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Space

A Sleepy Sensory Story by Jo Grace, on behalf of Simple Stuff Works



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“Together we are better”

We (Sarah Clayton from Simple Stuff Works and Joanna Grace from The Sensory Story Project) have teamed up to bring you a sensory story designed to support the delivery of good postural care. We hope you will benefit from, and enjoy, sharing it. Everything you need to know to tell the story is in this booklet, combine this with your knowledge and the advice you have received from your therapist and you will be ready to go.

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Sensory stories

Sensory stories convey a narrative using a mixture of words and sensory experiences.

Sensory stimulation supports cognitive development, learning, memory and communication.

Narratives are an enriching part of life, we all enjoy stories, and within the story telling space we find ourselves better able to understand concepts and try new things.

Sensory stories can be used to support individuals with a range of needs and disabilities, they are particularly beneficial to individuals with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

You can download a free guide called **Sharing a sensory story** from:

<http://jo.element42.org/sensory-stories>

The best thing about sensory stories is that they are fun.

Postural care

Good postural care helps to prevent people who find it hard to move from developing damaging body shape distortions. With the right information and by using the right equipment and positioning techniques you can protect and restore a person's body shape. Body distortion does not have to be an inevitable consequence of disability.

Night time positioning is especially important as we spend so much time in bed over the course of our lives. Getting used to a new night time position can take time, practice, and patience. Supporting someone to learn to lie comfortably on their back can be challenging but there are recognised benefits which will make your efforts all worthwhile.

Please remember to use a comprehensive safety checklist, if you have concerns for the person's safety while they lie on their back ensure that there is someone with them at all times. This story has been written to form part of a bed time routine however it can easily be used during the day to help the person practice a new position before this is introduced at night.

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Introducing Space

Space is a story for anyone who has looked up at the night sky in wonderment. It is a stretch for any imagination to consider the awesomeness of space. What better place to exercise our imaginations than in dreams?

Astronauts journey into space aboard rockets and shuttles. Your story experiencer is going to go on a similar adventure, but their shuttle is their imagination, and their journey is their dreams. With story experiencers who can understand this idea you can talk to them about what they think they might find in space. Every night can be a different journey: they can discover distant planets, make friends with aliens, land on the moon, space walk. If they enjoy these imagination adventures then you might be able to find ways to feed them through sharing a little bit of information ahead of each journey: did they know – in this way the adventure will keep growing. You don't always have to launch at night, if you are sharing the story during the daytime you could sit with your story experiencer as they rest in position and gently talk through their adventures, you could even make them up together.

I have purposefully chosen the space shuttle for this Sleepy Sensory Story because it is designed to return to earth. Your adventurer's journey is not one that will last forever, they will be returning to tell you all about it. The flight last for the night only, in the morning they return. Waking up is their landing; and perhaps they will return with moon dust between their toes and tails to tell of the brightness of distant suns.

As you move through the story there are cues for your postural care routine. Most of these cues occur at the start of the story so that your story experiencer gets first their body ready for sleep and then their mind. Typically a countdown linked to a launch is a thing of great excitement; it is up to you as the person sharing the story to use this countdown as an opportunity to cue in relaxation, imagination and sleep.

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Imagine yourself as ground control getting further and further away, soon you will just be a tiny spec on a blue planet far below your adventurer. Count calmly, steadily, and fade out.

This story is to be used in conjunction with the postural advice you have received from your therapist. The story pages have prompts indicating the sensory stimuli to be used with each section of the story and making suggestions for text you might want to add to the guided meditation. Make your own notes to remind you of key points for postural care.

It is well worth remembering the recognised advantages of supporting people to learn to lie on their back and remember there is no rush. The advantages published in an article called 'The Biomechanics of Body Shape Distortion' include: the person's head can be supported centrally; their shoulder girdle can lie symmetrically in a level, neutral position; their arms and hands can be gently supported in a functional position; the weight of their spine is lowermost and on the supporting surface, the softer more delicate part of their chest is uppermost and can be protected; their pelvis can be gently brought into a level position; the gap and their waist, between pelvis and lower ribs, can be brought into a position to lie symmetrically; their hips can be supported and protected in secure abduction, with the legs slightly apart; gravity can be used to gently help the knees to straighten; and finally their feet can be supported in a secure neutral position. For a copy of the article please contact Sarah at training@simplestuffworks.co.uk

The sensory stimulation that accompanies this story is simple to create and should aid a peaceful night's sleep. Sensory stimulation is beneficial to cognitive development and the maintenance of cognitive abilities; it can also help develop communication skills. Good postural care is an essential part of a healthy life. We hope that through this story you will be able to share both with your story experience and have an enjoyable time doing it.

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Resourcing the story

To provide the simple sensory stimuli to tell this story you will need to gather a couple of items and create a couple of items. It can help to engage your story experiencer with the story if you make the home created items together (Do not worry, they are very simple and instructions have been provided. If you're not feeling creative perhaps school or a friend would like to help out with the glue and the sequins!)

Be aware of any sensory preferences, needs or allergies the person you will be sharing the story with may have and feel free to substitute more suitable resources as required.

Gather

A hair dryer

Essential oils

Create

A galaxy mobile

A control panel

Optional extra fuel

Research books

Internet

Gathering:

A hair dryer is likely to be something you already have at home, however if you are looking to get one to use with the story (perhaps to travel with the story to where ever it is told) then a small portable one would be excellent.

