

# Sensory Modalities to Boost your Child's Neuroplasticity



By Mendability

Sensory Enrichment for Brain Healing

## Note by Claudie Gordon-Pomares, co-founder.

When I was 5, my best friend Simon stopped coming to school. He had Down syndrome and had been sent to an institution... Since then I knew I would go to school and become a neuroscientist to find ways to help everyone, especially when they feel vulnerable, to feel more confident, calmer and happier so that we all can journey through life together more comfortably.

The good news is that it's totally possible. The neuroscience field of Environmental Enrichment has been studying ways to **boost brain development, increase brain reserves, and improve function**. Scientists have successfully treated many neurological disorders that way, and the protocols can **easily** be adapted for home use.

In this guide, I will share with you a few that you can do yourself right away.

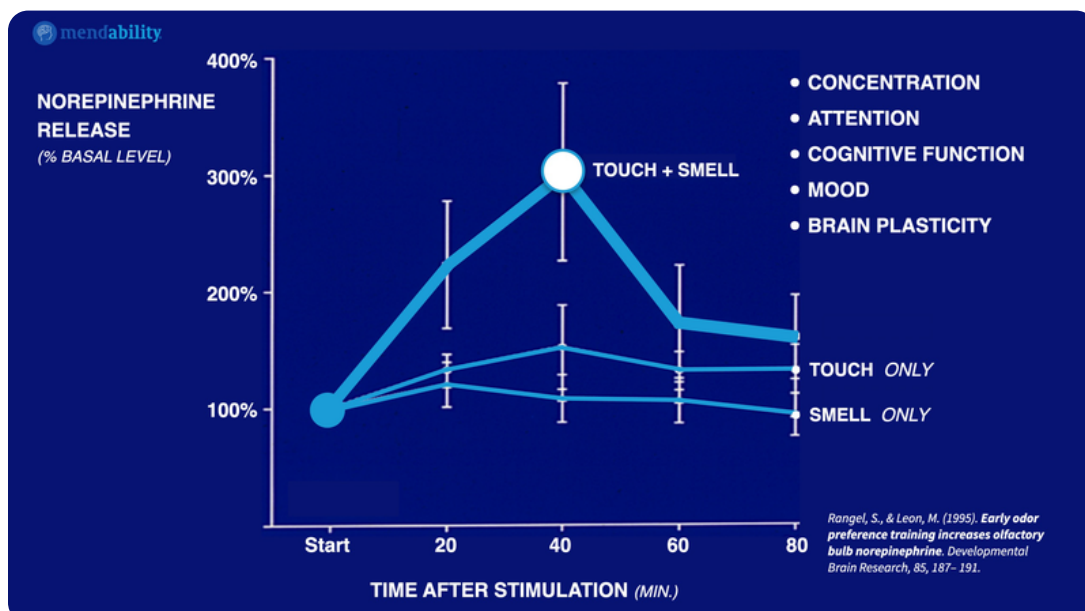


# Combine Smell and Touch to Trigger Brain Healing

Of all the different types of experiences that you can use to stimulate your brain (*Sensory, Social, Motor, Cognitive*), researchers have identified sensory and motor stimulation as the most powerful influencers on brain development and brain function. So, at Mendability, we developed hundreds of different ways of experiencing fun sensory and movement-based games that are the best translations of protocols they have used in laboratories.

And... Of all the different types of sensory and motor experiences, **smell** and **touch** have been identified as the most important ones.

**You can induce an elevated state of neuroplasticity, and trigger the brain's self-healing mechanisms by smelling your favourite scent and having someone give you your favourite back rub.** Continue reading to see how it works...





## Smell: Dopamine, Clarity and Motivation

Smell alone has its own benefits, related to dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical in the brain that influences how we feel pleasure, stay motivated, and maintain focus. If you have ADHD, you may find it interesting that dopamine is what the brain uses to tell your muscles to stop moving... In animal studies, scientists discovered that smelling a pleasant aroma can double your dopamine levels for up to 3 hours.

**All you have to do is bring your favorite scent to your nose and enjoy.**

The aroma can come in any form. The only thing that matters for this sensory stimulation protocol is that you enjoy the experience. It can be a candle, essential oil, scented hand lotion, chapstick, hot cocoa, incense stick, etc.







## Touch: Serotonin and Stress Resilience

Touch also has its own benefits, related to another brain hormone: serotonin. Serotonin is connected to almost every brain function, but it's mostly known as a growth and calming factor.

There are 5 types of receptors in the skin and gentle touch is the most direct and powerful way to boost serotonin. Have you had the perfect back rub and felt chills? This "frisson" is the physiological effect of a serotonin boost.

For best results, look for ways to experience touch in a passive, receptive state. **Close your eyes and get a perfect back tickle.** Ask your partner to use their fingertips instead of their palm, for more sensory tracks. Alternatively, use a backscratcher yourself (*While movement and task planning dilute the stimulation, the fact that you can control exactly where and how to scratch compensates a little*) or spend a few seconds exploring a texture board.



# Combination and Repetition

You can boost your clarity and motivation just with your sense of smell, you can boost your resilience to stress just with your sense of touch, but **true healing happens when you combine** these two senses.

Another key principle that we mentioned already and is worth repeating (*no pun intended*) is that **to make the changes you induced in your brain stick, you need to repeat the experience**. Over time, the brain will install the new connections permanently, along with all the support systems needed (*blood vessels, etc.*).

For example, as you get into the habit of smelling and touching regularly the brain will gradually manage its own dopamine and serotonin levels better.





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