

Archaeology & Nature | Sensory Heritage

The Detectorists

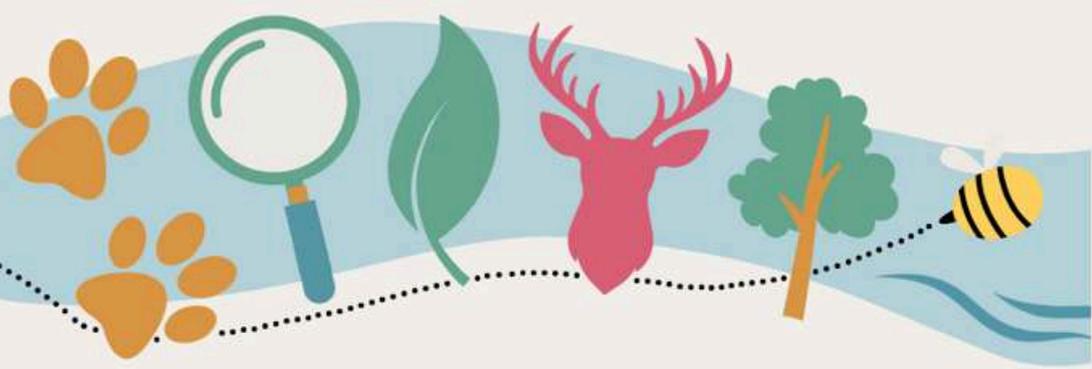
A Sensology Workout For Sensory Archaeologists



CBA
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2026

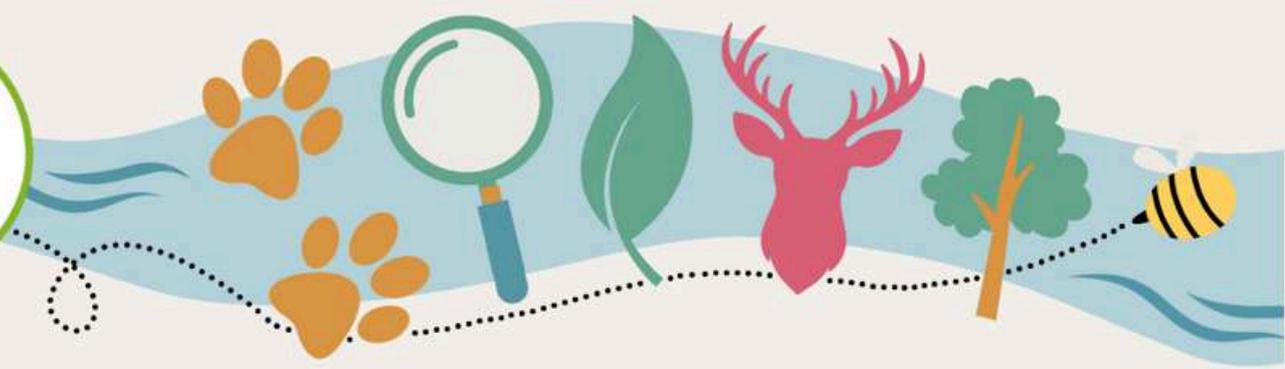
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CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE	4
What is a Sensology Workout?	4
Who are Sensology Workouts For?	4
How was this Sensology Workout developed?	4
Who are Sensory Archaeologists?	5
RESOURCES	6
MANAGING SAFETY & RISK	7
Know your participants	7
Small objects and treasures	7
Taste and Smell	8
Light and Reflection	8
Outdoor Contexts	8
Dignity and Consent	8
Getting Messy	9
HOW TO RUN THIS SENSOLOGY WORKOUT	10
Create a Visual Planner	10
A Warm Welcome	10
Some Me Time	11
Becoming A Detectorist	12
The SENSOLOGY WORKOUT	13



Suggestions for Touch	13
Suggestions for Smell	14
Suggestions for Looking	15
Suggestions for Taste	15
Suggestions for Listening	16
A Moving Finale	16
AFTER THE DIG: A JOY AUDIT	17
DETECTORISTS THEME AND LINKS	18
DETECTORISTS THEME AS SENSIOLOGY	19
PRINTABLE VISUALS	20
Hello	20
Mirror	21
Detectorist	22
Touch	23
Smell	24
Look	25
Taste	26
Listen	27
Move	28
ABOUT COLLAR & CUFFS CO	29

About This Resource

What is a Sensology Workout?

Created by the legendary and much-missed Flo Longhorn, a Sensology Workout is an activity designed to stimulate as many sensory systems as possible.

A Sensology can be used as an activity on its own, as a warm-up for the day, or as an energiser before another activity.

A Sensology Workout can take as long or as little as needed, depending on the needs of participants. For this activity pack, it can last as long as the time it takes to listen to the song once, but feel free to repeat as many times as you like!

Who are Sensology Workouts For?

Sensology Workouts are designed especially for people with Profound & Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD), but are also relevant and engaging for anyone who needs and enjoys sensory forms of stimulation and communication, which may include early years children, neurodivergent children and young people, and adults with learning disabilities or dementia.

But really, they are for everyone — especially when they help to bring music to life in our bodies.

How was this Sensology Developed?

In the summer of 2024, Discover Bucks Museum commissioned a sensory heritage storyteller - Collar & Cuffs Co - to run a bespoke session for families as part of their programming.

The session explored the Lenborough Hoard, a hoard of more than 5,000 Anglo-Saxon silver coins discovered by detectorists in a field in Buckinghamshire. Linking programming to ideas that already may be familiar to some families can help increase engagement and confidence in participation, so Collar & Cuffs Co used the theme of the BBC Series 'The Detectorists' to start and end the session, singing the vocals a capella.

Having been tried and tested in the field - or, in the museum's garden - this pack helps you to recreate that experience for yourself to ensure that everyone has a way to participate in this year's Festival of Archaeology. This activity can stand alone, or be paired with our CBA Festival of Archaeology 2026 Lenborough Hoard Sensory Story Template.

Who are Sensory Archaeologists?

Sensory Archaeology explores how people in the past may have experienced and understood their world – through sight, touch, sound, smell, and taste. While archaeologists at work use specialist tools to reveal and interpret evidence, sensory experience is something we all share. It is our first language.

By working through embodied, shared sensory experiences, this Sensology invites everyone to participate in exploring history, community, and landscape.

Everyone can be a Sensory Archaeologist. Everyone can make discoveries.



Sensory Heritage recognises that embodied encounters are not secondary to historical understanding. They are a valid form of knowing in their own right.

Resources

What will I need to run this Sensology Workout?

This resource list for a Sensology Workout is not prescriptive: you will have your own ideas and preferences based on knowledge of your participants and where you are running your activity. In keeping with our values, we suggest low cost, easy to source items that can be reused or recycled afterwards.

You'll find our suggestions below as part of the body of the Sensology Workout, broken down by sense. In addition to these, you will need:

- Something to play the Detectorists' Theme by Johnny Flynn on - this could be a smartphone or tablet, or you could sing it yourself.

Note: There are two versions of the song, this Sensology Workout is designed to fit with the full version *not* the shortened version used in the credits of the television series. Search for 'Johnny Flynn Live At The Roundhouse'. Clickable links are on the Lyrics page.

- If you are creating a Welcome Dig then you'll need a bucket, tray, or basket filled with dried leaves or shredded paper, and some interesting treasures to hide in it.
- Mirrors, foil, survival blankets, or shiny trays - add a light source such as pocket torches or finger torches; to change the colour of the beam, use an elastic band to secure coloured cellophane or sweet wrappers over the lens.

