

Communicating with Individuals who are Deafblind

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What do you think of when you hear “Deafblind”?



Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff	Gg
Hh	Ii	Jj	Kk	Ll	Mm	Nn
Oo	Pp	Qq	Rr	Ss	Tt	Uu
Vv	Ww	Xx	Yy	Zz		

BRaille Alphabet

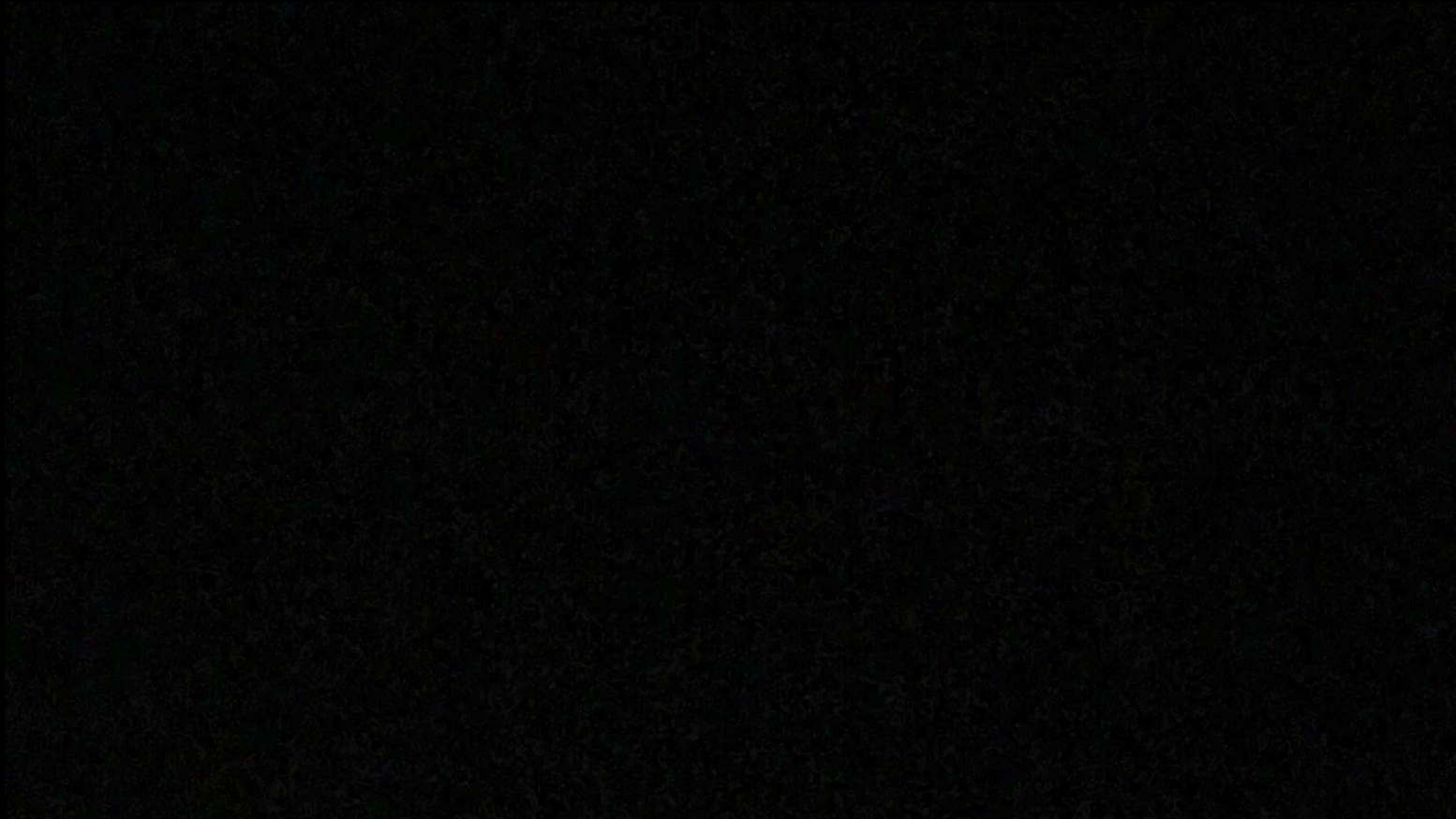
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9



Deafblindness Defined

“Combined vision and hearing loss, which may challenge a person’s ability to communicate, interact with others, access information, and move about safely.”

