

for the infant with low vision & blindness

HELPING ME LEARN WITH CONFIDENCE

Many infants with visual impairments remain passively where they are placed, uninterested in exploring or moving around freely. Exploration and movement at this stage is how infants learn and develop. Helping them feel safe, bringing the world closer to them and encouraging different positions will help increase their interest and activity.

Creating boundaries

When infants can't see well, it is hard for them to know just how much they can move without falling or hurting themselves or without scaring themselves by touching something unexpected. Creating a boundary for



them that they can feel or see is a first step to helping them define “their safe space”. For some children, it may be enough to just make a high contrast border on their mat; others may need a physical, touchable border. You might find some like something they can place at least one part of their body against for security. For very passive or fearful children, use boundaries at all times – even when a child is on your lap, using your own body to do this – until you find they start ignoring the boundaries and are willing to explore beyond.



Bringing the world closer

Having something to feel and explore helps the child understand the difference between their own bodies and the rest of the world. Always have something interesting to hear, smell, feel or see near the child



where they can reach it if they want to. It can be confusing if things the infant touches or reaches too keeps changing position or rolling away, so remember to tie or stitch it safely on to something nearby. Don't forget your own clothes, face & hands are fascinating for infants to explore.



Encouraging different positions

When we play in different positions, we understand our bodies better as we find we have to use it in different ways in order to keep our balance or reach to things. For the very young infants, the first discovery is of their own bodies. Helping them experience different positions is easy to do through the day.



for the child with low vision

HELP YOUR CHILD SEE MORE EASILY

Simple changes to the objects the child is using or the environment in which the child is doing a task, can encourage the efficient use of vision. Encourage children to use their vision through the day, in all that they do. Supporting their use of vision in everyday activities is more effective in helping children develop good visual skills than “vision training” sessions. Here are some suggestions to help this girl in stringing the beads.

Modify the objects

Finding the right size

First consider what the child needs to see in order to perform the task. It may not be necessary to change the size of all the objects the child uses. In this task, we could make the beads larger or only the hole, we could make the thread thicker or only the tip.

REMEMBER! Some children see better if they use smaller objects. Making things bigger doesn't help all children!

Using contrast & colour

Watch her and see what she has trouble doing.

- Is it in locating the bead? Try choosing bright colours or placing a contrasting cloth on the ground so she can find them easily.
- Is it in locating the hole? Just paint the hole & outline it with a colour that contrasts with the bead.
- Is it in keeping the string visible? Make the end of the string a bright colour, so she can easily keep sight of it.



Modify the environment

Light

Some children can see better if we change the light in the room or on the work or play area.

Try using different kinds of light – daylight, neon, yellow light (incandescent)

See if it helps if it is focused on the work space or simply if the room is made brighter.

Is the child squinting? There may be too much light reflected into the eyes. Using dark colours on the floor or table may help.

Position of child & objects

If the child is hunched over her work, needs to turn her head to see better or strain to hold her balance, it will be very difficult to use her vision efficiently and for a long time. Change the height and angle of the table or chair so that she is working without strain and you will see and improvement in her use of vision.

Clutter

Sometimes, just by keeping the number of objects around the work or play area to a minimum, or spreading a mat with no patterns on the ground, we can help the child locate the things she needs better.

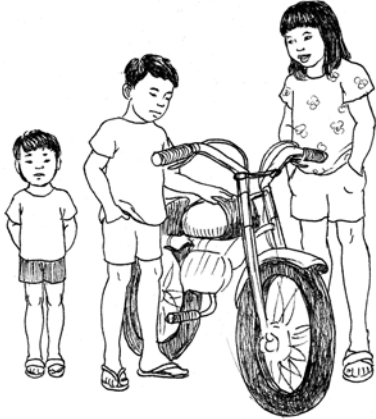
Modify the activity

REMEMBER! Letting the child play or work without your help is important. It is never too early to give them that feeling of competence.

If the task is too difficult, change it a little, so that she can succeed by herself. For example, instead of a thread, let her use a stiff wire or a stick fixed in a block of wood to make it easier.

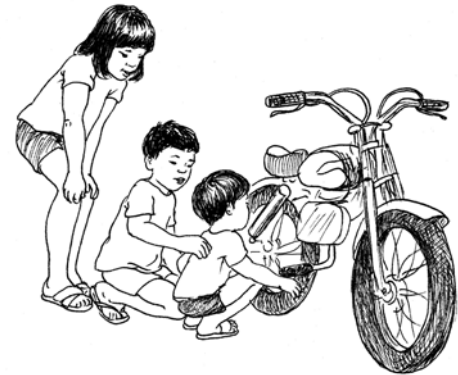
HELPING ME LEARN ABOUT NEW THINGS & EXPERIENCES

Draw on my past experiences with objects and events to help me understand new ones. Remember, a new object or event may be frightening at first. Try to guess what may be bothering me and help me understand what it is. Here's a story of how my family helped me learn.



When my father came home yesterday, there was a strange, loud growling sound outside. I was scared and stood very quietly at a distance. My brother and sister were excited, and told me my father had bought a motorbike. It seemed scary and I did not want to go near it.

Then my brother said the sound was only a motor just like the one that sends water up to our tank. He sat near me as I was still scared and let touch it by myself. He showed me the wheels and where the feet were kept. Then when I realized it was just like a big, fat bicycle, I wasn't so scared anymore.



They helped me sit on it and then they asked Appa to start it while I was on it, so I could hear and feel the sound it made. Although it was a little scary, it was exciting too! I could feel the whole motorbike throbbing under me as the engine growled. In the evening, the three of us counted motorbikes as they roared by in front of our house. Appa has promised us a ride later. I hope I will be the first to get to go!

Remember:

- Help me make sense of what I hear or feel.
- Explain new things by telling me how they are like and different from things I already know.
- I may take a while before I am willing to try something new. Be patient! I learn better if I try out of my own curiosity rather than at your insistence.

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HELP ME DISCOVER THE WORLD

Interest me in the world

The world is full of things to do, but unless you help me discover this, how will I know? Unless you show me, I will not know what is around me. Talk to me about the sounds I am hearing and the things you see. You can guide my hand gently towards things, or let me hold your hand as you touch it when I am scared to try by myself. Don't force my hands, or I may not let you take them again!



Show me how to discover

Show me where things come from, how I can get to them safely and what I can do with them. Keeping my things in the same place will help me get to them when I need them. Since I cannot see, I will not understand how things happen unless you show me the whole process. Do not just put a toy in my hand. Show me where you keep it and how you reach up to get it. Then I will learn to do it myself.

Help me become independent

Show me how to do things and encourage me to do them myself. Remember, doing things the same way every time & using simple, clear directions helps me learn faster. Don't be too quick to help me – I may just be thinking before I start. Give me less help as I get better. One day soon I'll do it alone!

