



Let's Make a Valentine's Day Sensory Bin

Children who are blind or visually impaired need to know about colors. Even if a child can't see the colors, they need to understand the concept of colors and how they are used as descriptive words, especially as children are learning emergent literacy skills in pre-school.

One way to teach the concept of a color is to make a sensory bin - which is a storage tub or dish pan filled with things you can touch, smell, listen to, or even taste with your kiddo. To play with the bin, just pick up and experience the items. Talk about their color. Mention other things in your home that are the same color. Use other meaningful words to describe the object -- its shape, texture or the sound it makes - so your child will recognize the object in other ways besides visually. If your child eats by mouth, talk about the foods your child is eating that are the same colors.



As you explore the bin together, take turns between letting your child explore quietly on his own and talking to him about what he's doing. "You found the bumpy ball! You're holding the red heart - it's so soft. Bang, bang, bang on the bowl - that's a loud sound! You put it IN the bowl!"

Don't forget to be sensitive to your child's personality. For some children who are blind or visually impaired, introducing new items can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming. For children who are hesitant to touch new objects, try introducing new items one at a time or at their feet first to allow them to "warm-up" to the idea.

To make a Valentine's Day sensory bin like the one in the picture, first cover the bottom of a tub or dish pan with dried white beans or rice. This provides a nice contrast to your objects and a pleasant texture to run your hands through. Fill the pan with anything that's red from around your house; the objects don't have to be heart-shaped or with a Valentine's Day theme. Fuzzy red socks, red wool mittens, red jingle bells, a red bouncy ball, or red measuring cups all work. What's important is that they are everyday



things you find in your own home, even the dog's red toy. Don't put too much in the bin or it will be overwhelming to your child and hard to find single items to touch.

Once you've made one sensory bin, it's easy to get creative and come up with your own themes. Here are some other fun things to consider for your sensory bin: Mardi Gras beads, mylar paper, wooden shapes or puzzle pieces, sponge or bath scrubby, textured pony tail holders, plastic cookie cutters, felt or foam shapes, a Slinkie. Make sure the items don't pose a choking risk for your child. If the item fits inside a toilet paper tube, it's probably too small. You don't have to use a plastic bin either; a large stainless- steel bowl or a colander is wonderfully reflective and makes a great sound when your child drops a toy in it. Pinterest has many great ideas here:

<https://www.pinterest.com/officialperkins/tactile-sensory-activities-for-children-who-are-vi/?lp=true> .

Or you can talk to your Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired from A Shared Vision for more sensory bin suggestions.