

IMPACT OF SENSORY LOSSES ON ATTACHMENT, COMMUNICATION, AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Deaf-Blindness:

Presence of Additional Disabilities:

Another very significant reason why we cannot think of deaf-blindness as simply the sum of deafness and blindness is that when a person is missing both hearing and vision, it is highly likely, though not necessarily the case, there will be additional medical and neurological involvement that will affect his overall developmental growth. This becomes truer as advances in medicine result in the saving of lives of children born with multiple congenital abnormalities and with rare genetic syndromes. In such cases, the challenge to communicate with these children is intensified: Caregivers and educators must be able to imagine the experience of one who not only cannot see or hear, but who may be also limited physically, medically, mentally, and/or emotionally. Only by being able to imagine their experience can we communicate effectively with these children and help them communicate with us.

Importance of Diagnosis and Assessment:

We need to have as clear an idea as possible of what a child hears and what he sees. This essential information will enable us to imagine with as much accuracy as possible, his experience of the world so that we may thereby connect with his and help him to connect with the world around him. The importance of these assessments is often underestimated especially where a child with multiple disabilities is concerned. Indeed, the use of clinical assessment, combined with specialized functional assessment, is essential in the process of enabling the student with deaf-blindness to join families, friends and environment.

Medical assessment is also a very important component of the diagnosis and assessment process. Many medical treatments exist that can result in a dramatic improvement in seeing and hearing. These can range from the prescription of medication, removal of middle ear fluid, and the surgical treatment of glaucoma. Because so many children are Deaf-Blind in addition to vision and hearing impaired, we must take every opportunity to ensure that we are maximizing the use of every avenue of learning and preserving whatever residual senses exist.