Managing Safety & Risk

Every group is different. Before running a Sensology Workout, take a few moments to consider the specific needs, health plans, and communication preferences of your participants. What feels joyful and engaging for one person may feel overwhelming or unsafe for another.

Working in a sensory way adds additional layers of consideration and risk management to help manage the presenting dynamics of participants; our sensory systems are in a constant state of flux, and can be affected by the weather, how busy the environment is, if we're hungry, tired, or need the toilet, as much as by our sensory preferences. Managing risks well helps us to ensure choice over participation as well as mitigating against choking hazards, slips and trips, or allergies.

Know Your Participants

Check in advance for allergies, sensory sensitivities, unsafe swallow or nil-by-mouth guidance, mobility requirements, and any individual positioning or medical considerations. If in doubt, consult caregivers or support staff.

It's okay to skip parts of the Sensology Workout if it doesn't feel like a good fit for your group, or to change your resources and plans in response to emerging needs; a Sensology Workout is a method, not a recipe.

Small Objects & Treasures

Coins, beads, and other "finds" should only be used where safe to do so. For participants with unsafe swallow, use larger objects, textured discs, or symbolic items that cannot be easily mouthed. Always supervise closely during digging activities.

Taste & Smell

Seek permission before offering taste-based experiences. Use cosmetic-grade aroma oils rather than essential oils, and avoid direct skin contact unless you know it is appropriate. Present smells in sealed jars or containers to reduce spillage and control intensity.

Light & Reflection

When using torches or reflective materials, avoid shining light directly into eyes. Consider whether anyone in the group is light-sensitive or may find reflections uncomfortable, and offer alternatives if needed.

Outdoor Contexts

If working outside, assess the terrain for stability and accessibility. Raised trays, planters, or tables may be helpful for wheelchair users. Be mindful of weather conditions, insects, and potential trip hazards.

Dignity & Consent

Participation should always be invitational. Every sensory element is optional; participants are free to choose what they want to try. Especially for people with PMLD, being able to express a choice or preference shows that we have created access that is working and that we are listening responsively.

Watch for cues of discomfort, fatigue, or overstimulation. Adapt, pause, or step back when needed. The aim is shared exploration, not compliance.



Getting Messy

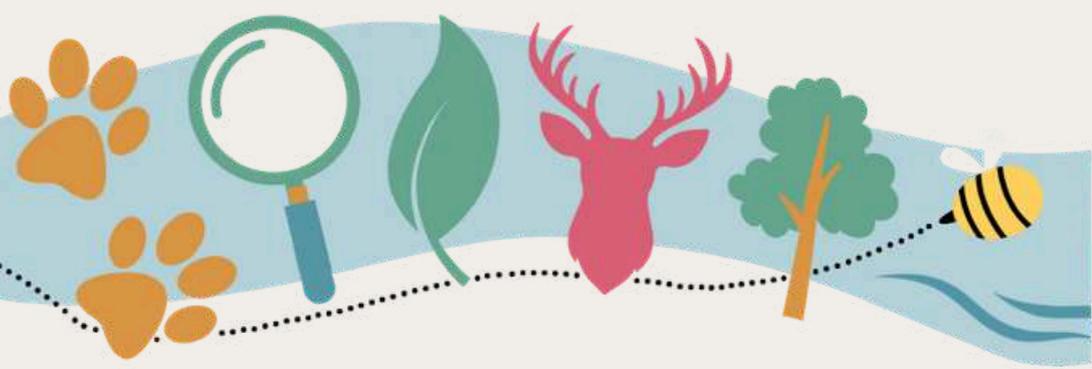
Sensology Workouts can be messy, which may be fun or could be a nightmare for others. As all the elements are choice-based, some participants will make their comfort levels clear and will be able to opt in or out independently. Those who express choices more subtly may need additional processing time. If you are unsure how to interpret a cue, check with caregivers for confirmation.

It is thoughtful to have 'protective equipment' openly available; this could include gloves, aprons, digging tools, etc.

A bowl of water with soap and paper towels are also often appreciated if you don't have easy access to indoor sinks. Warm water can be easily transported in a flask to fill up the bowl; check the temperature carefully before allowing participants to use it.

With thoughtful preparation and responsive facilitation, a Sensology Workout can be both adventurous and safe — a space where discovery happens through trust, attention, and care.





How To Run This Sensology Workout

Create A Visual Planner

To support participants who use signs, symbols and/or speech, a Visual Planner can be a helpful resource. At the back of this pack you'll find printable visuals with text. These can be used, removed, or covered as you move through the Sensology, so everyone can see what's finished, what's next, and when the activity will end.

A Warm Welcome

Some families, classes and groups have their own Hello or Getting Ready songs as part of their routine. These are ideal to use before a Sensology Workout to help build attention and signal that an activity is about to begin.

If you don't have a Hello or Getting Ready song, you can use this one to the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*:

**Dig, dig, dig the ground,
Gently, soft and slow,
Hello [Name], come and look,
See what lies below.**

Sign along using your preferred communication system or add simple actions such as digging, waving hello, or listening closely. You could also prepare a small "Welcome Dig" activity. For example, fill a tub or bucket with dry leaves and invite each person to dig down to discover a chocolate coin, an interesting shard of pottery, or a string of glittering beads.



Some Me Time

To support participants in working with their own bodies, offer time with a reflective surface. Mirrors can provide clear visual feedback, helping participants notice that their movements create movement in the reflection. This supports early self-awareness and understanding of agency.

Across cultures and civilisations, reflective surfaces have held significance for humans. From polished metal mirrors to still water, people have long encountered themselves through reflection. Seeing ourselves — even fleetingly — is part of how we develop a sense of “I am here”.

However, mirrors are not always comfortable or appropriate. Alternative reflective materials such as foil, shiny trays, or survival blankets offer softer, less defined feedback. These surfaces emphasise cause and effect rather than appearance, and may feel safer for participants who find direct self-reflection overwhelming or challenging.



If relevant and safe to do so, you could always use some shiny artefacts such as pots, pans, shields, or armour as reflective surfaces.

Adding a torch can enhance this experience. Light responding to movement makes the relationship between action and outcome more visible.

Allow time. Move slowly. Notice together. And if it feels right, allow for laughter and pulling funny faces — reflection can be playful as well as meaningful.

Becoming A Detectorist

Detectorists are passionate and proud about their work — as they should be. This part of the Sensology Workout offers an opportunity to play with that identity. It can sit before or after the main body of the Workout, depending on your participants.

You don't need a real metal detector to explore the world of The Detectorists. In our original session, we used our hands.

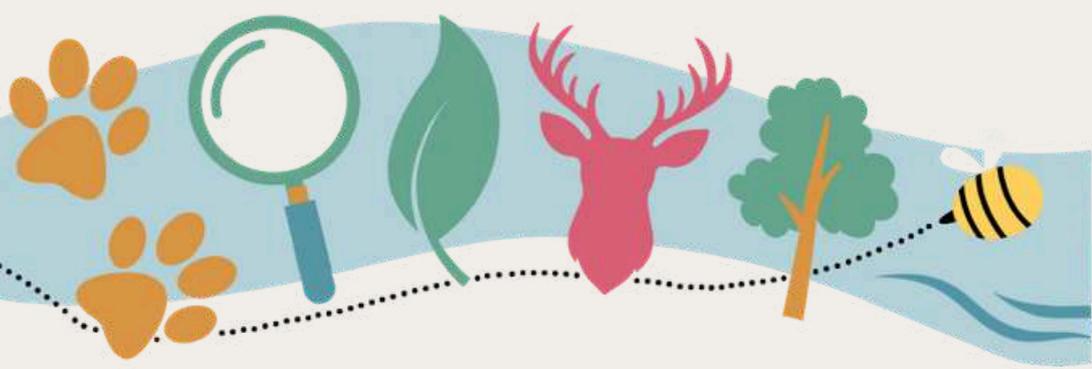
With one arm extended, sweep slowly from side to side as if scanning the ground. Add a gentle “beep... beep...” as you move. When your hand passes over something hidden — real or imagined — increase the tempo and invite someone to uncover the treasure.

