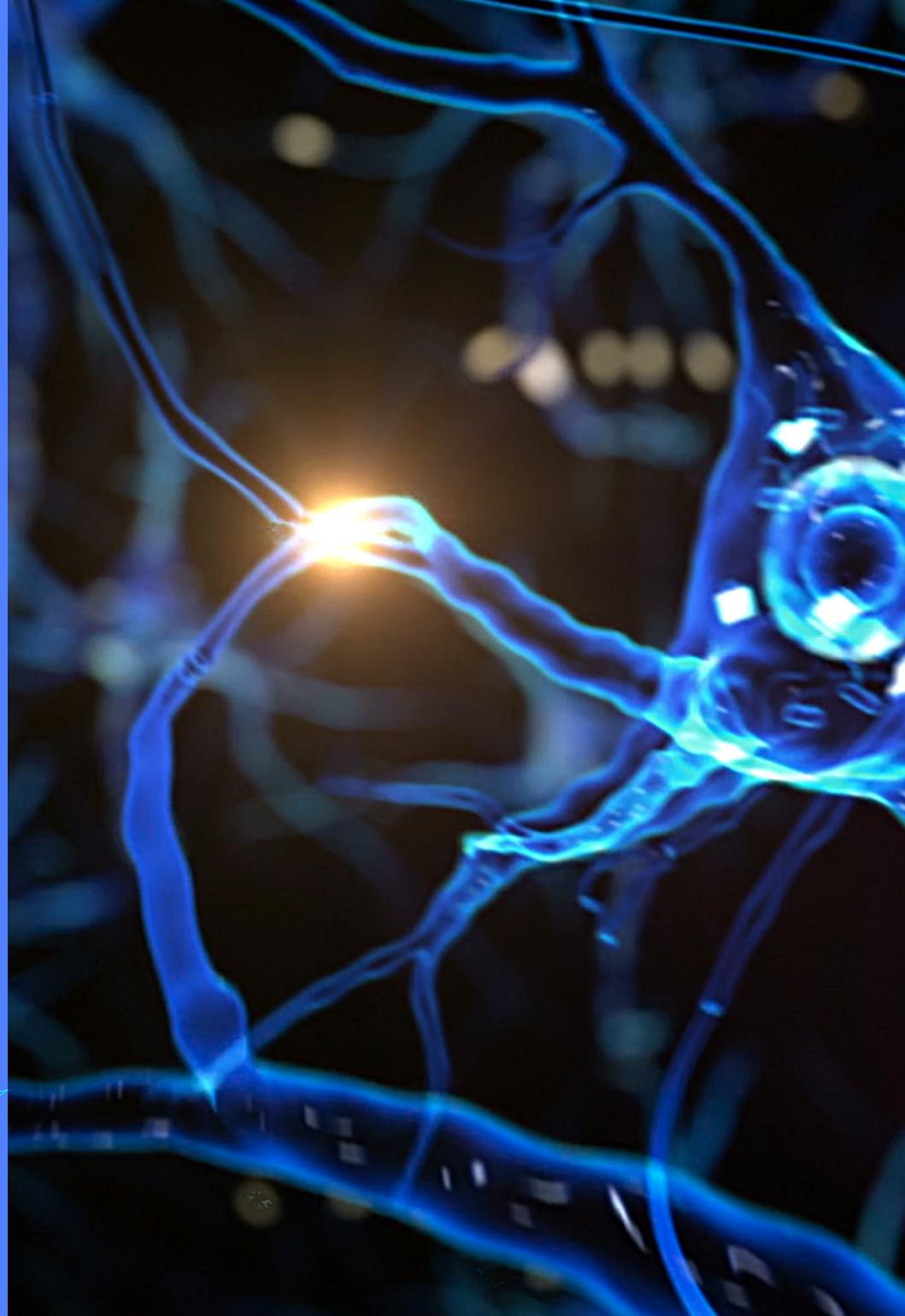


# TASTE & SMELL



In this episode of **Human +** The Future of Our Senses—*Taste and Smell*—we explore a sense we rarely notice while it is working: smell. Laden with emotional valences, smell unlocks our connections with others and influences our ideas about the future.



