Flavor Roller Coaster

Sensory Activity

Objectives:
1. Recognize the role of the five senses in eating food.
2. Appreciate eating as a satisfying and pleasurable experience rather than as a rushed experience.

Age:
8 years and older.

Length:
Approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Supplies and Materials:
1. Spice Gum Drops candy. While brands vary, flavors usually include: wintergreen, cinnamon, anise or black licorice, spearmint, cloves, and/or ginger.

2. Plastic sandwich-size or snack-size bags. Prepare bags ahead with one of each flavor gum drop in each bag – one bag per participant.

3. Large container of water and a cup for each person.

4. Flavor Roller Coaster handouts, attached. Cut in half – one half-sheet per person.

5. Pencils.

6. Optional: samples of actual spices matching the spice gum drop flavors.

Special Considerations:
Food Allergies: Be aware that some participants may have food allergies. Ask them to be your helpers in distributing supplies for the activity.

Activity Directions:
1. Share information about the senses and the pleasure of eating. The following is a suggested script:

   Taste is not the only sense we use while enjoying food. We also use sight, touch, sound and smell. Up to 80 percent of what we think of as taste is actually smell. The combined effect of taste and smell is called flavor.

   We sense the smell of foods in two ways: first through the nose as we inhale or sniff and second through the back of the mouth as we chew and swallow.
2. Distribute plastic bags with the different spice gum drops, *Flavor Roller Coaster* handouts, pencils and small cups for water.

3. Ask participants to start with the white spice gum drop and follow your directions:
   * on the handout, record the flavor you expect or predict
   * smell the white spice gum drop and record the flavor you expect or predict
   * place the spice gum drop in your mouth, chew and record the flavor
   * rinse mouth with water and swallow before the next sample

4. Ask participants to try the yellow spice gum drop next and with different directions:
   * on the handout, record the flavor you expect or predict
   * while holding your nose, place the gum drop in your mouth
   * chew a few times and try to guess the flavor while holding your nose
   * before swallowing, release your nose
   * record your experience (*Participants should experience little taste while the nose is held and then a rush of flavor when the nose is released.*)

5. Have participants repeat this process with the rest of the spice gum drops. They can choose if they want to hold their noses.

6. Once complete, share the true flavors of the spice drops. If available, you can show samples of the actual spices and talk about how they are used in different foods.

7. Briefly discuss the experience asking the following questions:
   * What senses did you use for this activity?
   * Which spice gum drop tasted least like what you thought from its color?
   * Which spice gum drop tasted least like what you thought from its smell?
   * What happened when you held your nose? How important is your nose to taste?

**Take Home Tidbit**

Take home slip says the following:

“Ask me how our noses help us taste food and about the spice gum drops we sampled during the WIN Kids Fun Day.”

**Source:** Wardlaw, Mary Kay. *Senses Carnival.* WIN Kids Lesson. Wellness IN the Rockies, University of Wyoming. 2011.