

Positive Touch Access: Increasing Access for Young Learners who are DeafBlind

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Overview

- What is Positive Touch Access (PTA)?
- What are the differences between the different touch methodologies?
- How can parent & professional engagement lead to improved self-determination in young children?

Experiences of Deaf-Blindness

Deaf-Blindness
represents a
very diverse
range of
combination of
varying
degrees of
hearing and
vision loss.

Experiences of Deaf-Blindness

- An extremely heterogenous group
- Most individuals who are deaf-blind have some functional hearing and vision
- Terminology – hearing impaired/visually impaired, dual sensory loss, multi-sensory loss, combined vision and hearing loss, deafblind, deaf-blind, multiple disabilities
- Current cultural identity – DeafBlind

Critical Factors

- Age of onset of vision and hearing loss
- Congenital or acquired
- Degree and type of vision and hearing loss
- Stability of each sensory loss
- Progressive or stable
- Presence of additional disabilities
- Interventions: Access, environments and routines, communication partners

What is the one
constant across all
experiences?



TOUCH

1. What is Touch?
2. How do you use touch?
3. What is the purpose of your touch?
4. What does touch mean to you?

There are two pathways in the brain for processing touch.


```
graph TD; A[There are two pathways in the brain for processing touch.] --> B[The first gives us the facts about touch — like vibration, pressure, location and fine texture.]; A --> C[The second processes social & emotional info, determining the emotional content of interpersonal touch using different sensors in the skin.]; C --> D[This pathway activates brain regions associated with social bonding, pleasure and pain centers.];
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The first gives us the **facts** about touch — like vibration, pressure, location and fine texture.

The second processes social & emotional info, determining the **emotional content** of interpersonal touch using different sensors in the skin.

This pathway activates brain regions associated with social bonding, pleasure and pain centers.

These pathways
cannot be
separated.



*If that is the case why would we not
prioritize touch as a main means of
access for young learners who are
DeafBlind?*

Sense of Touch

“The sense of touch is the first sense to develop, and it functions even after seeing and hearing begin to fade.”

Nicholas, Jude. “From Active Touch to Tactile Communication: What’s Tactile Cognition Got To Do With It?” DBI Review Number 45 (2010)

What is Tactile Cognition?

Tactile Cognition

“Tactile cognition refers to the higher order processing and integration of tactile information through active touch.”

Nicholas, Jude. “From Active Touch to Tactile Communication: What’s Tactile Cognition Got To Do With It?” DBI Review Number 45 (2010)

What is Active
Touch?

Active Touch

Touch that is intentional,
consistent, and has a clear
beginning and ending.

Prefrontal Cortex Stimulation

The frontal system of the brain becomes active when working memory tasks are being performed – regardless of the mode of access: visual, auditory or tactile.



WHAT IS NEURO-ACUPUNCTURE?

<https://www.needlesofhope.com/what-is-neuro-acupuncture>

Neuro-Acupuncture/Scalp Acupuncture

By stimulating areas associated with motor, sensory or other functional impairment, brain cells are induced to make new connections and surrounding neurons are recruited to reform circuitry and restore the lost abilities.

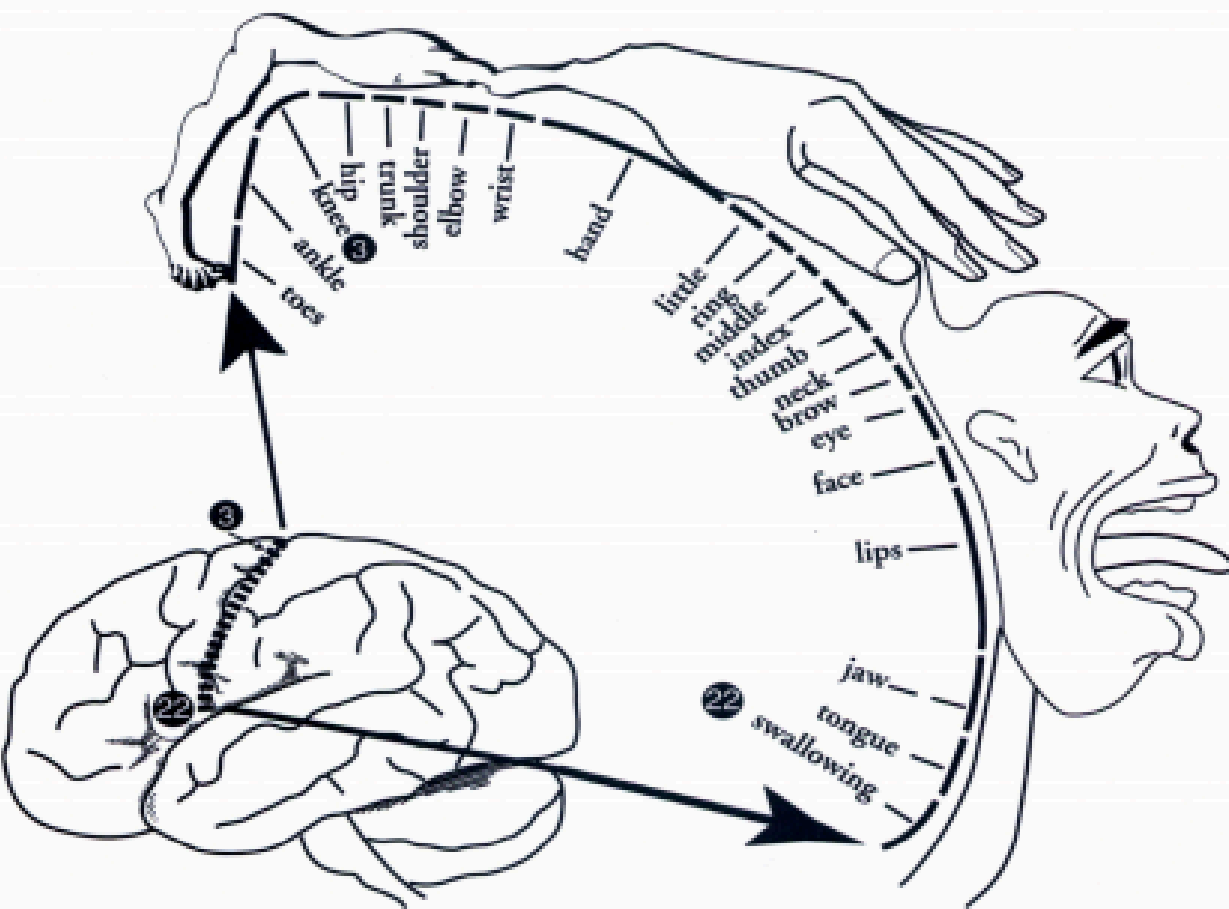


Figure 4. Touch messages to the brain; the cortical homunculus is a pictorial representation of the anatomical divisions of the somatosensory cortex

December 2017
national child
count = 10,749
who are DB from
across the
country between
the ages of
0-21

90% have one
or more
disability

2005: 13.1%
had four or
more additional
disabilities

2016: 43%