Functional description as defined by the New England Consortium of Deafblind Technical Assistance (2018)



...which may challenge one's ability to...

- Communicate
- Interact with others
- Access information
- Move about safely

Most Common Causes of Deaf-Blindness 2016 Child Count

■ Hereditary Syndromes & Disorders

(CHARGE, Down Syndrome, Usher 1)

■ Pre-natal Congenital Complications

(Cytomegalovirus, hydrocephaly, microcephaly)

■ Post-natal Non-Congenital Complications

(Asphyxia, severe head injury, meningitis)

(NCDB, 2018)

Factors that Contribute to the Impact of Deafblindness:

- Age of onset
- Degree and type of vision and hearing loss
- Type of interventions provided and educational history.
- Presence of additional disabilities

Hearing Loss Simulation (NEC, 2018)

Deafblindness Today

- Approximately 40,000 people in the U.S are deafblind; 11,000 are youth (NEC, 2018)
- 90% of children who are identified as deafblind have additional physical, medical and/or cognitive disabilities (NationalDB, 2018)
- Most individuals who are deafblind have some useful vision and/or hearing (NEC,2018).

Today's Children are Tomorrow's Adults



“Blindness separates people from things;
deafness separates people from people.”

- Helen Keller-

Communication

1. Form, *“How”*
2. Function/Intent, *“Why”*
3. Content, *“What”*
4. Partners, *“Who”*
5. Physical Environment, *“Where”*

Form:
How are you communicating?

Respectful Interactions through Touch

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- Respect the individual's space
- Approach slowly from the front
- Gently touch or tap an individual's shoulder or arm
- Disclose what you are going to do with the individual before you do it.



Hand-Under-Hand

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- Hand-under-hand demonstration and instruction
- Least intrusive
- Provides spacial awareness
- Involves individual in task

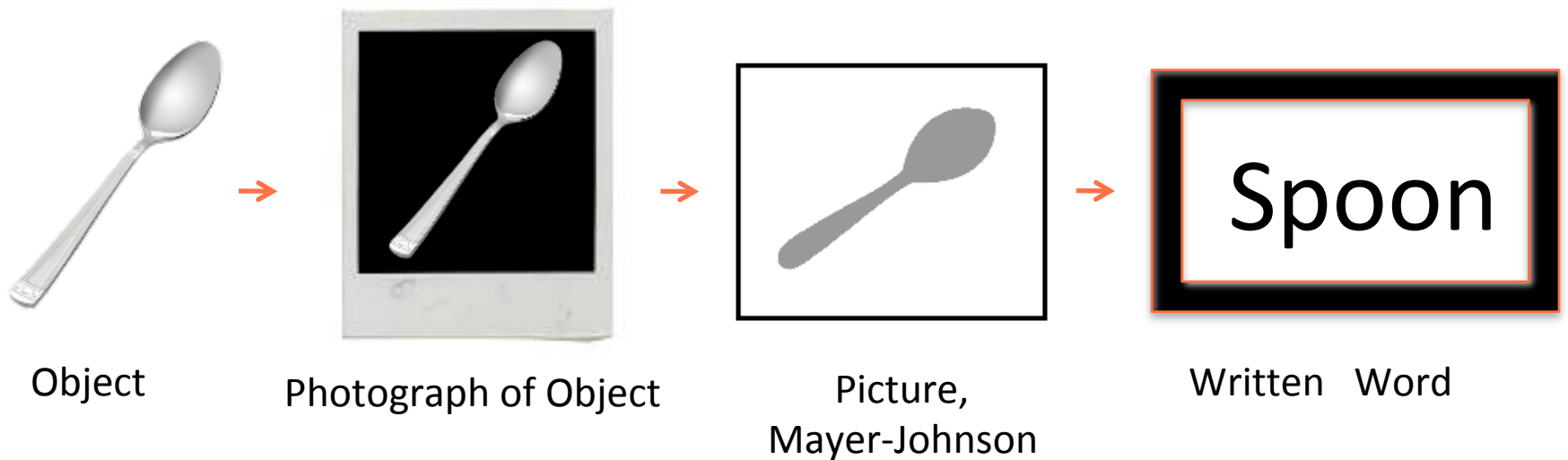


Mode of Communication

- Individuals who are deafblind may use one mode for expressive communication and another for receptive communication.
- Choosing a form of communication depends on the social, physical, perceptual, and cognitive skills of the individual.