The detector can also scan people.

Sweep playfully past a participant's tummy or shoulder and pause. “Beep... beep... what's this? Treasure.”

This kind of game, when relational and well-judged, builds anticipation, shared attention, and laughter. It reinforces the idea that everyone is part of the landscape — that everyone holds something valuable. As always, watch carefully for cues. Some participants may enjoy the drama of suspense; others may prefer the predictability of a slower, gentler scan. The aim is not performance, but connection.

We discovered that many of our participants had their own Detectorist hands, and we took them with us into our storytelling and play. Explore with your participants and notice what makes their Detectorist hands beep or vocalise, sweep, reach, or grasp.



The Sensology Workout

For this Sensology Workout you can choose several pathways:

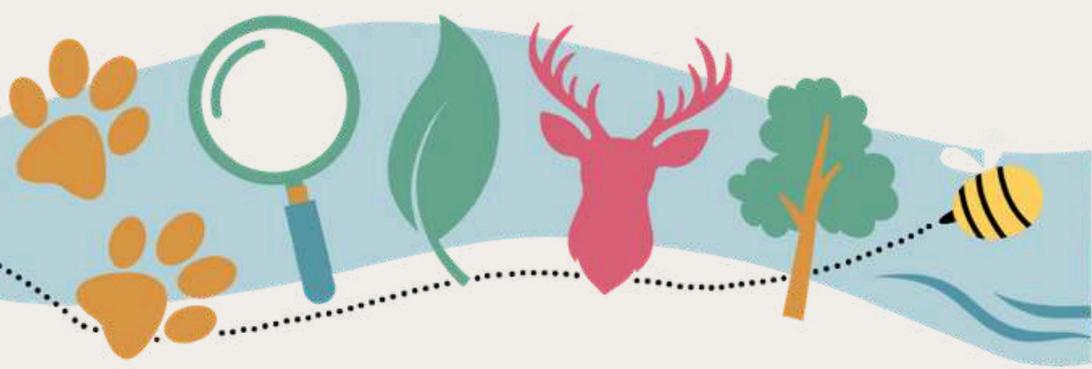
- Play the song once for each sense to allow for maximum exploration and processing time.
- For more able groups, break the song up into five sections and explore each sensory experience in association with that part of the song; the five sections are shown colour-coded below.
- You can build the experience over time, starting with one playthrough for each sense but building up to integrating all five into one playthrough as participants become more familiar with the routine.

The best sensory learning happens through repetition: once is nice, twice is better, three times is when anticipation begins to shine.

Suggestions for Touch

The lyrics of the first verse describe searching and touching. You could provide:

- Trays, bins, or bowls of compost, moss, or leaf litter with treasures hidden in them
- Coins with monarchs or Roman Emperors on them, or crowns and jewels
- Feathers or a plush bird with a soundmaker - the RSPB make some good ones, and these are also easy to find secondhand on eBay, Vinted, or in charity shops.



If running this Sensology outdoors, create a dig site using a sandpit, mud kitchen, or vegetable patch - think about using raised planters or tuff trays on stands for wheelchair users.

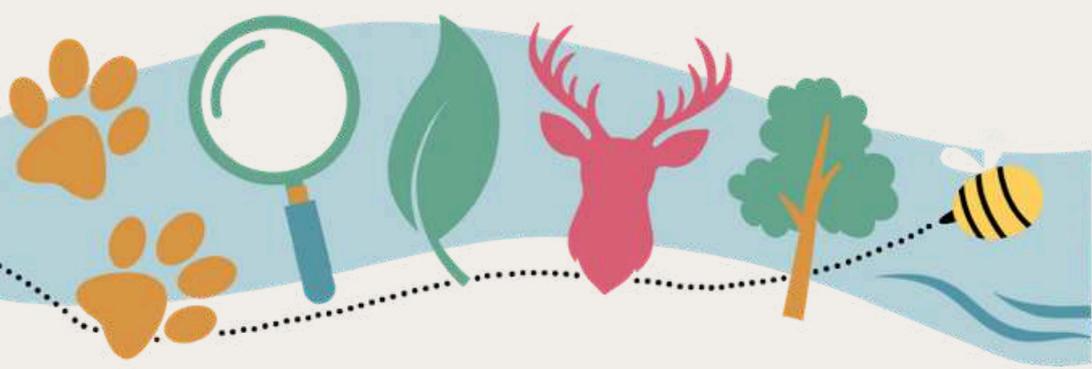
If you are on a historic site, do you have a test trench or a mock dig that visitors can use and that could be integrated into the Sensology? Think about a good location for a musical, sensory excavation.

Suggestions for Smell

The song mentions several environments with smells: loamy earth, briny sea, rolling fields. It's helpful to provide a couple of contrasting smells as individual reactions can vary, and a contrast for comparison can also create interesting responses.

You could:

- Use cosmetic grade aroma oils such as those used for bath bombs or wax melts - these are widely available from Amazon, eBay, etc, for a few pounds - as these are generally considered lower risk than essential oils. Smells to search for could include 'sea salt', 'cut grass', or 'wheat'. Place a few dots of aroma oil on a cotton wool ball and seal inside a clean spice jar; the smell should waft up through the perforations in the cap.
- Use real, authentic resources such as compost and leaf litter, seaweed, hay and straw.
- Use museum-grade scent cubes, such as those from AromaPrime.
- Link smells to your specific location and use what may be relevant to your site or theme e.g. charcoal, leather, metal.



Suggestions for Looking

If moving in line with the song, the third part is about the sea, which offers lots of visual possibilities. You could:

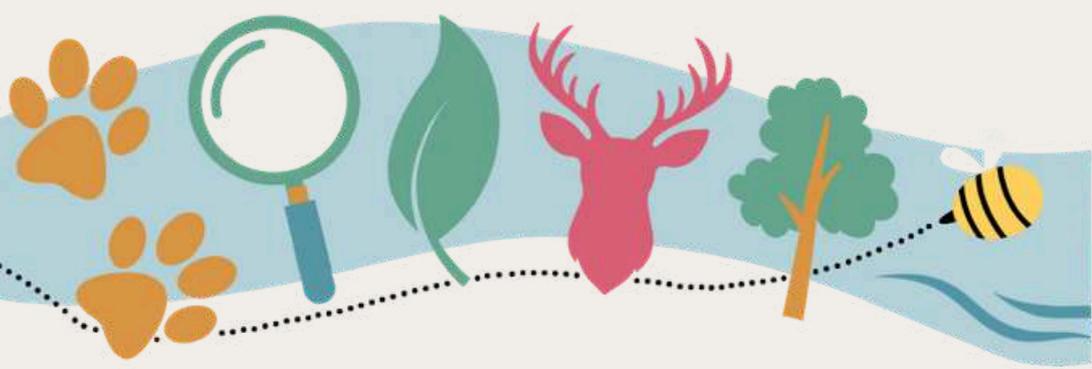
- Create the motion of rippling waves using pieces of fabric, ribbon sticks, veil fans, or survival blankets. Create different weather conditions by moving materials gently for a calm day through to the chaos and drama of a storm, and back again.
- Trickle water from one container to another - colanders make a lovely visual with added sound, or you can create visual interest by pouring water from one metal bowl or pot to another.

