**Module 1 Lesson 3 Part 3 Descriptive Video Transcript**

**Narrator:** Teaching Children Who are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators

Module 1: The Impact of Deafblindness on Learning and Development

Lesson 3: Foundational Teaching Strategies

Part 3: The Hand-Under-Hand Technique

**[On-Screen Text]** Michelle Clyne, Coordinator, Project Reach Illinois DeafBlind Services

**Michelle Clyne:** For some children and youth, who are deafblind, the world is pieced together one person, one word, one concept over and over by what they can touch. Every single touch contains the potential to open the world a bit more.

**[Visual Description]** A child holds a horse figurine and moves her fingers over the head and feet.

**Narrator:** The hands of a child who is deafblind are precious. With limited hearing and vision, a child’s sense of touch can be their main connection to information, to others, and to their world.

**[Visual Description]** A woman stands beside a teenage boy who sits in front of a calendar board containing tactile symbols. The boy’s hand rests on top of the woman’s, with his fingertips touching the calendar. Together, they explore different areas of the calendar.

As its name suggests, the hand-under-hand technique involves placing your hands underneath a child’s hands, or alongside them, to help the child explore objects and materials. The child’s hands lightly rest on yours. Supporting the hands like this helps you connect and communicate with the child as you gently guide and support their learning.

**[Visual Description]** A woman sits behind a small girl who is wearing glasses. They use the hand-under-hand technique as the woman rolls a ball of dough between her hands.

**Woman:** Can I see your hands? Can you put them on top? This one too.

Okay and we are going to roll, roll, roll.

**Narrator:** When hand-under-hand is used correctly, it becomes a form of mutual communication -- in other words, a kind of conversation you are sharing.

**[Visual Description]** A series of videos - A boy who is deafblind sits in a wheelchair, with a supportive brace around his trunk. He reaches out to a woman who is scratching his back and head with a back scratcher, and smiles. A woman sits behind a young boy. Together they turn the pages of a picture book.

Sometimes, a child who is deafblind will have limited use of their hands. In fact, a recent study found that nearly half of students with dual sensory loss required some level of physical assistance to perform tasks with their hands. If this is the case, keep in mind that everything we discuss in this video can apply to any other body part the child uses tactually; that is, to touch and feel with--such as an elbow or a foot.

**[Visual Description]** A woman has her hands on top of a child’s as he plays with a horse figurine.

**Narrator:** You might be wondering, “Why not just use hand over hand to show the child how to do something?” It might seem a lot easier and faster. There are several reasons. First, a child’s hands are their eyes and ears. Controlling or physically manipulating a child’s hands is akin to blindfolding a sighted person -- you’ve restricted or taken away one of their key information-gathering senses.

Likewise, with hand-over-hand, children are much more passive, waiting for instructions from others, rather than learning to move and explore independently. Some children are especially sensitive to people touching or manipulating their hands due to unpleasant, frightening memories or associations they may have with medical procedures or other situations. If a child has this “tactile defensiveness,” hand-under-hand is much less stressful because their hands are free to move about at will.

**[Visual Description]** A child has his hand on top of a woman’s as she touches a horse figurine.

Let’s look more closely at what’s going on during hand-under-hand. There’s much more involved than just putting your hands under a child’s hands.

1. First, as always, make sure you’ve prepared engaging materials that stimulate the child’s curiosity and exploration through touch and that are appropriate for the child's level of development.
2. Position yourself close to the child according to their preference, such as next to, behind, or across from them.
3. And always make sure the child is well supported and in a comfortable position.

**[Visual Description]** A woman sits behind a toddler girl. She places her hands, palms up, within easy reach of the girl. The girl grasps the little finger of one of the woman’s hands and then grasps the other.

To get started, ask the child for permission to touch them by making your hands available in a relaxed, palms-up position (or another way a child can learn to recognize).

**[Visual Description]** A woman and girl sit across from each other at a desk. The woman has her hands on a piece of paper, and the girl has hers on top of the woman’s hands. The woman begins to accordion fold the paper. After each fold the girl taps the woman’s hand, and the woman continues to fold the paper. Once it is folded, the girl holds onto the paper as the woman wraps a pipe cleaner around it.

Once the child starts to rest their hands on yours (even just a bit), start to move and have them follow along. Explore an object “with” them...allowing the child’s interests to guide the choices and movement. Give them plenty of time to explore and process what they’re feeling. If the child has some usable hearing and/or vision, use your voice and/or body language to reinforce what they’re feeling, hearing, and seeing.

**Woman:** I am going to show you how we are going to twist, twist, and twist, but I need your hand.

**[Visual Description]** A man sits behind a toddler boy. The boy has both hands on top of one of the man’s hands as the man lifts the lid off of a glass jar.

**Narrator:** The hand-under-hand technique supports learning and development in a number of ways. First, it helps the child safely develop their hands as tools -- a crucial skill that supports learning, self-determination, communication, and exploration of the environment.

**[Visual Description]** A woman sits behind a girl at a desk. The girl has her hands on top of the woman’s hands as they insert pieces into a puzzle.

