



**UNESCO Chair  
on Visual Anticipation  
and Futures Literacy  
towards Visual Literacy**



## **SENSING INSTEAD OF MAKING SENSE**

Sensing, instead of making sense, focuses on the emotional impact of events and encapsulates a paradigm shift in how we perceive and interpret the world around us. Colors, textures, shapes, and materials become potent symbols and carriers of meaning, and serve as conduits that allow us to grasp the complexity and depth of our sensory encounters. Beyond mere cognitive processing, the tool suggests a deeper engagement with our surroundings – one that transcends language, rational thought and analysis to embrace the full spectrum of sensory experiences on a primal level. In this way, we move beyond the confines of traditional sense making to embrace a more holistic understanding of the world.

The tool **aims** to:

- Enhance emotional awareness by encouraging learners to deepen the observation of their own , thoughts, reactions and emotions.
- Promote sensory engagement and awareness through active sensory exploration.
- Foster empathy and understanding by facilitating a deeper appreciation for the diverse range of emotional responses.
- Encourage creative expression.
- Facilitate descriptive skills in communication.



## How to apply it

When learners share their own memories and narratives, it is important to get in touch with their feelings, fears and needs in order to achieve deeper comprehension of their thoughts, perceptions, assumptions and anticipations.

Facilitators can support learners to make as many associations as possible with their own experiences by asking simple questions. Even if learners cannot possibly have any direct memories or personal experience – because an event belongs in the past or a situation involves a different community or/and country – they are still carriers of collective narratives. Thus, affective imprints exist already in their memory.

The same process can apply when discussion evolves around any kind of archive materials: Facilitators can easily figure out what events, narratives or visuals particularly engage learners and use them as starting points for exploration.

The more the facilitators insist in supporting learners to associate their thoughts and emotions with colors, textures, shapes and materials, the more the learners will make them tangible. Becoming familiar with them and understanding their patterns and associations will help them comprehend how they directly relate to physical manifestations such as body language, facial expressions, actions and social interactions.

For better results, if time allows, facilitators can ask learners to draw the shapes they associate with the topic under examination, use colored pencils, or bring into the class textures and materials that correspond to the materiality of their emotions and create an actual visual and literary tangible outcome of their thoughts and feelings.

### Guiding questions can include:

- How does the X memory/event/experience make you feel?
- Why do you think it has this effect on you?
- Had the X event/ memory/experience etc. been a color / texture / shape / material, what would it be?
- With what do you usually associate the X (chosen) color / texture / shape / material? How do these associations make you feel? What are your thoughts?

### **Suggested combination with other Visual Literacy tools**

The “Sensing instead of Making Sense” process combines effectively with the outcomes of other tools such as the “BABEL”, the “Visual Stimulus”, the “Barcoded Baby”, the “Five Mirrors”, the “Frame”, the “White T-shirt”, the “Wall”, and the “Reframing Concepts” tools.

