

JOHN PENDAL: Coaching For People Who Feel Like Outsiders

Soothing your Senses

If you have a few minutes free here are five questions to consider:

What are the things you that really like to touch?

You particularly like to taste, eat or drink?

You most like to see or watch?

You love to hear or listen to?

And can you name anything that you like to smell?

It doesn't matter if you think of one answer, several things or nothing in response to a question – but here are some ways the answers can be put to good use:

BETTER SLEEP

If you struggle getting good sleep, can you incorporate any of your favourite items into your sleep routine? Maybe listening to waves/ music/ a podcast, bringing a smell that you like into the room or the touch of a favourite fabric will help. Even if you can't sleep, they may make lying awake more pleasurable.

(There are more suggestions to help improve sleep at <https://www.johnpendal.com/sleep.html>)

PEOPLE PLEASING

Many people I work with have spent a lifetime masking and people pleasing to fit in, and now they struggle to know who they are or put up boundaries.

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Taking time to explore nice things happening to your senses can be a great first step in discovering who you are underneath years of masking, or being able to say “yes” to things that are just for you.

REDUCING ANXIETY

Are there anything on your list that you could take with you into stressful situations? It might be putting a weighted blanket over your legs whilst on a zoom call, or putting a favourite item to hold in a pocket whilst on a walk.

Some people have taken answers from the list which are suitable for storage and making up a “*mental health box*” they can open when needed.

If you find it stressful moving from one activity to another (“*code switching*”), then taking a minute to calm yourself with one of your favourite items can help to reduce the cost of changing plans or activities.

RECONNECTING WITH YOUR BODY

There are many reasons why you might feel disconnected from your body. You might have poor internal signals (*interoception*), be in a state of sensory dysregulation, healing from trauma, or struggle with your body image.

Having soothing things happen to your senses can be a way of grounding yourself and reconnecting with your body.

RECOVERING FROM BURNOUT

Often when we are exhausted, stressed or near burnout our bodies want to withdraw and hibernate. You might find that normal parts of your self-care (*e.g. eating, singing, yoga, hobbies*) lose their appeal as your brain rejects anything that it sees as an extra demand.

The answers you gave to the sensory questions may still work as ways to restore yourself, as your brain might not consider them as demands.

On days that you don't feel like eating – is there a favourite food that still appeals?

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If you just want to stay on the sofa, is there a piece of music that would help – or a pet you can sit with?

Having nice things happen to your body may be a way of getting under the radar when your brain is in *"demand avoidance mode"*.

The part I like most about this exercise is that even if you give it a go and don't feel any of the extra benefits – something nice has still happened to you.

Please get in touch if you have any questions or would like to book a call.

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