

The Five Senses Experience

Wednesday 26 January, 20.00 - 22.00

Our perception of reality is based on our five senses, creating a different reality for each of us.

What should we know about our five senses?

Key Points

- The system of smell is used for survival.
- Taste on its own does not tell the complete story, but needs to take in one's internal and external environment.
- Sight helps with the ability to deal with people.
- Together, the five senses make up an interconnected world that frames perception.

Synopsis

After being asked to sniff a small plastic bottle that contained a perfume, participants were asked to describe what they smelled and what it made them think of. The simple experiment was used to demonstrate the power of smell. Humans smell the world using about 12 million olfactory receptor cells. Smell not only helps associate with memories and emotion, but is also used to sense danger. Thus, humans use smell for survival.

Described as the “superstar” of the senses, the ability to taste is also powerful. However, taste is subjective and does not tell the complete story. What brings taste to life is how it relates to the environment and feelings, memories that are unique to the person alone.

Sight is one of the more complex senses. For some, it is not just about seeing but about dealing with people. When you see someone, you can look at the person's surface and accept it, or you can work hard and start seeing what is beneath the surface.

Hearing is about the sense of sound perception that is crucial to language and speech. It is a mechanical sense because vibrations are mechanically conducted from the eardrum through a series of tiny bones to hair-like fibres in the inner ear. But, it is also the mechanical energy of the universe that dates back to humans' proto-consciousness. That is why certain kinds of sound become spiritually important.

Each sense is part of consciousness; together, they make up an interconnected world. It is the medium of the senses that has driven the evolutionary continuum of all creatures, including humans. Sometimes humans need to work hard for the senses to be inspired.

Add all the senses together and you get perception. Perception is related to all the things we experience and the choices we make. It is primarily our inner thoughts and the ability we have to separate truth from falsehood. Perception is also a series of organizational frameworks that lets us get a fair representation of our world. However, while we all have the same perceptual system, the way we map information can come out in different ways with different beliefs.

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<http://www.weforum.org/sessions/summary/five-senses-experience>

Responding to a question as to whether or not it is possible to cure an illness with one of the senses or all of them together, one participant said he believed it is possible to help people, but not cure them. For example, music therapy has shown to offer respite for someone who is suffering a serious illness, such as Parkinson's disease; it can relieve stress and provide an overall sense of well-being.

Discussion Leaders

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Nigel Osborne, Professor, School of Arts, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Dominique Reiniche, President, Europe Group, Coca-Cola Company, France

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Moderated by

Philip Campbell, Editor-in-Chief, Nature Magazine, United Kingdom

Disclosures

This summary was prepared by Mark Schulman. The views expressed are those of certain participants in the discussion and do not necessarily reflect the views of all participants or of the World Economic Forum.

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