



THE NOSE KNOWS

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Stop for a moment. Take one large breath in and smell the air around you. With every inhalation and exhalation (about 23,000 times per day!), we smell the world we're surrounded by. We are awash in odours of all kinds, from the pleasant fragrance of lily to the sharp and pungent smell of skunks.

The latest research suggests that humans' sense of smell is far more sensitive than we give it credit for. In fact, a 2014 study revealed that we detect up to one trillion distinct odours! We can even smell feelings! For example, if a friend is happy, they release subtle odours that make us happy, and if they are stressed or upset, we pick that scent up too, without even knowing it! Just like we exercise our bodies, we can exercise our sense of smell to enhance our connection to the natural systems that sustain and nurture us. In our technology-saturated world, which arguably dulls our senses, taking the time to appreciate the amazing symphony of smells around us is a necessary and rewarding experience!

SCENT TRAILS

Imagine this: Your eyes are closed and you hunker down. You fill your lungs full of fresh spring air and you pick up a scent. It's the familiar odour of your friend Rick and you can tell that he passed right by your front door, headed for downtown. You use your nose and follow his scent to a convenience store just in time to share his bag of chips. If only that were true!

Unfortunately, our human nose isn't sensitive enough to follow scent trails, but many animals can! Canids (or members of the dog family) including foxes, coyotes, wolves, and dogs, have an incredible sense of smell—many thousands of times better than a human. A larger portion of their brain is given over to scent perception, which can distinguish between many different types of smells. While we might say, "Mmmm I smell mac and cheese!" They might say, "Mmmm I smell noodles and cheese and butter and salt and milk and bread crumbs and metal pot and Aunt Marge must have just made this." Animals take short and deep sniffs to isolate and follow a scent.

THIS GAME IS FOR THE DOGS

Working in pairs, have one person don a blindfold while the other lays down a scent trail using extracts or essential oils (lemon, mint, or orange are all good scents to try). Leaving a drop or two every foot or so, for about five feet, try to create a curving, sweeping trail to make things more challenging. At the end of the trail leave a small treat for the hardworking sniffer!

Guide the blindfolded partner to the beginning of your trail and let them use their nose to and follow it. If they're lucky, just like a hunting fox following the trail of a rabbit, a sweet treat will be waiting for them at the end! •