Suggestions for Taste

Tasting treasure can be inclusive for those with allergies, intolerances, or unsafe swallow with a few careful tweaks - always ensure you seek permission from care givers if unsure if someone can participate or not.

Ideas could include:

- Dairy-free chocolate coins - to differentiate for those with unsafe swallow or nil-by-mouth, try a chocolate-flavoured lip balm; these are available from Amazon and are usually Vegan. Offer lip balm to care givers with bamboo buds, have a paper cup or bin near by to dispose of used buds and use clean buds each time: no double-dipping!
- A sprinkle of salt for the sea: dip a finger in water, shake a little salt on to the moisture, then touch with the tip of the tongue.
- Blackberries, apple slices, or other seasonal fruits from hedgerows, fields, and orchards; these can also be found as lip balms flavours.



Suggestions for Listening

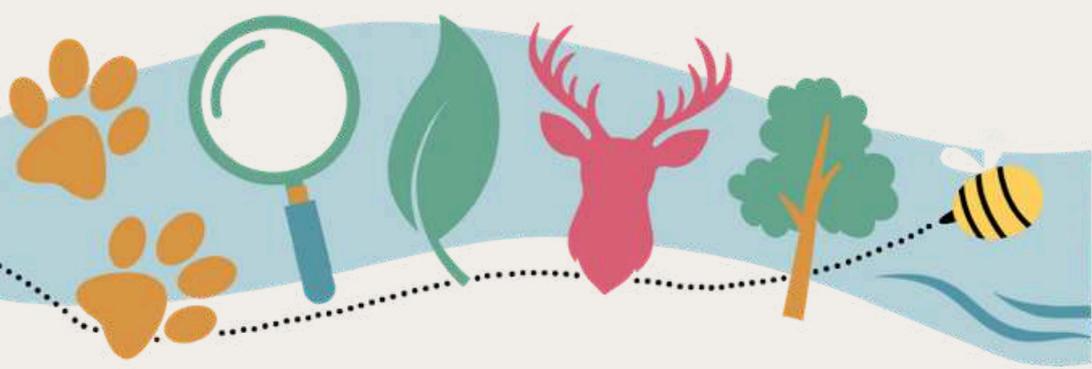
The song itself offers auditory input, of course. Joining in with the humming sections especially offers vibration and a deep calming tone; this can be amplified by humming against someone's palm if appropriate to enable them to feel sound. When humming, invite participants to place their fingertips on their cheeks, throat, and chest to see if they can feel their own vibrations.

Other options could include:

- The sound of jingling treasure coins in hands, a pouch, or jar.
- Sounds from nature, such as rustling branches and leaves, snapping sticks, rattling and rolling pebbles.
- Mindful time at the end of the song to listen for the sounds around us, especially if the activity is taking place outdoors - tune in to listen for birdsong, the breeze, voices, distant traffic. If you're fortunate to be at a historic site, do you have any environmental sounds that would be available? This could include a crackling fire, the sounds of digging, a creaking or slamming door, jingling chains, children playing, water rushing in a brook, etc.

A Moving Finale

To regulate and release from the Sensology Workout, our other senses benefit from stimulation: our vestibular sense (sense of balance) and our proprioceptive sense (the sense of our body in space). We can offer this through a return to digging, tidying up the resources, or through something more playful such as dancing, movement and action rhymes and songs, visiting a play area, or simply enjoying and chasing bubbles.



After The Dig: A Joy Audit

After running this Sensology, pause for a moment and notice:

- When did someone lean in?
- When did someone vocalise, reach, sweep, hum, or still?
- Where did anticipation begin?
- Did anyone surprise you?
- What would you keep exactly the same next time?
- What might you soften or stretch?
- How did participants end the activity feeling?
- How do you know?
- What feedback did you receive from participants during and after the session?

In Flo Longhorn's work, joy was not noise or excitement alone. It could be quiet, rhythmic, subtle, shared. Look for it in the small shifts.



Detectorists Theme | Johnny Flynn

Will you search the loamy earth for
me?
Climb through the brier and bramble?
I'll be your treasure

I felt the touch of the kings, and the
breath of the wind
I knew the call of all the song birds
They sang all the wrong words

I'm waiting for you
I'm waiting for you

Hmm-mm-mm-mm, mm
Hmm-mm-mm-mm
Hmm-mm-mm, mm
Hmm-mm-mm-mm

Would you swim through the briny
sea for me?
Roll along the ocean's floor?
I'll be your treasure

I'm with the ghosts of the men who
can never sing again
There's a place, follow me, where a
love lost at sea

Is waiting for you
Is waiting for you

Hmm-mm-mm-mm, mm
Hmm-mm-mm-mm
Hmm-mm-mm, mm
Hmm-mm-mm-mm

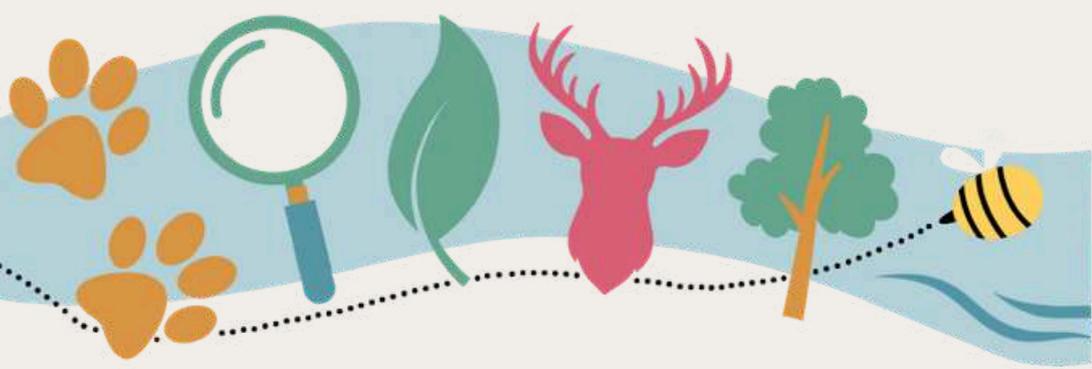
Would you drift o'er the rolling fields
for me?
Hoard me in the highest bough?
I'll be your treasure

But in history's rhyme, there's a place
and a time
And a truth to the gold that the folds
cannot hold

I'm waiting for you
I'm waiting for you

Links - *Click To Launch*





Detectorists Theme As Sensology

Will you search the loamy earth for me?

Climb through the brier and bramble?

I'll be your treasure

I felt the touch of the kings, and the breath of the wind

I knew the call of all the song birds

They sang all the wrong words

I'm waiting for you

I'm waiting for you

Hmm-mm-mm-mm, mm

Hmm-mm-mm-mm

Hmm-mm-mm, mm

Hmm-mm-mm-mm

Would you swim through the briny sea for me?

Roll along the ocean's floor?

I'll be your treasure

I'm with the ghosts of the men who can never sing again

There's a place, follow me, where a love lost at sea

Is waiting for you

Is waiting for you

Hmm-mm-mm-mm, mm

Hmm-mm-mm-mm

Hmm-mm-mm, mm

Hmm-mm-mm-mm

Would you drift o'er the rolling fields for me?