Receptive Communication	Expressive Communication
<p>Sign Language Tactile Sign Language Spoken Language Print/Braille Object Cues Touch Cues Pictures Photographs Gestures Tangible Representations</p>	<p>Sign Language Spoken Language Written word Body Movement Touching object and/or person Behavior Gestures Vocalizations Tangible symbols Pictures Photographs Augmentative Communication Eye-Gaze</p> <p>(NTAC, 2002)</p>

Communication Hierarchy: Visual Learner, Example



Concrete → Abstract

Communication Hierarchy: Tactile Learner, Example



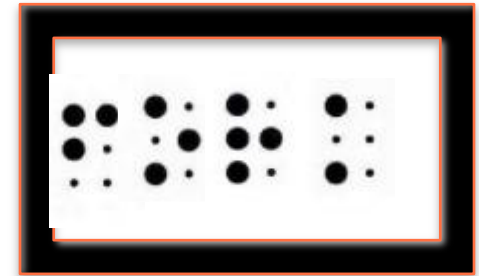
Object



Symbolic Object



Partial Object



Braille Word

Concrete  Abstract

Must be meaningful to the individual.



eat



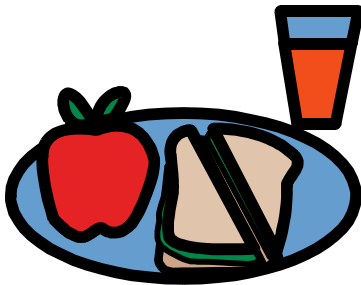
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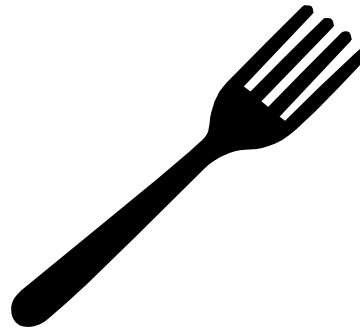
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eat



eat



eat



Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL)

- Complex language with it's own grammatical structure that uses signs made by moving the hands combined with facial expressions and postures of the body.

Signed English

- Use of ASL sign vocabulary presented in English word order.

