**Exercise 5: Assess Play Centers Using the Senses**

Consideration of each environmental category through each sense results in a cohesive multi-sensory profile for the playroom and can be used to identify centers individually as well. For this exercise you will need paper and something to write with. You will be assessing each of four play centers individually in the four sensory areas, and in a single word holistically:

1. **Visual Environment**
2. **Auditory Environment**
3. **Tactile Environment**
4. **Olfactory Environment**
5. **One Word Impression**

Fold a piece of paper into quarters. At the top of each box write the name of the center and below, make a list of each sensory element as you perceive them.  This can be done before or during active play.

For example:

***Block & Building Materials***

Visual Environment: looks like geometric shapes, earth tones

Auditory Environment: sounds like the clicking of blocks

Physical/Tactile Environment: feels rough or smooth

Olfactory Environment: smells like wood or paint.

In a Word: Busy

***The Sand/Water Table & Toys***

Visual environment: looks like blue (containers)

Auditory Environment: sounds like splashing noises trickling sounds

Physical/Tactile Environment: feels wet and cold

Olfactory Environment: smells like wet sponges

In a Word: Slippery

***House & Home Life / Pretend Toys***

Visual Environment: looks like pastels and black (colors of play pieces)

Auditory Environment: sounds like chimes or doorbell ding at entrance

Physical/Tactile Environment: feels smooth and plastic (dishes and furniture)

Olfactory Environment: smells like herbs.

In a Word: Cluttered

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Center 1.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Visual:Auditory:Tactile:OlfactoryIn a word: | Center 2.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Visual:Auditory:Tactile:OlfactoryIn a word: |
| Center 3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Visual:Auditory:Tactile:OlfactoryIn a word: | Center 4.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Visual:Auditory:Tactile:OlfactoryIn a word: |

In reviewing your lists for each center consider the following:

* Were all four sense areas present in each center?
* Did you feel you were reaching to be able to record a sensory experience, or were they readily apparent?
* Are the sensory stimuli planned or just a byproduct of the center?
* Overall is there a variety of sense stimulation available?
* Is one type of sense experience over-represented (i.e. smooth plastic)?
* What is missing or being overlooked?
* How can you add interest in the various sensory areas to each of the centers?

**Tips for adding sensory interest to play centers:**

* Add background music to set a mood; calming or stimulating, seasonal, thematic.
* Cover containers or shelves with sandpaper, felt, fuzzy cloth, etc. to change up textures.
* Add colorful elements- contrasting hues or values for example for interest. Paint is inexpensive and a quick change when one is called for.
* Change up the lighting by filtering through cloth or paper (plan for fire safety)
* Introduce materials with different qualities for variety i.e. feathers, animal skin, musical instruments, colored cellophane, shaved ice, fresh herbs, etc.