Hoard me in the highest bough?

I'll be your treasure

But in history's rhyme, there's a place and a time

And a truth to the gold that the folds cannot hold

I'm waiting for you

I'm waiting for you

Key



Touch



Smell



Look



Taste



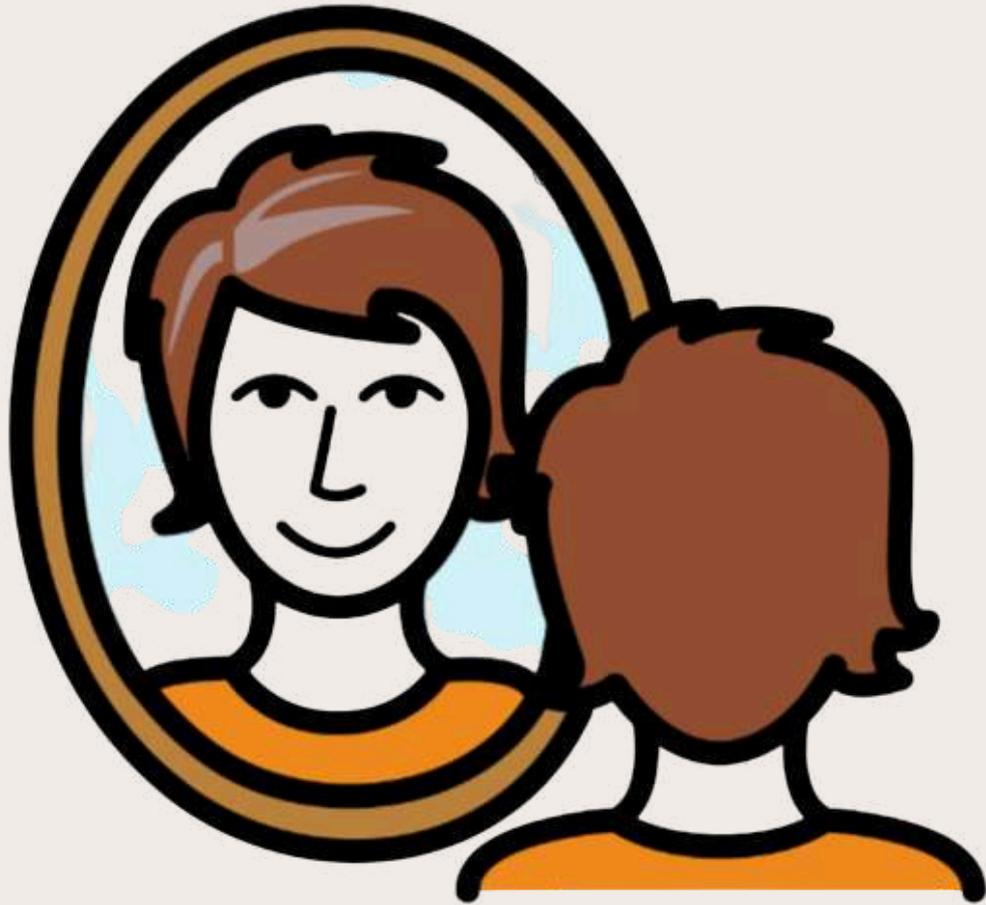
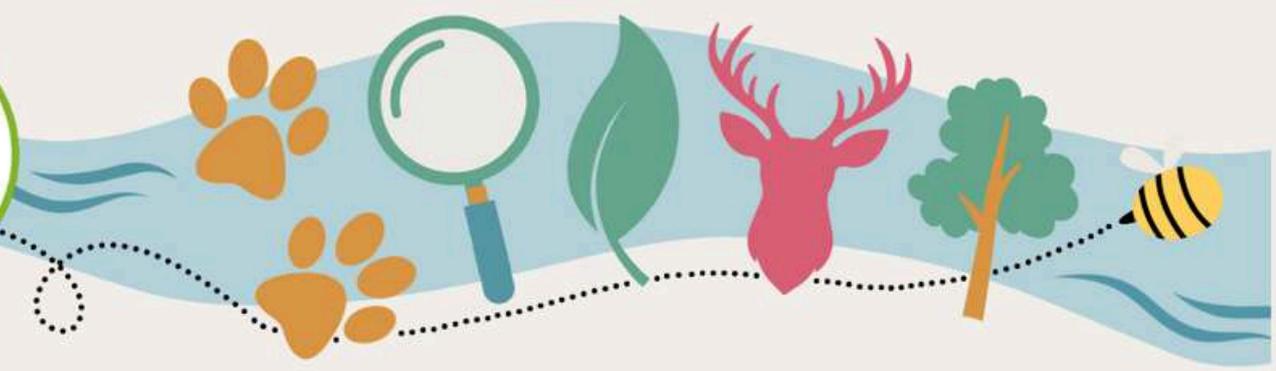
Listen

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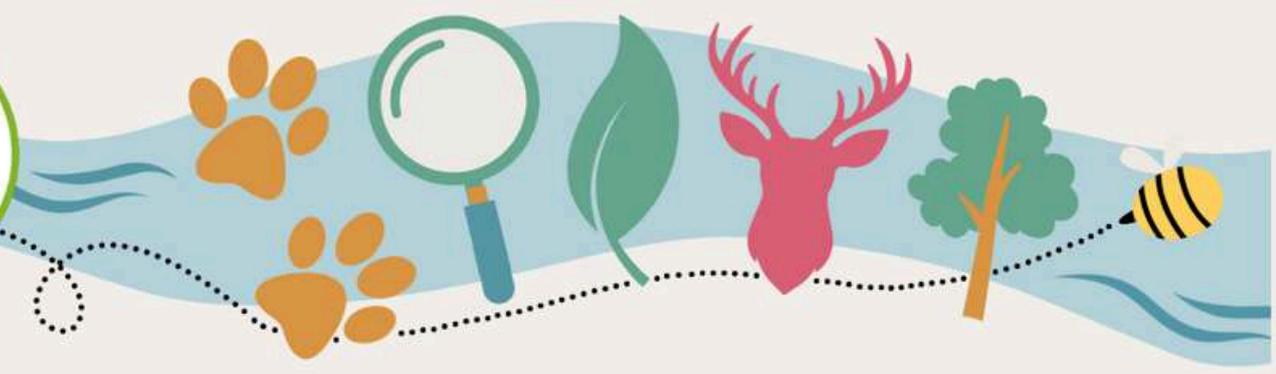
Hello

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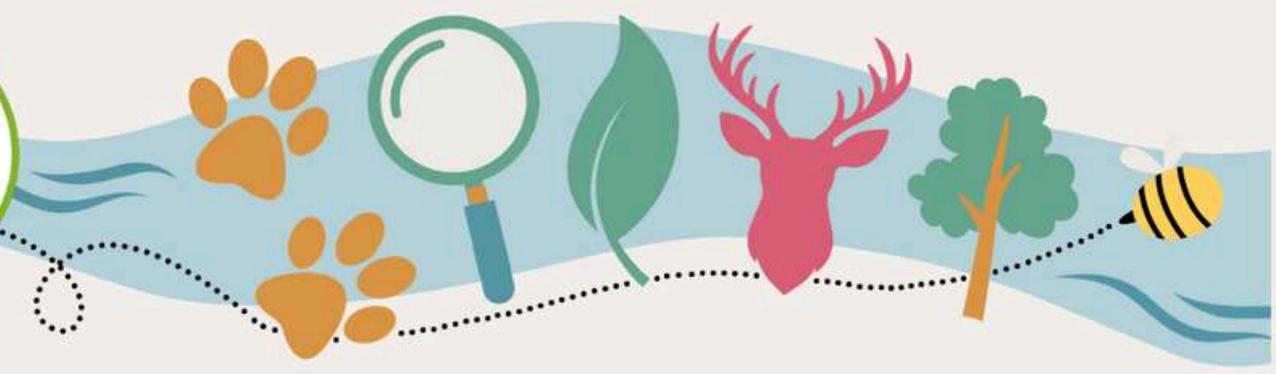


