**Module 1 Lesson 4 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 4: Building Relationships Part 3: The Importance of Peer Relationships

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

**Maurice Belote:** Many teachers and specialists who work with children or students who are deafblind focus primarily on IEP goals, academic goals, or whatever is called for in the IEP. But peer relationships are so important it's vital that all children have friends. And that's what makes going to school exciting and what makes a child look forward to going to school every day. And so it's important that we recognize peer relationships and the role they play in giving children that we serve the same kind of lives that any of us would want for ourselves.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images. A teacher and a girl look at an electronic tablet. A brother and sister sit on a lounge chair at the beach. A young woman, wearing a tiara and holding flowers, kisses a man on the cheek. A boy smiles as he reaches to take a banana from a woman. An intervener and a boy wearing glasses sit next to each other.

**Narrator:** In our last video, we discussed practical strategies for building a strong, trusting relationship with a child who is deafblind. In this section, we’ll discuss the importance of building positive relationships with peers. Let’s talk about why peer relationships are so important for children who are deafblind–regardless of age, setting, and extent of hearing or vision loss. Typically, children who are deafblind have good relationships with their parents and other family members, like siblings and grandparents. And hopefully they’re building positive relationships with teachers, their intervener, and other educators who they frequently see throughout the school day.

Having excellent relationships with family and providers is wonderful for any child who is deafblind…But is it enough?

**Narrator:** The answer is No.

Children who are deafblind commonly have significantly delayed social-emotional development as compared to their peers–a direct result of a lack of peer relationships. Barriers to communication and access to information from peer interactions impact their development in areas like attachment, friendships, empathy, independence, and engagement.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl who is deafblind and her cousin sit near each other touching and smiling.

**[Visual Description]** A girl who is deafblind and her sister sit together outside on grass.

**Narrator:** For children who are deafblind, building relationships and social skills are an important part of their growth and development. These experiences become the foundation for higher level interpersonal skills that they can use later in life.

Depending on the child’s age, these relationships will help them

* Become aware of their peers, what they are doing, and how they interact
* Realize that they are not always the focus of every interaction (e.g., that their peers interact with teachers too)
* Learn how to take turns
* Learn how to share
* Learn how to pretend
* Learn to do things for others and with others
* Understand that others have emotions
* And most importantly, help them Have fun with their peers in a variety of games and activities

**[Visual Description]** A young woman sits next to a girl with a cochlear implant. The woman paints the girl’s hand with yellow paint.

Note that all of these skills and competencies play a significant role in a child’s communication and language development.

**[Visual Description]** A young woman holds up a girl, who is wearing a cochlear implant, as the girl holds onto pieces of a climbing wall.

Strategies you can use to help nurture peer relationships are highly dependent on a number of variables, such as the child’s age and the setting or environment involved, whether it’s in a general classroom or a special education setting or at home or in an early education center, and on whether the children involved are prelinguistic or language proficient

**[Visual Description]** A young girl on a bike holds onto her sister's arm.

For example, for school-age children, fostering good peer relationships often involves preparing the hearing-sighted peers and other students with disabilities for the interaction. This helps create an understanding and sensitivity to the specific communication challenges and other issues a child who is deablind may have.

**[Visual Description]** A toddler girl sits in a pile of rubber pieces. She is holding a scoop and is using it to scoop up pieces of the rubber.

With infants and toddlers, this kind of peer preparation likely won’t be necessary.

If family members seem reluctant to expand their child’s exposure to new environments and other children, encourage them to see the many benefits of peer interactions. Suggest playgroups and other kinds of meet-ups, which offer excellent opportunities for little ones to interact – even when they might at first just play independently, side by side. And it’s no surprise that there are numerous benefits of having parents connect with other parents!

**[Visual Description]** A series of images. A girl who is deafblind sits in a wheelchair. Another girl stands next to her with an arm wrapped around the shoulders of the girl who is deafblind. Two girls sit at a desk decorating cookies.

Narrator: Friendships often develop when people have shared interests and circumstances…when they have things in common. So, when first pairing up a child who is deafblind with a peer, avoid telling the hearing-sighted child to “be this child’s friend” or to just “play with this child at recess.” As their teacher, you need to provide the children with intentionally structured experiences.

For example, rather than just telling them to play, give the child who is deafblind and their hearing-sighted peer a very specific, age-appropriate task that they need to do together – something concrete, like make a snowman out of clay or count the number of red and green blocks in a container. This way, they’ll have something in common – a common goal that requires “joint attention.”

**[Visible Description]** A variety of images showing children who are deafblind, of different ages, engaged in positive interactions with family members, friends, and educators.

**Narrator:** As we come to the end of this lesson, it’s important to acknowledge the difficulties involved in building relationships with children who are deafblind – especially peer relationships.

As noted earlier, there are many educational goals that teachers and other practitioners need to focus on throughout the day with their students in the classroom (or that parents should focus on with their youngsters at home). And in general education and special education classrooms, you’ll likely have an entire room full of students you need to pay attention to!

Although we’ve hopefully improved your knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of working with children who are deafblind, AND given you some specific strategies you can put to use, the reality is it can be challenging! Relationships with children who are deafblind take time and each child will be different.

Have patience with the child–and with yourself, knowing that in time, your efforts will make a difference in their educational success and quality of life.

Let's take a break now and check what you’ve learned.

1. Why can’t you just put a school-age child who is deafblind together with a hearing-sighted peer and tell them to play?
2. As their teacher, what should you do to help ensure the interaction is successful?

Feel free to pause the video if you need time to think.

First, you shouldn’t just tell a child who is deafblind and their peer to play together. It’s best to provide them with an intentionally structured experience, such as a task they can accomplish together. This way, they’ll be working toward a common goal that requires joint attention.

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

1. It is nearly impossible for a non-family member to build a trusting relationship with a child who is deafblind and at a prelinguistic level of communication.

FALSE! Strong, trusting relationships are important to all children who are deafblind–regardless of age or ability. And there are many ways to build relationships that don’t involve language.

1. Allowing a child who is deafblind to follow their interests should be avoided because they need continual guidance.

FALSE! It’s important, especially when you are initially connecting with a child who is deafblind, to let them follow their interests. When they become more comfortable and accepting of your presence, you can begin to guide them toward new objects and activities.

1. Peer relationships are important to develop for children who are deafblind, regardless of their age, the environment or setting, and extent of their hearing or vision loss.

TRUE! As we’ve seen in this lesson, peer relationships are critical for the social-emotional development of all children who are deafblind.

This concludes Lesson 4 of Module 1.

**[On Screen text]** National Center on Deaf-Blindness
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