



Working with the Festivals through the Twelve Senses

by

David Mitchell

How can we create new festivals that give life-long strength to the children we teach? Today's children require tactile experiences. Those incarnating today have strong social awareness and they long to "touch" the world with their full beings. Considering the twelve senses allows us to facilitate this need.

The festivals help us to mark time. They give us reference points both to look forward to and to look back upon. They help us to breathe from a cosmic perspective of contraction and expansion, and all this helps us to psychologically to put things in order.

From the perspective of a teacher, my colleagues and I and our students journey through the three major seasons of nature, autumn, winter, and spring. Wise people in the past ascribed festivals to these nodal points and called them, amongst other names Michaelmas/Yom Kippur, Hanukkah/Christmas, and Passover/Easter. These seasons within the year present us with the opportunity of bringing a living meeting with nine-fold man through the activities we create. They also afford us the possibility to specifically educate the twelve senses of the children we teach.

So, if each festival is a season and is part of a threefold whole then:

- Michaelmas /Yom Kippur is the festival of our "will."
- Christmas/Hanukkah is the festival of our "feelings."
- Easter/Passover is the festival of our "thinking."

The nine-folding occurs because aspects of the other two are present as well.

Michaelmas	Christmas	Easter
Willing	Feeling	Thinking
Thinking	Willing	Feeling
Feeling	Thinking	Willing

At Michaelmas /Yom Kippur we feel a resurgence in our will-life as the meteoric iron streams through space. The cool air in the northern hemisphere pulls us more inside into our thinking; we are set free from the dreaminess of summer. Our feelings are sparked by the changing of the leaves and the metamorphosis of the dying plant kingdom. We are being contracted within ourselves in this cosmic breathing of the year.

At Christmas/Hanukkah we meet the darkest time of the year. Our feelings are quickened by the overshadowing darkness. We may concern ourselves with altruistic caring of others; our will can be engaged toward this same purpose. The cosmic year is at its deepest in-breath. We are at one with our thinking. Now we can ponder how the frost holds the etheric world of nature under its heavy stamp. We are now most alive in an inward sense.

At Easter/Passover we are at the time of nature's rebirth. Our thinking has been exercising itself actively and has reached a peak with regard to the support it receives from the outer world. Our feelings are being stirred by the movements of the natural world and the soft breezes of springtime.

How can we bring this experience to our children? The answer lies in the activation of their senses. Below is a sketch of how this could be contemplated.

	Willing	Feeling	Thinking
The 12 Senses	Michaelmas	Christmas	Easter
Sense of touch (where we materially relate to the external world)	sand, grass, ropes in games	drama and pageants with costumes	amnesty international letters written, deeds done for the disadvantaged
Sense of life (where we sense our wellness or sickness)	running, jumping, (being in the breath)	singing, eurythmy, sledding	experience a sunrise followed by neighborhood breakfast
Sense of movement (where we perceive the movements of our limbs relative to each other)	throw a javelin, lance a moving ring on the run	eurythmy, choral singing at the homes of friends or nursing homes	long hike with spaces for quiet reflection
Sense of equilibrium (where we find our relation to above, down, left and right)	juggling, tug-of-war, balance beams	rollerskating, skiing, ice skating, jumping rope	contra dancing, folk dancing, Maypole dancing
Sense of smell (we merely perceive through this sense to the outside world)	baking pies and bread in ovens made by the third grade	steamed cider, peppermint and herbal tea, baking cookies	bread baking; discuss smells that interest you
Sense of taste (where we bring the outer world within ourselves)	taste savory items	taste sweet items	taste salty items
Sense of the sight (where the world enters us as a picture)	have banners and pennants at your games	illuminate party with lots of candles	decorations with purple and yellow; discuss meaning of colors
Sense of warmth (where we have an intimate relationship with the outer world & experience a quality of an object as cold or hot)	have children run through water sprinkler as part of games	create snowball domes with candles in the inside to illuminate pathway	early morning walks in the brisk air, afternoon talks in the warm sun

	Willing	Feeling	Thinking
The 12 Senses	Michaelmas	Christmas	Easter
Sense of hearing (where we experience the inner texture of external things)	have brass and drums play at games	have violin and cello at assemblies or class supper	make music together with all instruments
Sense of word (where sounds become imbued with meaning)	recite strong poetry	read poetry like Dylan Thomas' Christmas in Wales, etc.	read naturalists' writings of rebirth in nature
Sense of thought (where we develop a living connection with the word)	tell biographies of courage and daring	tell biographies of kindness and compassion	tell biographies of sorrow and its transcendence
Sense of Ego (where we gain a true perception of another person)	have children do physical tasks in pairs	have children choose a secret person to do good deeds for every day during Advent	share three deep questions in small groups with each person responding: "What three personalities most influence you and why?"

The weave that connects this wonderful tapestry is music and eurythmy. This list barely scratches the surface of possibilities. There are many more activities that can be added. If we can activate and educate the children's senses then we are truly preparing them in a holistic manner while at the same time we are creating a "new" festival through our own wakeful consciousness.