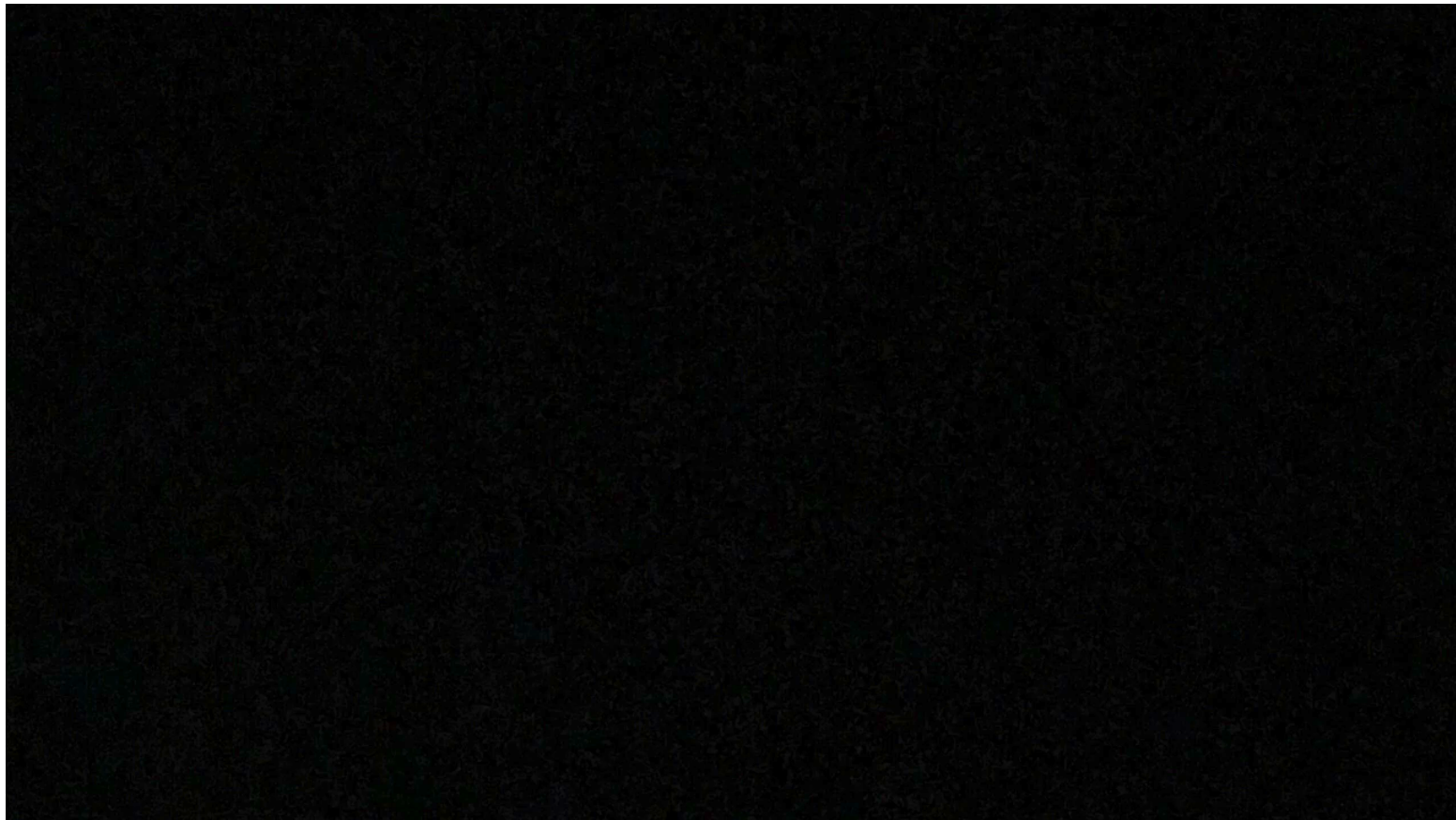


Tactile Sign Language

- Receptive means of receiving communication via sign language.
- Recipient places hands on top of the signer's to receive information.



Field Loss: Access to Sign Language



Choosing a Mode(s)

- Team collaboration! Student, educator, speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, audiologist, parent/guardian...
- Get to know the student, be a strong observer.
- Learning Media Assessment
- Communication Matrix
- Functional Vision Assessment
- Sign Language Assessment (ADAMLS)

Transitioning Modes

- Slow and methodical changes
- Transdisciplinary assessments
- Is the student demonstrating comprehension?
- Student should be a part of the transition process

Form: Teaching Strategies

- Embedded in routine!
- Conversations within motivating activities
- Accessibility (visual, auditory, motor)
- Beginning-middle-end
- Model higher levels of communication
- Position students to access materials
- Establish joint attention
- Prompting

Function:

Why are you communicating?

Functions of Communication

Early, Basic Functions	More Complex	Most Complex
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requesting• Protesting or rejecting• Accessing others• Directing others/ making requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greeting• Offering• Confirming• Answering• Naming/labeling• Questioning• Commenting/replying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joking• Lying• Persuading

(NTAC, 2002)

Content:

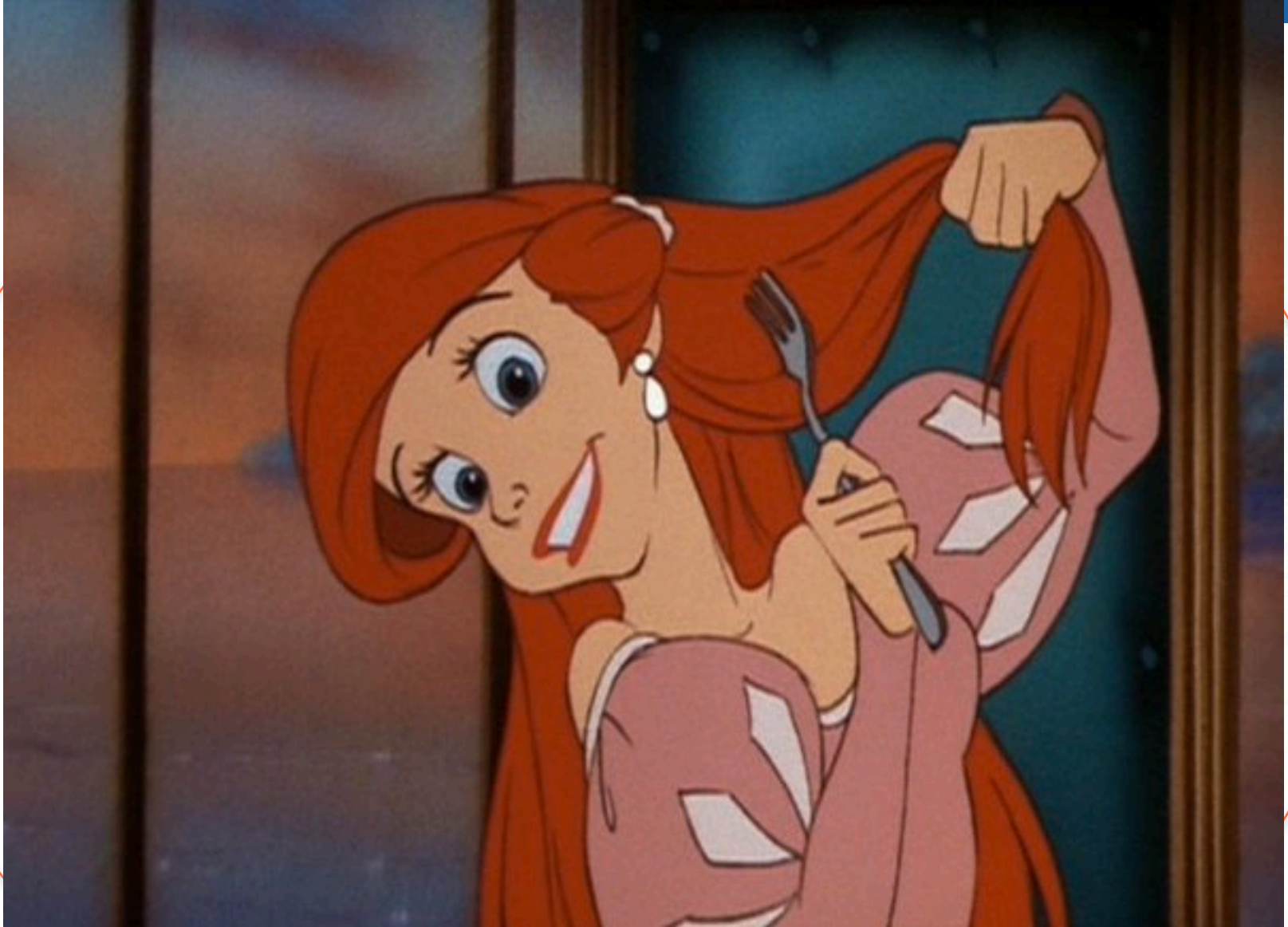
What are you communicating about?

Content:

- We must experience different people, objects, and activities before we can effectively communicate about them.

Tell me about this...





Content:

- Incidental learning is often inaccessible; direct, hand's on experience is necessary.
- Repeat experiences with meaningful interactions.



“At lunch today, Sally dropped her apple and it rolled on the floor.”

The apple is red and smooth. There is often a stem at the top inside an indent.

“I like apples.”

“I want a banana, not an apple!”

“That apple is bruised. That means you shouldn’t eat it.”

“My favorite are the green apples.”



“When apples are cut open, there are seeds inside.”

“You can find apples at a store.”

“I don’t like apple sauce because I don’t like apples.”

“You will really like this apple, try it! It’s juicy and sweet.”

“Why did the apple pie cry?”
“Because it’s peelings were hurt!”

“I don’t like apples.”

“An apple is a fruit.”

“Apples are best when ripe”

Building Content:

- Offer a variety of activities; do not assume disinterest.
- Encourage full and partial participation.
- Respect an individual's preferences.
- Discuss what is available and what it is like; share your experiences!
- Behavior is communication!



I've never experienced cage diving but...



- I don't like being confined in small spaces.
- I'm scared of sharks.
- I can communicate that I would **not** like to try this activity!