You can expect a little bottle of essential oil to cost under a pound; many shops offer a wide selection of smells. You are welcome to find the one that you think best matches what the pumped air inside a space shuttle might smell like, however you may want to choose one with soporific properties, look for scents like: Sandalwood, Camomile, Jasmine, Lavender, Rose or Vanilla or Bergamot, are all said to aid sleep. Place a few drops of your chosen oil on cotton wool and keep inside a plastic container. The air inside the container will become fragranced so that when you take off the lid you get a gentle waft of the aroma.

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Creating

To make a control panel take a piece of card large enough to curve over your story experimenter when they are lying down. Create switches on this by sticking on coloured card or foil, cutting holes in the card will make the control panel more visually interesting. Alternatively, if you can gather a number of real switches and attach these to a piece of board you will create something that feels more switchy when you switch it. A final option is to print out an enlarged image of the inside of the space shuttle and your story experimenter can pretend to press the real space shuttle switches.

To create a galaxy cut a spiral out of a piece of card. You can choose to use a piece approx. A4 size and make a traditional mobile, or you can use a larger piece and make a bigger experience. To make the traditional mobile you will need a pack of star sequins and some thread. Sprinkle the stars onto a sheet of paper, dip the thread in glue and then drape it over the stars so that they attach themselves at irregular intervals. Repeat this with many threads and then attach them at even intervals to your spiral. Hang the spiral from a single thread in its centre. The spiral shape will mean that the mobile will turn slowly and the stars will twinkle below. To make the larger experience choose star sequins or star shaped gems (you may want to source several colours and try to copy the patterns seen in galaxies). Glue your stars all over your spiral. Then take a needle and thread and stitch from one ring of the spiral to the next, tying a knot on each ring, so that when you lift the spiral the rings can only fall a short way apart. Hang the spiral from a single thread in its centre. It will twirl creating a glittering spectacle above your adventurer.



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Inside the space shuttle – see contents page for where you can download this image.



Traditional star mobile.



Large galaxy visual experience. View a short film of this stimuli at <http://youtu.be/tUP49Qlr6m0>



A spiral galaxy – see contents page for where you can download this image.

Optional extra fuel

The text provided in this document is not the real story you are aiming to share with your story experiencer, it is merely the springboard to the story they create themselves or you create together. Giving a little bit of extra information before you share the story, or as you begin your imaginative journey together can be a great way to refuel and keep the story interesting over many retellings. Try to resist the temptation to share everything you know all in one go, instead hunt for interesting facts about space and space travel and offer one or two of these with each telling. Pictures from the Hubble telescope would also make for great extra fuel. You can access images uploaded by NASA at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/gsfcc/>

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Facilitating the sensory stimuli for Space

Get everything ready before you start. Set out the sensory resources and the postural support resources you will need somewhere where you will be able to reach them easily as you share the story. Prop up the story page somewhere where you can see it as you move about.

The boy climbed into the space shuttle, his mind full of the journey that was about to begin.

Get your story experience into bed.

I wonder how far I will travel, he thought, as he fastened his safety harness.

Adjust your story experiencers' torso according to the guidance you have received from your therapist, "clunk" an imaginary harness.

How fast will I soar, he asked himself, as he placed his feet carefully on the peddles.

Place your story experiencers' legs and feet in the position recommended by your therapist.

And what will I see? The boy set the switches to provide air for his flight.

Hold the switches above your story experiencer and allow them to switch the ones they feel necessary. Once the switches are set ensure their arms rest in a suitable position according to your therapist's advice you can remove the lid from the plastic pot containing a few drops of essential oil, allow your story experiencer the time to notice this smell and then leave the pot open somewhere in the room.

From ground control the countdown began: 10, 9, 8, the boy imagined all that he would see, and how high he would fly 7, 6, 5, his body relaxed ready to let the space shuttle to take him to the place where all his questions would find answers, 4, 3, 2, 1

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The experience that accompanies this section is you counting down. Use your voice to convey a sense of deepening relaxation, think about slowing your speech and using a deeper tone, your “one” should be a whisper (not a dramatic “ONE”).

The rockets outside the capsule roared, the boy felt their warmth from his head to his toes, he laid his head back against the headrest...

Use the hair dryer to gently warm your story experiencer from their head to their toes, when you get to their toes check their physical alignment. Make any adjustments you need, and then cover them with their blanket.

And then he was there...floating in space, weightless, the light turning to darkness, ...he looked up out of the capsule window and his eyes filled with stars

Turn off the lights in the room and hang the galaxy stimulus above the head of your story experiencer. Hang it in a position that will support their postural alignment if they look directly at it. You can use a small night light, or wind up torch (which will fade), to throw light on the stars.



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Space

The boy climbed into the space shuttle, his mind full of the journey that was about to begin.

Get into bed.

I wonder how far I will travel, he thought, as he fastened his safety harness.

Torso positioning.

How fast will I soar, he asked himself, as he placed his feet carefully on the peddles.

Feet positioning.

And what will I see? The boy set the switches to provide air for his flight.

Switches, arm positioning - Essential oil.

From ground control the countdown began: 10, 9, 8, the boy imagined all that he would see, and how high he would fly 7, 6, 5, his body relaxed ready to let the space shuttle to take him to the place where all his questions would find answers, 4, 3, 2, 1

Countdown.

The rockets outside the capsule roared, the boy felt their warmth from his head to his toes, he laid his head back against the headrest...

Hair dryer - Head positioning

And then he was there...floating in space, weightless, the light turning to darkness, ...he looked up out of the capsule window and his eyes filled with stars

Light-dark & galaxy mobile.