



Abstract No. 3.7

Wednesday 6th September 2017 at 11:00-11:45

Title: Positive Touch Access: Invitation to Touch Leads to Self-Actualization

Presenter: Susanne Morrow, New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative, USA

Main focus: Both research and practice, Both congenital and acquired deafblindness

Abstract: This presentation will address two major issues related to touch and touch techniques:

1. Positive Touch Access. Over the past five years there has been a major shift in the way touch techniques are labeled and used in the USA, specifically with DeafBlind adults. The system of haptics, an influence from Scandinavia, has made great impact among some institutions and DeafBlind community members in North America. While Pro-Tactile, a USA DeafBlind adult community movement, has taken great lead and influence in the community at large and higher education institutions. And then a third term, Touch Signals, coined by a sub-committee of DeafBlind committee members associated with Helen Keller National Center, has entered the field. These similar yet differing approaches have all had positive influences; however, they have also caused confusion and conflict throughout the adult DeafBlind and interpreting communities. The presenter proposes a shift in approaching these often tension-laden ideas and suggests an overarching approach: Positive Touch Access.

2. Congenital vs. Late Onset. While these advances are happening in the adult DeafBlind community, this movement has gone on without much consideration for the way in which congenitally DeafBlind children have been educated. Research in the field of DeafBlind education has indicated for decades the critical aspect of touch in early cognitive and communication development (Nicholas, Jude. "From Active Touch to Tactile Communication: What's Tactile Cognition Got To Do With It?" DBI Review Number 45 (2010), Moss, Kate. "Some Things to Learn from Learning Through Touch" SEE/HEAR Newsletter (2005) and Miles, Barbara "Talking the Language of Hands to the Hands" DB-LINK (2003).) Technical assistance projects in the USA, funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, have been in service as a result of the Congenital Rubella Syndrome epidemic in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These grant directors, coordinators and educational specialists have paved the way for exemplary practice for learners who are DeafBlind, with the main theme of constant, respectful touch.

This presentation will address these two critical aspects and show the natural marrying of the two that Positive Touch Access, thus providing an invitation to touch will lead to self-actualization in DeafBlind individuals.