

Information Sheet #2

Top Tips for living with Post Traumatic Olfactory Loss

Top Tips for living with a smell/taste disorder as provided by members of Fifth Sense



Don't give up hope. I've met a number of people whose sense of smell has returned to varying degrees after a head injury, sometimes several years later. This is probably due to some healing taking place in the damaged areas of the olfactory system over time. Unfortunately it's impossible to predict whether this will happen (it will depend on how bad the damage was) and many people may never recover any olfactory function.

Anon



Talk about it. Sharing your story with others can help you feel less isolated.

Joan - Boise, ID



Don't dwell on your loss. Acceptance helps me. Being part of an online support group helps in many ways.

Jill - Marshall Missouri USA



I have learned to enjoy the limited items that I can taste--which means that I use ketchup extensively. The biggest problem is with sweets, because of the danger of weight gain, so I make use of Sucralose (probably not a great idea in large doses).

Bernard - Atlanta, GA



Being grateful I have other senses...

Anon - Green Valley, Arizona



I try to look for textures in foods. And to stay away from overcooked soups or sauces where there are no separate textures. Aside from the food issues, there's the problems of not being able to smell body odour, clothes, shoes, bedding, the garbage. Since I'm not going to get it back, I have to rely on other people and a cleaning schedule.

Anon - Illinois



Seek support from people with the problem who understand because very few will. Be prepared to grieve pretty much alone. Try not to stay angry, it can't be changed, move on if you can.

Anon



Use a kitchen timer when cooking. A simple magnetic kitchen timer will prevent burned food and ruined pans. Especially important for something with a long cooking time, when you have left the kitchen. Put the timer where you will hear it clearly, and don't ignore it!

Susan - Melbourne. Australia



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www.fifthsense.org.uk

info@fifthsense.org.uk

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My advice would be to get a referral to one of the specialists listed on the Fifth Sense website for a full examination, if possible, and it's also worth trying smell training to see if you are able to detect some smells.

Anon



I am training/encouraging/stimulating my smell sense by sniffing essential oils e.g. lemon, Eucalyptus, Rosemary, Pepper, Clove, Rose etc. I am picking up some "smells" but none relate to my remembered smell library. I however can now detect a new smell, not unpleasant, which associates with wood smoke/burning toast. This is a totally new smell to me so I'm assuming my receptors have adapted to associate it with the burning/smoke from now on.

Gemma - Bridport



Accepting that I will never be able to smell and getting on with life. Keep occupied to take it to back of your mind. Then it won't be a constant worry in your head. Find something to enjoy.

Sylvia - England



I always rinse things well (especially meat drippings) before putting them in the garbage to avoid bad smells. I wouldn't notice them, but others might. (Plus it helps to deter bears from sniffing out our rubbish bins!)

Gina - Alaska



Find someone you can really talk to who won't think it's funny to be Anosmic! Or say 'but you look fine'!!! Share on websites. Eat for texture and mouthfeel, try things you may never have eaten before, close your eyes and eat slowly.

Maggie - Bridgwater



Pay attention to spoilage dates on food. Get at least 1 smoke alarm. Mourn the loss, but then move on. Life is too precious to not to experience it to the fullest that you can. Stay abreast of research. Maintain hope. Use perfumes that you liked when you could smell so that you maintain your signature smell.

Lesley - Jacksonville, Florida



It is what it is.... Work on living your best life. And check your smoke/radon detectors!

Valerie - US



Be ready for a long term new approach to life in regard to how you interact with others, your emotional needs as well as the more obvious such as smell and taste. Know that olfactory loss is just that - a loss that merits grief. Self compassion goes a long way. In regard to food, finding visual beauty and textural components helps.

Mary - Santa Rosa, CA



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Stay positive and try new foods.
Richard - Epping, UK



Smell training and trying to bring back smells associated with strong happy memories have really helped me, a lot of smells have come back gradually using the fifth sense technique. In terms of cooking I love making dishes with lots of garlic and lemon, freshly squeezed lemon is one of the core tastes that you don't need a sense of smell for. Try Nigella Lawson's Summer Pasta recipe with lots of fresh basil and lemon zest.

Anon



Follow recipes when cooking! Trust someone close to choose a nice perfume. Buy extra smoke and carbon monoxide sensors. Be thankful that it is better to lose taste and smell than sight or hearing. Be thankful to be alive.

Grace - Ireland



Meditation, support groups, and friends & family who understand. Stay away from those that don't understand.

Cheryl



The thing is not to angst about it, I know people born without any sense of smell or taste and they don't miss it of course but they don't angst about it either... I just imagine I can taste and smell, and at times I can, because these are all signals coming from the brain so I train my brain to use itself more than it has to.

Pamela - Twickenham, UK



Keep your fire alarm well maintained!

Julietta



I believe I gradually lost my fifth sense after a serious blow to the head in an RTC. It has never been confirmed; at the time I suffered double vision and various other muscular injuries. I am very fortunate that I have retained my sense of taste and flavour, and best of all survived. I miss the smell of many things but for me I deal with it.

Nick - Broadway, Worcestershire



Try to accept the situation and get on with using the other senses! Don't make food or smells the focus of life.

Anon - Brighton