Mirror

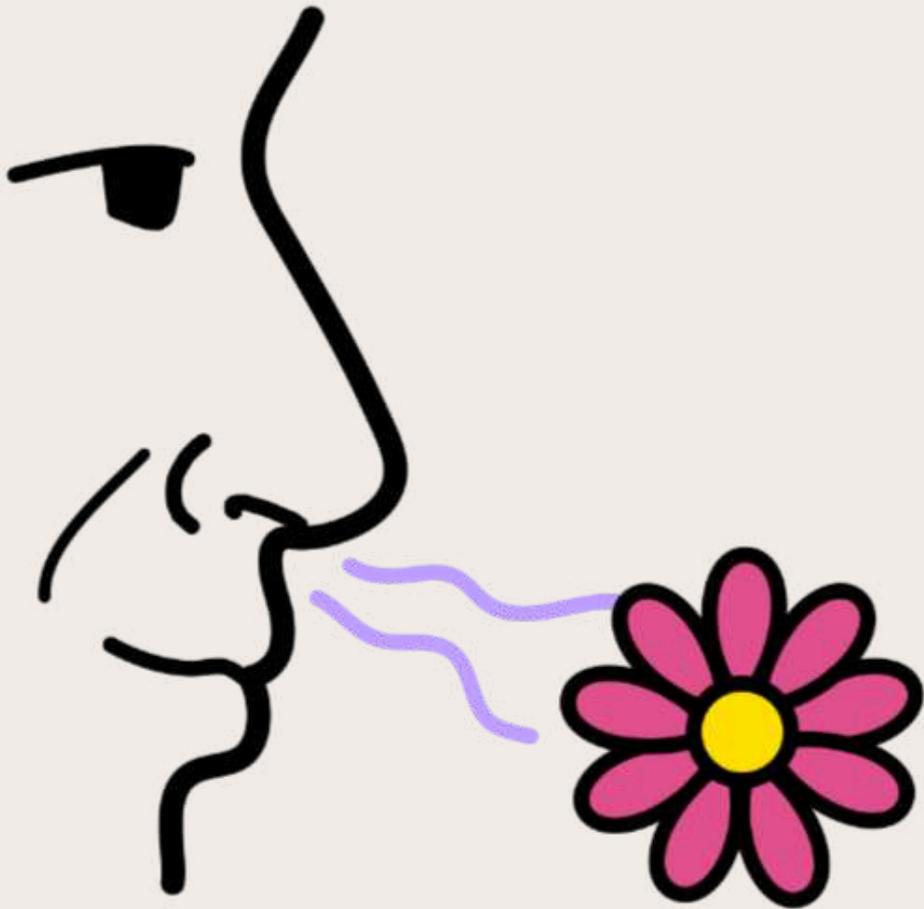
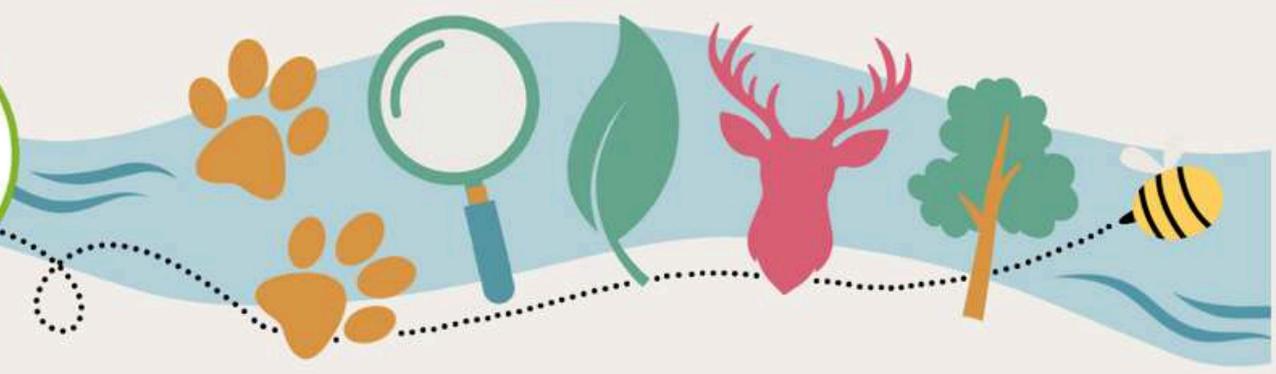
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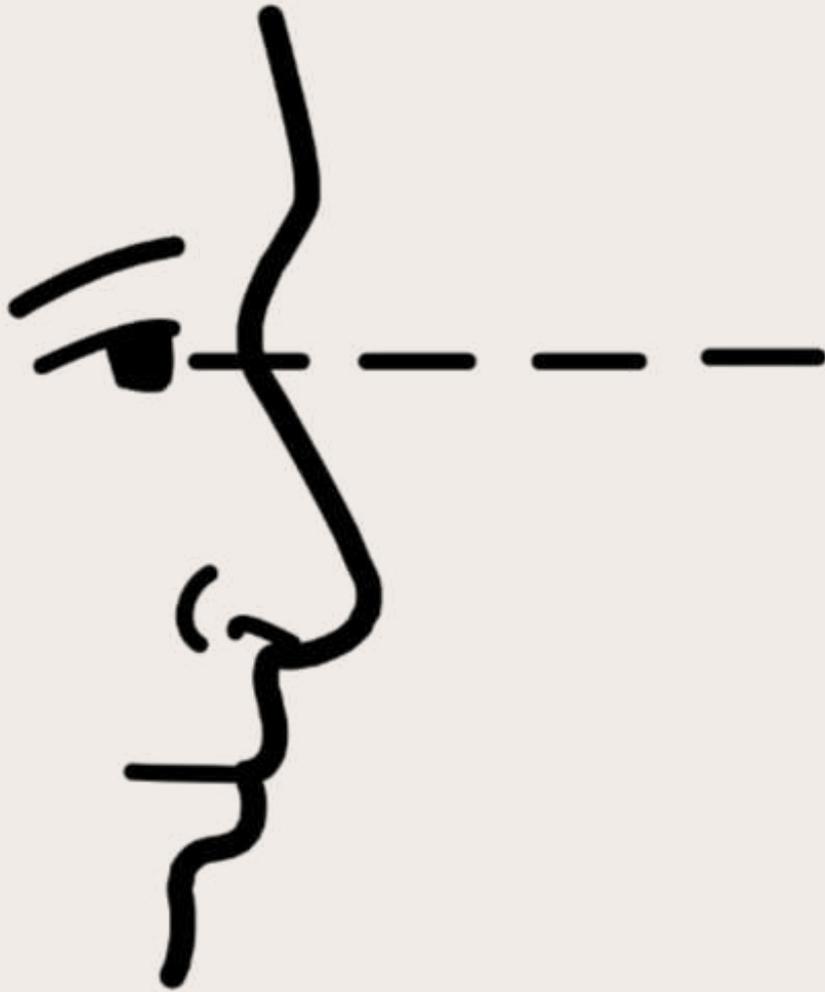
