

Chapter 5: Human body

Get in touch

Ratings

MESS  DANGER  DIFFICULTY 

Theme

The power of touch

Equipment needed

For two-point discrimination: business cards; glue or tape; toothpicks

For the feel bag: a variety of small objects such as (easy) cup, spoon, ball, block, sponge, fruit, sponge, rock, cotton ball, leaf, pine cone, feather, or (difficult) wood letters, wood numbers, foil, peanuts, bar of soap

For sandpaper rankings: as many different grades of sandpaper as you can find

Before you begin

The two-point discrimination test has been used by real-life neurologists, and is the most scientific and measurable. Other modalities such as pressure, temperature and vibration are also medically useful. Feel bags and sandpaper are other fun ways to explore touch.

While doing the two-point discrimination experiment, be aware that toothpicks can be quite sharp. Tell your group not to put them anywhere near eyes or ears, or to run/be silly with them.

Ask your participants what kind of information skin can carry.

Experimental method

Two-point discrimination

Stick pairs of toothpicks on to the sides of two business cards with gaps of 60, 30, 15, 7.5 and 3.75 mm. Stick a final toothpick on to the remaining side by itself. Ask the participants whether they can discriminate (without looking) between the single toothpick and the paired toothpicks on various parts of the body, such as back, arms, hands, legs, and feet, or even tongue. For each part, write down the smallest two-point gap they could differentiate as different to the single point.

Feel bag

The aim is to identify a variety of objects by 'seeing their shape with fingers'. You can do this in several different ways, such as placing single items in a sock each, several into a pillowcase, or a fancier box with tunnels attached made from old socks to put hands through. To make it more challenging, race against the clock, show the item outside the box that needs retrieving by touch alone, or wear gloves of increasing thickness.

Sandpaper ranking

Cut small squares of different grades of sandpaper (which should have a measure of roughness somewhere on the back), and write a letter on the back of each corresponding to its rank. Jumble up the letters so you don't give the game away (i.e. don't write 1=A, 2=B, 3=C). You could stick the paper to wooden blocks. Then ask the members to rank the squares in order of roughness.

You can also test pressure with filaments of fishing line of different thickness, vibration with a tuning fork, and temperature with a hot water bottle.

Big thinking

Skin is the largest sense organ, which can surprise us with its sensitivity and power to connect us with each other. Did your skin surprise you? What kinds of information can skin convey? The answer is not simple, but includes pain, temperature, vibration, position, pressure, shape and a lot more in non-verbal communication.

Big questions

Read Luke 5:13. How does touch change the way we feel? Can you think of examples when you needed a touch from someone? Why did Jesus often touch people who others would not?

Read 1 John 1:1. What difference does it make that God decided to become man? Why do you think God wanted to be touchable?

