

Take a walk with your children along any of Durango's in-town trails and you can explore an amazing variety of sensorial experiences! I will describe some of the experiences I have had on our local trails recently and I will color code each of the senses (**sight**, **sound**, **smell**, **taste**, **touch/feeling**, **stereognostic**) as well as **emphasize** any vocabulary words.

While walking along a trail I was startled when I **heard** a sudden flapping that burst out along my path. The surprise turned out to be a *Spotted Towhee* who landed on the branch of a *Juniper Tree*. I **saw** three colors on the towhee, what colors do you see? Can you draw your own Spotted Towhee?



Farther down the trail I **saw** two (2) *Colorado Blue Jays* chasing each other in a different tree. I can see 4 different colors on this jay, can you color your own blue jay?



Other things I **saw** and some questions you can ask:

- La Plata Mountains (which mountain looks the **biggest**?)
- Rocks by the river (can you find 3 rocks, **big bigger biggest**? How about 3 that are **small, smaller, smallest**?)
- Ducks swimming (what **colors** do you see on that duck?)
- Differentiate between a **thick** stick and a **thin** stick or a **tall** tree and a **short** bush.

As you walk, bring your own awareness to the sensations on your skin, your sense of **touch/feeling**. Is it sunny? Does the sun feel warm on your skin? Do you feel the wind on your face? Is it raining? How do the droplets feel? Ask your child what they feel when you are outside; have them close their eyes to heighten the awareness of their sense of feeling. What else do they feel?

- Touch the bark of a juniper tree. How does it feel on your fingers: **soft** or **rough**?
- Now touch the bark of a pinon pine tree. Does it feel **soft** or **rough**? Does it feel the same as the juniper bark or different? How do the needles of each tree feel?

Can you find a sage bush along the path? **Feel** the soft leaves, crush them between your fingers and take a breath in. How does it **smell**?

- Help your child gather a few sage leaves, a sprig of juniper, and pinon pine pitch. Each item will feel and smell different. Can you help your child describe them? Offer vocabulary words for them to differentiate. Is the sage soft or rough? Is the juniper smooth or spiky? How does the pitch feel on your fingers: sticky or liquid?

While exploring the sense of **touch** we can also explore the **stereognostic** sense which can enable a child to develop concepts by feeling objects and gaining a sense of recognition through the sense of touch instead of sense of sight. For example: have you ever searched in a bag for your keys only using your hand and not your eyes? You were using your stereognostic sense to find your keys. Making your way to the bathroom in the dark? Stereognostic sense.

- Make a friend with a tree game
  - Have your child close their eyes or tie a blindfold (bandana/hat/scarf) around their eyes so they cannot see.
  - Walk them to a tree or bush and invite them to explore that tree using any sense except their sight. Glve them all the time they need; 1 minute, 5 minutes?
  - Walk them a short distance away from the tree while still blindfolded and spin them around if it feels safe. Then have them try to find the tree again only using their **stereognostic** sense.
  - This same game can be played with a collection of rocks or household items in a bag - just have the child choose an object to familiarize themselves with (no looking!) and see if they can find it when it's in a bag amongst other items.

Stop for a snack or picnic lunch to explore the sense of **taste**.

Offering your child vocabulary to explore what they are tasting will help develop their palate and be able to name what they are tasting.

- Do you have a **salty** snack? Often salty snacks also have a crunch you can **feel**.
- Do you have a **sweet** snack? How does the sweet feel different on the tongue to salty?
  - Make a PB&J and ask your child if they can tell which element is sweet and which is salty
- You can explore **sour** by allowing your child to feel lemon on their tongue and see how it feels.
- Treat yourself to some extra dark chocolate and let your child taste a little to explore **bitter**.

- Make a salad with all the flavors (+**umami** which is a fun vocab word!)
  - Arugula (**bitter**) with parmesan (**umami/salty**) and strawberries (**sweet**) dressed with olive oil (**umami**) and lemon juice (**sour**)

*If your child does not want to try all these different things, explore our PDF on Children's House Lunch Guidelines*