

# GOSEDJUR

en mjuk utställning i en hård tid

Om utställningen på engelska  
About the exhibition in English

## **Gosedjur (soft toys) – a soft exhibition in hard times**

May 28, 2016 – September 17, 2017

Welcome to an exhibition filled with soft toys in every conceivable colour, shape, form and size. The majority of the soft toys on display have been lent or donated by both children and adults. The exhibition is playful, but it also addresses deeper issues. This is a brief introduction to the exhibition and it outlines what you can see, do and experience during your visit.

### **How do soft toys affect us?**

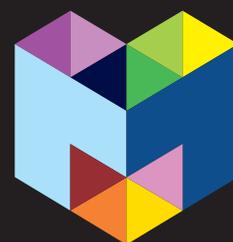
How do they make us feel? In a filmed interview, Kerstin Uvnäs Moberg, a doctor and a professor of physiology, explains what happens inside us when we hug a person we are fond of, or when we stroke an animal or hold a soft toy. A hormone known as oxytocin is released into our body, helping us to feel calmer and more secure and inducing a feeling of well-being. Pick up the teddy bear and hug it. How does it make you feel?

### **The history of the teddy bear**

The very first teddy bears were produced in the USA and Germany at the beginning of the 1900s. They rapidly grew in popularity among both boys and girls. In the 1950s it became common for Swedish children to be given teddy bears and other soft toys as gifts. Most children in Sweden nowadays have several soft toys in every shape and form imaginable.

### **Soft toys can help**

Personnel in the lifeboat, fire, police and ambulance services have soft toy mascots that they use to console and comfort the children (and sometimes adults) they come across in difficult situations. In the eldercare system, soft toys are sometimes used to help individuals relax and to create a feeling of security. Soft toys can also be used in the healthcare sector in contact with children. Putting plasters and bandages on a teddy bear could be an excellent way for children to learn how a hospital works and to show them that it is not dangerous or scary to be examined by a doctor.



MÖLNDALS STADSMUSEUM  
[www.museum.molndal.se/sprak](http://www.museum.molndal.se/sprak)

## **Soft toys as symbols**

Soft toys and teddy bears are often used to symbolise childhood, love and security. They are found in contexts that are both sorrowful and joyous – at a child's funeral for example or at a student graduation – or as a gift to signify one person's love for another.

## **A friend for life**

The exhibition contains many much-loved soft toys that children and adults have lent to the museum. Soft toys that have accompanied them through life and which remain with them even today.

Among all the well-worn soft toys are two dogs and a monkey lent to us by a 96-year-old woman (you can see her in a photograph together with her beloved toys). They have been with her all her life and they have always meant a great deal to her.

She explains: "My mother left us when I was just one year old and I didn't see her again until my confirmation. My father was in the navy and he was often away at sea. These soft toys became my family instead."

Did you have any soft toys when you were young? Do you still have any of your treasured soft toys?

## **Some of the activities in the exhibition:**

- Sit on the lap of the enormous teddy bear and have your photograph taken
- Pick up and hug the teddy bear next to the filmed interview. How does it make you feel?
- Join the teddy bears' picnic or go to a party at the teddy bears' house
- Write down the name of your soft toy and put it up on the mirrored wall
- Draw a picture of your soft toy and hang it up on the wall
- Listen to soothing stories about soft toys in the film room
- Dress up and become a life-size soft toy...

**Welcome to experience the exhibition together – young and old!**