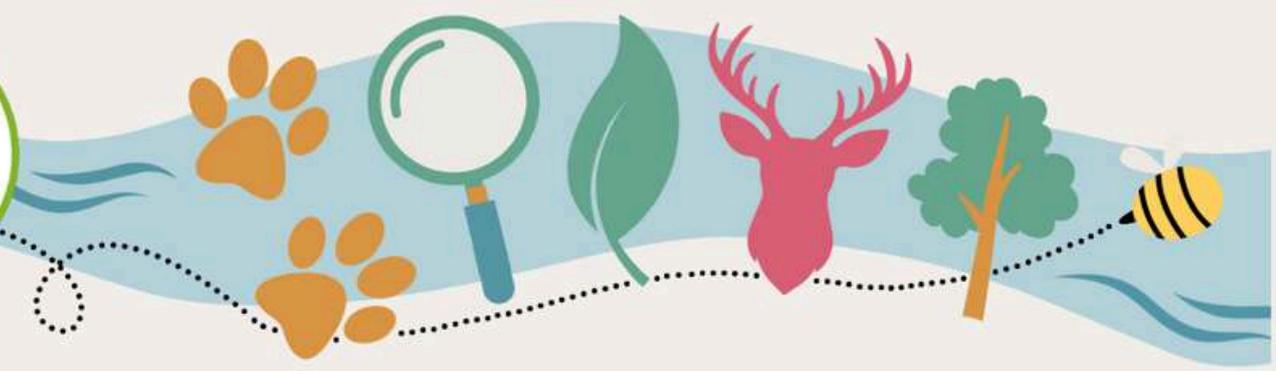
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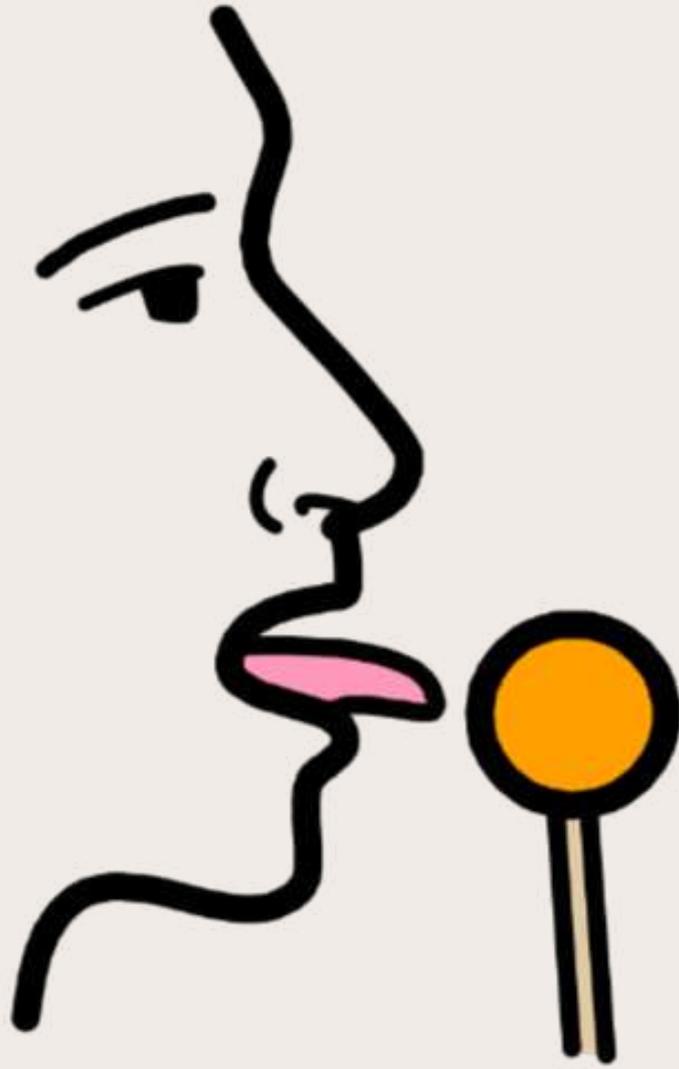
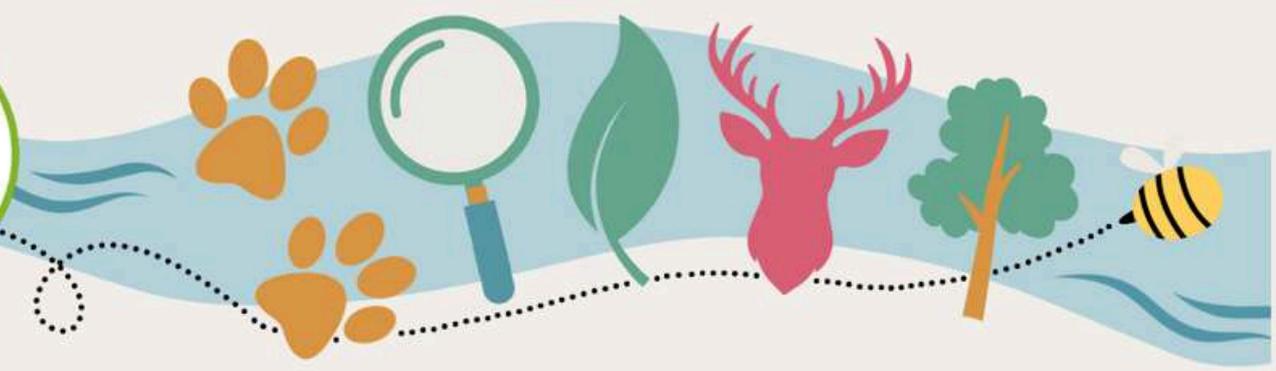
Touch



