt
- Watered down food colouring
- Pipette or paintbrush

Drizzle a pattern with PVA glue across your card or paper. Cover the page in salt and tap off any excess. Carefully squeeze the food colouring mixture onto the salt lines or gently tap the food colouring mix on with a paintbrush and watch the pattern emerge as it spreads.

Shaving foam marbling:

- Shaving foam
- Gel food colouring
- Pipette
- Stick for swirling
- Tray
- Card
- Stiff card or scraper

Squirt shaving foam into the tray. Gently drop different colours into the foam. Swirl the colours around being careful not to mix them too much. Dip the card gently onto the foam to rest on top (flat). Remove the card and scrape the foam off. You should have a lovely marbles effect!

Clay modelling with jewels and collected items: If you can get hold of any, there is something wonderfully mindful about working with clay. You can make anything with it too!