



## January - Week 1 *A New Year, a New Way of Noticing*

**New Year's Resolutions involve changes** we want to make in our lives. Try a change in the way you interact with the world. We humans are very visual animals. We stop to watch a glorious sunset; a Northern Cardinal catches our eye and selfies document our days. But today, focus on other senses.

We have millions of sensory receptors throughout our bodies that transmit environmental information to our spinal cord and on to our brains. In addition to vision, we have receptors for taste, smell, hearing and balance, and those in the skin – our largest sensory organ. Tactile and temperature sensations are vital, but your tongue has even greater tactile sensitivity than the tips of your fingers.

Watch a dog explore its environment and you recognize that the human olfactory system is weak in comparison. However, our sense of smell does enrich our experiences of the world and it carries strong memories. Think about a whiff of baking cookies or brewing coffee.

Compared to many other animals, our sense of hearing is also less acute. Sound is produced when objects vibrate and produce pressure variations or waves that travel through the surrounding air or water. Our outer ears funnel these vibrations through our eardrums to inner ear bones, then on to our brains. This sound helps us identify objects in our environment.

Begin the year by focusing on senses other than sight as you venture outdoors. Go out and observe the invisible! Estimate temperatures. Where is it coldest? Compare textures of bark, rocks or soils. Make “deer ears” by cupping your hands behind your ears to gather more sounds. How many sounds do you detect? Sniff like a dog. What previously undetected odors do you discover? Which are pleasant fragrances? Tasting is a bit trickier. Just a tip of the tongue on an object you know to be safe, perhaps an icicle or fresh snow or a quick lick on vegetation. Record your observations and the surprises you find.