# TOPIC

# 1

## Untapped potential

Smell is the first sense that connects a newborn to memory and to her mother. For Joy, it was her love of her husband that led her to discover how talented she is when it comes to smell. Scents can also help to calm surgical patients so that they do not need morphine. But the potential uses of the sense of smell are not just medical—they can also be emotional. Scents can open up the imaginations of incarcerated people, allowing them to connect and bond with each other. Smell represents an unnoticed, untapped potential in human beings.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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Scent-detection technologies make use not only of technical innovations but also animals that can detect epilepsy, TB, drugs, and bombs. Why would it be better to have more people like Joy or a machine than a dog to identify scents?

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Why does it seem as though scent is separate from taste? What about things that smell good but taste disgusting or things that smell disgusting but taste delicious?

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Smell and taste are subjective, perceived differently according to our unique human experiences and cultural backgrounds. How could these differences contribute to the development of a scent-induced dissociative state (in lieu of morphine) as a medical technology during surgery?

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Why, if scent is so much more robust than sight in human beings, do we consider ourselves “vision-oriented,” rather than “scent-oriented”?

## EXPLORE

Other stories about augmented human senses...

### Biological scent technologies

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/10/151006-giant-rats-landmines-cambodia-science-animals/>

### Scent-detection diversity across cultures

<https://www.mcgill.ca/neuro/channels/news/olfactory-perception-influenced-background-and-semantic-information-264222>

### Distracted people can be “smell-blind”

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/06/180605172521.htm>

### Tongue and taste

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/neat-and-tidy-map-tastes-tongue-you-learned-school-all-wrong-180963407/>

### Global taste networks

<https://www.npr.org/sections/the-salt/2011/12/20/144021294/what-a-global-flavor-map-can-tell-us-about-how-we-pair-foods>

**“SHORT-CIRCUITED  
THE  
CONSCIOUS CONTROLS  
OF THE BRAIN”**

# TOPIC

# 2

## Imaginary smells

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The sense of smell is important, but even without it, humans can adapt. Bernard suffers from anosmia after an accident but has relearned taste by rewiring his sensoria with other kinds of input, like texture, visuals, and memories. Students in perfume school create imaginaries of what space might smell like, and astronauts practice life without smell. Taste and smell help humans imagine worlds beyond earth and humanity beyond the human.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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What does it say about our senses when smell can be redirected to create a new way to taste?

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Why do we not imagine history via olfaction (the sense of smell) like the students in the perfume archive?

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Why do we not attend to scents when they can be warning signs?

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Some people do not enjoy the texture of certain foods despite their good taste, and some tasty foods, like the tropical fruit durian, smell bad. What are other senses besides smell that influence taste?

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Why does food taste better in certain environments than in others?

## EXPLORE

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Other stories about augmented human senses...

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**Habitat of astronauts on Hawaii**

<https://gimletmedia.com/shows/the-habitat>

**Restoring a sense of smell with stem cells**

<https://www.fiercebiotech.com/research/restoring-a-sense-smell-stem-cells>

**Why does the durian fruit smell so terrible?**

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-does-the-durian-fruit-smell-so-terrible-149205532/>

**Sensory eating vs. picky eating in children**

<https://researchautism.org/its-not-picky-eating-5-strategies-for-sensory-food-sensitivities>

## Guess what?

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Your tongueprint is as unique as your fingerprint. Some researchers see the tongue as a potential tool for ID verification. They're looking at ways to use the tongue as a biometric authenticator— a reliable way to positively identify a person.

[https://www.onhealth.com/content/1/tongue\\_facts](https://www.onhealth.com/content/1/tongue_facts)



TOPIC

3

GROUP  
DISCUSSION

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### Personal smells

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What scent would be the best choice to calm you during surgery? Would you trust olfactory anchors over pain medication?

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When do scents stimulate your emotions or memory?

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What senses are most important for you when you taste something?



# HUMAN +

HUMAN + The Future of Our Senses  
Impact Campaign

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