Exploring things together in this manner is also a way for you and the child to share experiences. It’s a powerful way to build a trusting relationship.

Think about it...Sighted-hearing people naturally share things all the time: They might share a laugh when hearing a good joke; they share a movie or TV show by watching it together; or they share the sight of a beautiful sunset.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl with glasses and a cochlear implant sits on a woman’s lap. The girl holds onto the woman’s hands as the woman sings and claps. The girl turns one ear toward the sound of clapping.

But a child who is deafblind doesn’t automatically have these mutual experiences. With hand-under-hand, the child learns that they can be an equal partner in experiencing something alongside someone else.

**[Visual Description]** A woman sits behind a young boy who is wearing glasses. The boy has his hand on top of the woman’s hands as she dips a small sponge in the shape of the letter T into a tray of paint and then makes a mark with the sponge on a piece of paper.

This technique is useful for another reason: When the child has any usable vision and hearing, their sense of touch can help confirm and reinforce information they receive through these other senses.

**[Visual Description]** A boy sits at a table eating pudding. His intervener uses hand-under-hand to assist the boy in dipping the spoon into the pudding, then withdraws her hand as the boy lifts the spoon to his mouth independently.

With hand-under-hand, you can also model or demonstrate a variety of skills and activities.

The ultimate goal is to help a child perform these actions as independently as possible. When you sense a child is ready, gradually withdraw your hands as the child moves on without you.

As the child becomes more curious and confident about doing things and exploring along with you, they’ll be encouraged to reach for things and explore more independently.

**[Visual Description]** A woman and a boy sit at a calendar box. The woman holds a cup while the boy twists and removes its lid.

**[On-Screen Text]** Maurice Belote, Former Project Coordinator, California Deafblind Services

**Maurice Belote**: It's important that we allow children to enter an activity at their own pace and in their own way. So imagine you are exploring playdough with a child. The beginning might be that the child does not want to touch the playdough, because to the child, playdough is a weird, unfamiliar texture that they don't want to engage with. So I might play with the playdough, and the child might participate initially by just touching my arm as I interact with the playdough. And then, as they get more comfortable, their hand may come down to my to my wrist, and so they make it closer to the playdough, but they're not quite involved. Eventually, their hands might come over my hands and slowly at their own pace and in their own way they'll start to play with the playdough with me. But I have to remember to allow them to do it in their own way.

**[On-Screen Text]** Michelle Clyne, Coordinator, Project Reach Illinois DefBlind Services

**Michelle Clyne**: So classrooms are real busy, and I think because of that, adults feel compelled to kind of push children through their activities and because of that, adults sometimes don't ask permission to touch children in order to give them information, in order to tell them what's going to happen and to ask them. ”Are you okay with me touching you, are you okay with us going on to the next activity?” That's not to say that children get a say in absolutely everything that happens in the school, of course that's not the case. But there's a certain dignity to, whenever possible, allowing a child to say “no thank you,” especially when it comes to touch on their own body. And if they don't want to participate, hand-under-hand, allowing them to take their hands away or if they're uncomfortable with a certain movement, allowing them to opt out… there's a lot of dignity and giving that option, whenever possible, and it really helps the child form their own self identity.

**Narrator:** Let’s take a break and check what you know.

Watch as this teacher helps her student make a house out of cookie dough. Notice the different ways she uses hand-under-hand to support her learning.

**[Visual Description]** A teacher sits behind a girl at a desk. The girl has her hands on the woman’s as, together, they shape a piece of dough.

**Woman:** Can you use your hands like this? On top. There you go, make a roof. Make a triangle, pinch, pinch.

**Narrator:** She used hand-under-hand to develop the hands as tools, jointly share an experience, build trust, and have fun.

Now, let’s review our pre-lesson questions:

True or False?

It’s important that you identify yourself to a child who is deafblind before beginning any interaction with them.  
 TRUE. Always introduce and greet the child in a way they will recognize. This often means using a personal identifier.

Turn-taking is an important strategy that teaches children who are deafblind about the “give and take” of conversations.  
 TRUE. In addition to showing the child you are fun and interesting--and that you think they’re fun and interesting too--this strategy helps children understand how conversation works.

The hand-under-hand technique should only be used if a child has some usable hearing and/or vision.

FALSE. Hand-under-hand can be used with any child who is deafblind, from those with some usable hearing and/or vision to those who are completely blind and profoundly deaf.

This is the end of Module 1, Lesson 3. In Lesson 4, we’ll look more closely into building trusting relationships with children who are deafblind.

**[On Screen text]** National Center on Deaf-Blindness  
Developed and produced by NCDB  
Narrated by Shelby Morgan  
Written by Ann Biswas  
Edited by Brian Daigle  
Special thanks to: the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, State deaf-blind projects, families, and educators who shared their photographs and videos with us for this program.   
IDEAS that Work logo. The contents of this video program were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H326T180026. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Susan Weigert.

© 2022 National Center on Deaf-Blindness