had four or
more additional
disabilities

Enter the
world making
a statement

What
sensory
systems are
being
impacted
here?

Whenever possible,
mothers and babies
should be in direct
contact for at least
the first
1–2 hours after
birth.

In skin-to-skin care,
the baby is naked
(a dry cap is okay,
as is a diaper), and
is placed on the
mother's bare
chest, between her
breasts.

- Within minutes the mother and baby begin to relax.
- The baby's body temperature, breathing, and heart rate stabilize
- Transfer of good bacteria
- Reduced pain during clinical procedures

Touch & Early Communication

- Education of congenital DeafBlind children emphasizes the importance of early communication & touch
- Tactile strategies have been around for many years (touch cues, touch signals, tactile sign, etc)
- Young learners who are DeafBlind and late onset adults are two different fields of study

— *Jan Van Dijk, Rob Last, Barbara Miles, David Brown, Susan Bruce, Carolyn Monaco, Marianne Riggio, Kathleen Stremel, Deborah Chen, and many more...*

Best practices for
learners with
compromised hearing
and vision loss.

Hand-
Under-
Hand

Shared
Tactile
Experiences

Wait Time

Respectful
Hand Use



How do we develop tactile cognition?

- Constant & repetitive access to things and people
- Touch that is:
 - Respectful
 - Mindful
 - Intentional
- Shared tactile exploration



Techniques and strategies being used and pioneered in the adult DB community need to be applied to young learners who are DeafBlind.



- Pro-Tactile
- Haptics
- Touch Signals

*“ProTactile
philosophy is not just
about ‘accessing’
communication; it
affects all areas of
life, including
DeafBlind culture,
politics,
empowerment, and
language.”*

www.protactile.org

-aj granda & Jelica Nuccio

-
- Pro-Tactile ASL: A New Language for DeafBlind People

Haptics

A system of specific tactile movements & touches that have particular meaning.

Created in Norway and making its way to the US.



"COFFEE", a fist with a rotating movement.



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- Active touch signals created on an as-needed, individual basis – specific to communication partners

Positive Touch Access

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graph TD; A[Positive Touch Access] --- B[Pro-Tactile]; A --- C[Touch Signals/Cues]; A --- D[Haptics]
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Pro-Tactile

Haptics

Touch
Signals/Cues

Increased
positive touch

Increased neural
pathways

Increased self-
awareness &
self-actualization

Increased
connections



A Mother's Musings

Heather Withrow, Mother of Orion

Multi-Modal,
Constant Contact,
Availability,
Respectful Touch,
Wait Time,
Assistive
Technology

*Parker with Intervener,
Cindi*

Multi-Modal, Constant Contact, Hand-Under-
Hand, Availability, Wait Time

Maeve with speech teacher, Sarah

Early &
consistent
tactile
exposure

Increased
tactile
cognition

Increased
Self-
Actualization

There is a need to connect both ends of the spectrum so that congenital DeafBlind learners can benefit from advanced, systematic means of touch described as positive & successful strategies by DeafBlind adults.

So how do we
enhance tactile
cognition in all
learners who
are DeafBlind?



We listen
to
ADULTS
who are
DeafBlind

Access to Touch =
Access to
People,
Language,
Meaningfulness,
Participation,
Fulfillment,
Joy



World Cup 2014 Brazil

*TASL, Tactile Board, Pro-Tactile =
Positive Touch Access*

Shifts in Access

- TASL
Tactile American Sign Language
- Pro-Tactile
- Haptics
- Touch Signals
- *Respectful Touch*
- *Full Inclusion*



Current Trends

- DeafBlind people are taking leadership
- DeafBlind Power (www.deafblindpower.com)
- DeafBlind Citizens in Action (<http://dbcitizens.org>)
- ProTactile Happy Hour



Professional Development

- Helen Keller National Center
- Workshops/Conferences
- DeafBlind Camps
- Federally-Funded State Deaf-Blind Projects

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