Smell

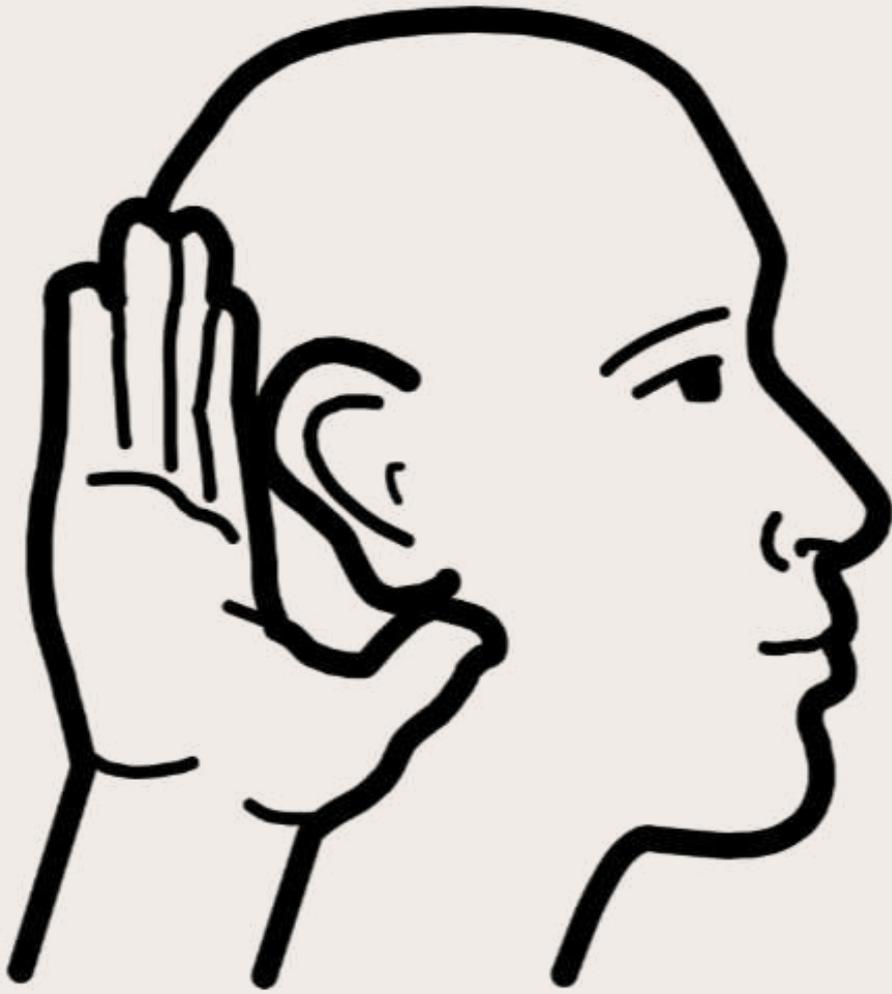
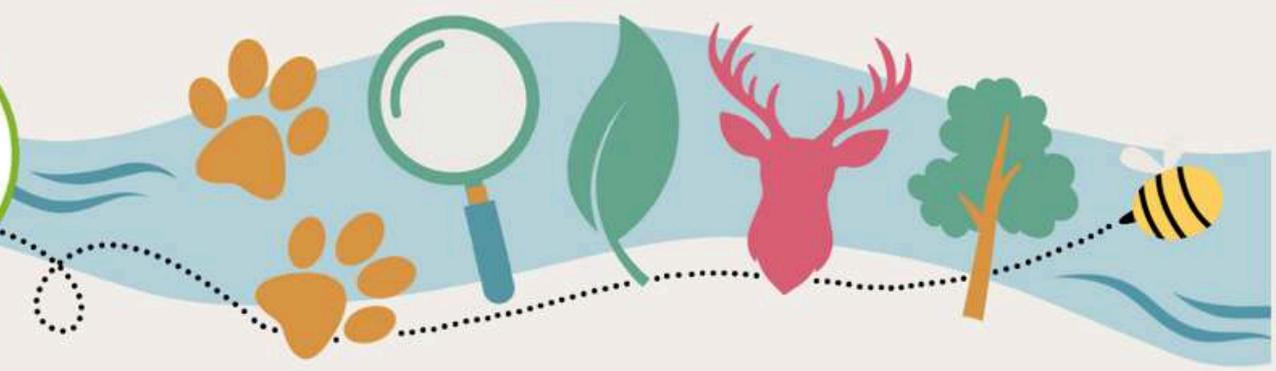


Look

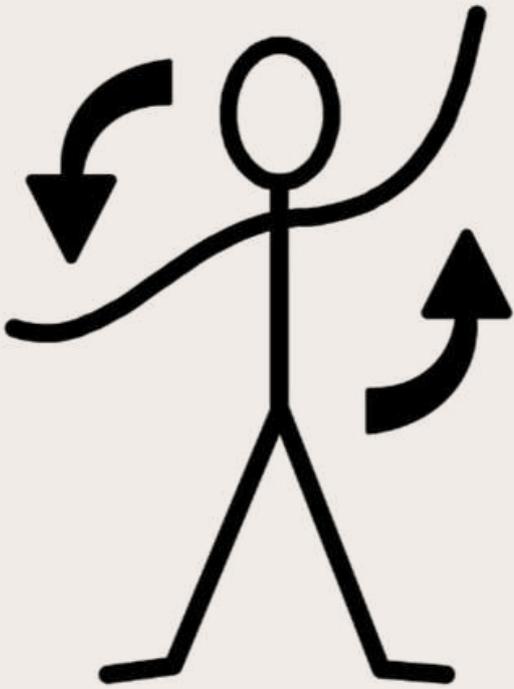
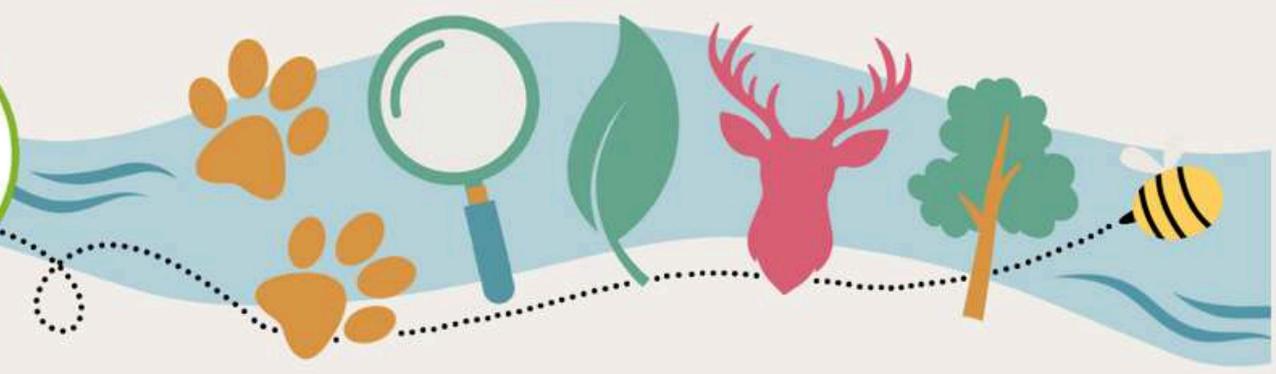


Taste

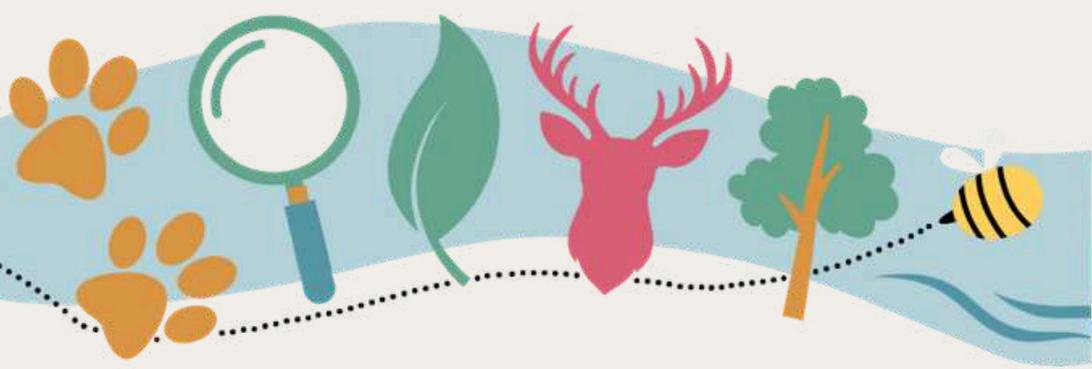
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Listen



Move



ABOUT COLLAR & CUFFS CO

Collar & Cuffs Co is a multi-award-winning creative learning practice founded in 2016 by Julia Collar. We specialise in Sensory Heritage — an approach to arts and heritage interpretation that begins with embodied, sensory experience and designs for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities first. From that foundation, access is layered outward rather than added on.

Our work centres co-production, relational facilitation, and the belief that sensory engagement is a valid and meaningful way of knowing. We have collaborated with partners including the British Museum, Kew Gardens, MK Gallery, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the National Maritime Museum and a range of specialist schools and community organisations. Across these contexts, we create inclusive storytelling experiences where everyone can participate, contribute, and belong within and to history.



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