

Shiny happy people

This Story Saack, based on the song by R.E.M., is an example of how you can use music which is a favourite with a child or their family to create a fun and motivational activity. This song also links nicely to the use of shiny and reflective toys to support the development of visual skills.

Lyrics

Shiny happy people laughing	There's no time to cry, happy, happy
Meet me in the crowd, people, people	Put it in your heart where tomorrow shines
Throw your love around, love me, love me	Gold and silver shine
Take it into town, happy, happy	Shiny happy people holding hands
Put it in the ground where the flowers grow	Shiny happy people holding hands
Gold and silver shine	Shiny happy people laughing
Shiny happy people holding hands	Whoa, here we go
Shiny happy people holding hands	Shiny happy people holding hands
Shiny happy people laughing	Shiny happy people holding hands
Everyone around, love them, love them	Shiny happy people laughing (repeat X2)
Put it in your hands, take it, take it	

A space to play

When working on the development of visual skills it's important to consider the space you use and whether you choose to play in a brightly lit environment or a darkened space. The use of reflective and shiny materials is enhanced by creative use of lighting and torches. You could include in this space a cosy seating arrangement with a range of interesting and accessible resources to share with your child. Consider using a space blanket to lie on, light projectors and mirrors.



Dressing up

For some children with a significant visual impairment it's important to make yourself as visible as possible. You could try wearing a high vis vest, a sparkly wig or maybe some stripy gloves to draw attention to your hands. Wearing big bold glasses or brightly coloured lipstick helps to draw attention to your face.



Cueing in

Use the song to cue your child in. If you have a story bag or story bucket you could show this to your child when the music starts. Or you could try shaking some bells along with the music.



Lures

The term lure is used to describe toys or resources which are designed to make the best use of the vision a child with a visual impairment has. These can include:

- Reflective toys which are shiny, glittery, have mirrors or are high-vis can be used to attract your child's visual attention. Examples include metal bowls and spoons, CDs, a space blanket, and an infinity mirror.
- Tactile toys with different textures, shapes, and sizes can help your child explore their environment and develop their sense of touch. Examples include textured balls, puzzle toys, and shape-sorting toys.
- Auditory toys which make sounds can help your child locate and identify objects in their environment. Examples include musical instruments, sound puzzles, and talking books.
- Sensory toys that stimulate multiple senses can be especially beneficial for visually impaired children. Examples include light-up toys, vibrating toys, and scented toys.



When selecting toys or lures for your child, it's important to consider their individual needs, motivators and abilities, and to seek advice from a specialist if necessary. Some ideas for activities with reflective lures are included below.



Psychological
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Story Saacks

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Activities

When working with your child it's useful to consider the visual skills of fixing and following including horizontal and vertical tracking. It's important to provide time for your child to 'find' the lure, follow it at a pace that suits them without going outside their preferred field of vision. Be prepared for your child to explore toys in a different way; perhaps they are more inclined to bring toys close to their face or explore with their mouth.

Dressing up

Wear a sparkly wig when you have some face-to-face time with your child. Encourage them (with hand over hand support if needed) to reach for and pull it off. Do the same with other things worn around your face e.g. deely boppers, red noses, hats, etc.

Shiny sensory umbrella

Lie with your child under a black umbrella that's trimmed with reflective and shiny items e.g. tinsel, stars, reflective Christmas baubles, etc. This is a great space to add the use of a torch or disco torch. You can light up the items hanging from the umbrella to attract your child's attention.

Play gym

When they are in a lying position introduce some reflective toys using a baby gym. Attach the items (chains, metal spoons, tinsel, pen torches, etc.) with an elastic cord and encourage them to reach for and grasp the items or put them into their hand.

Mirror play 1

Use a mirror as a tabletop or tray and sprinkle items onto it to explore. The mirror reflects the items and is a good way to provide visual reinforcement.

Mirror play 2

Sit your child in front of a wall mirror and sit behind them. Move some bright reflective objects behind them and watch their eyes in the mirror to see if they can locate and track them. Don't go too fast though!

Space Blanket

Place your child on a reflective space blanket and shine a selection of torches and light up toys onto its surface. Do they notice, follow, or even reach for these reflections?

Music time

Enjoy some rhythmic music play using shiny bell shakers and tambourines. The movement and noise from these reflective instruments can be both visually stimulating and motivating.

Box hunt

Line a shoebox with reflective or holographic paper and stick a string of fairy lights along the top edge. Hide 2 or 3 shiny or light up toys inside e.g. metallic bells, disco torch, mini disco balls. Help your child explore the box to find them.

Kitchen fun

Use a metal bowl or cake tin from your kitchen and add various reflective or light-up items to roll around inside it. Try adding a light up ball or rolled up tin foil balls. It's also fun to put a vibrating toy into the metallic bowl as this adds a noisy reward into the play!

Finish

Remember to prepare your child to understand that the activity is about to end. You may have had the music running in the background, so the music finishing signifies that the activity is coming to an end. If you feel your child is giving you cues that they are ready to finish earlier then go along with this. For some children being involved in sensory can be tiring or overstimulating so you may need to give them a quiet time before moving onto something else.

Taking it further!

You can explore more ideas for [Sensory Umbrellas](#) on The Highland Council Psychological Service [Blog](#). Other websites for supporting children with a visual impairment are:

- Positive Eye has some useful free downloads, such as, [Positive looking with your baby](#) and [Creative Story Buckets](#).
- From the RNIB, [Messy and Muddy A guide to outdoor play for children with a visual impairment](#).