Content: Teaching Strategies

- Embedded in routine!
- Motivating activities
- Accessibility (visual, auditory, motor)
- Beginning-middle-end
- Model higher levels of communication
- Position students to access materials
- Establish joint attention

Partners:

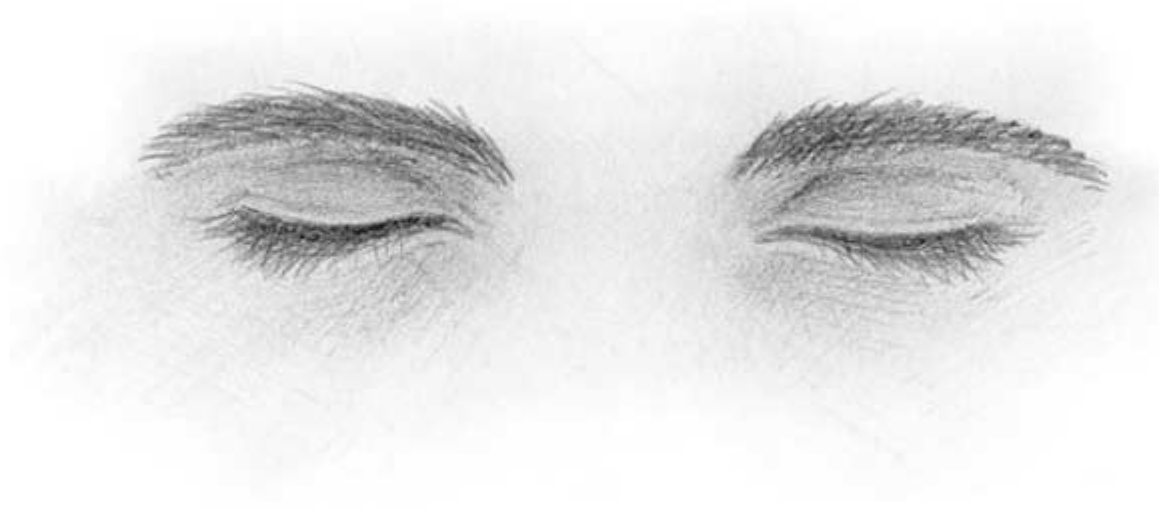
Who are you communicating with?

Partners:

- Communication partners must be equipped to communicate using the individuals required modes.
- Strong understanding of the individuals visual, auditory, and motor needs. Where are you presenting information? How are you presenting information?
- Partner must provide access to the environment.
- Collaboration between team members.

Partners:

- Partners need to be available to bridge communication.



Partners:

- How many opportunities are there to have a conversation or interaction?
- Across how many people?



Respectful partnerships

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Strong communication partners should...

- Encourage the individual to self-advocate and initiate conversation.
- Teach students to respectfully tap someone, wave, or use an alternate means of attention seeking. Student's do not need to remain passive!
- Model and teach appropriate times for specific topics of conversation.

Partners: Teaching Strategies

- Routine
- Clear, simple language
- Clear expectations
- Model higher levels of communication
- Positioning of staff and client
- Establishing joint attention, turn-take
- Adequate pause time for response
- View behavior as communication

Environment:

Where are you communicating?

Environment:

- Home, school/group home, community etc.
- Having access to a variety of environments allows for access to different topic areas.



Environment:

- Communicating across environments allows for experiences and increased generalization.



Environment:

- Allows for opportunities to model and teach appropriate topics and social rules across different settings with different people.



Awkward Elevator Rides

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(Blogspot, 2018)

Environment: Teaching Strategies

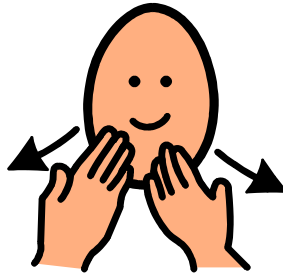
- Accessibility (visual, auditory, motor)
- Natural environments
- Naturalistic teaching and contrived
- Modeling
- Establish joint attention

In Summary:

- There are many different *forms* of communication; symbolic or non-symbolic.
- There are many different *functions* as to why we communicate.
- The *content* of conversations is based on our experiences.
- We require reliable communication *partners* to communicate with.
- Conversations must occur across a wide variety of *environments*.

Thank You!

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For More Information Visit:

National Center on Deafblindness: <https://nationaldb.org/>

Perkins Elearning: <http://www.perkinselearning.org/>

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