**Module 2 Lesson 3 Part 1 Descriptive Transcript**

**Narrator:**

Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators

Module 2: Early Intervention for Children Who Are Deafblind

Lesson 3: Expanding the Child’s World

Part 1: Creating Opportunities for Self-Initiated Learning

**[Visual Description]** Video series - a young boy plays on the floor. He pretends to eat out of a small bowl using a spoon. A toddler plays on the floor with toys around her. She reaches for a colorful strand of beads.

**Narrator:** In Part 1 of this lesson, we’ll focus on creating opportunities that encourage self-initiated exploration and learning for an infant or toddler who is deafblind.

But before we begin, let’s check what you know…

True or False? …

1. It is best for caregivers to direct an infant or toddler who is deafblind to new objects and textures rather than having the child accidentally bump into things.

2. Joining with an infant or toddler who is deafblind in activities they enjoy creates numerous opportunities to strengthen their communication and form deeper connections with others.

3. Children who are deafblind are not fully ready for activities outside the home until around age 2.

We’ll revisit these questions at the end of this lesson.

Lesson 3 has 3 learning objectives. After completing the lesson, participants should be able to

1. Describe how to expand an infant or toddler’s world by creating opportunities for self-initiated learning

2. Demonstrate strategies that encourage a child’s mobility and connections with others

3. Explain the importance of broadening the number of environments and interactions a child has outside the home

To get started, let’s consider what often happens with a child who is deafblind:

People put things in front of them and later, take them away. It’s sometimes called the “good fairy syndrome”: Things magically appear and disappear, and the child has no idea how!

In situations like these, caregivers are well-meaning as they try to anticipate the child's needs. But the child learns that the world happens *TO* them, not that it’s something they can engage with.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl lies on the floor, a bell bracelet is on her wrist. Near her is a toy. When she touches the toy it lights up.

In contrast, opportunities that are specifically designed to encourage self-initiated learning,

* Promote independent exploration
* Stimulate curiosity and enhance a child’s motivation to interpret and organize new sensory information
* And help a child learn they have some control over what they do and what happens

**[Visual Description]** Video series - a baby lies on an adult's lap. They smile and look at each other. A young child plays on the floor. A dog with a ball in its mouth sits nearby. When the dog drops the ball the boy reaches to pick it up. A young boy plays outside. When his grandfather calls, he runs to him for a hug.

To understand what’s different about learning for a child who is deafblind, let’s look at how infants and toddlers with typical vision and hearing learn about the world. They see and hear people and things around them and become interested and motivated to move and explore. They see a ball and go pick it up.

They hear grandpa’s voice, see his outstretched arms, and move toward him for a hug.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl sits near a variety of toys. She holds a ball in her hand.

But as we saw in Lesson 1, the way a child who is deafblind experiences the world is often limited to what they can touch, taste, and smell *in their immediate environment.*

They may not see the ball—and they might not even know that grandpa is in the room.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl plays with objects that are suspended above her.

For children who are deafblind, caregivers must intentionally create opportunities that motivate a child to want to learn. In doing so, they make *deliberate* choices about what will heighten the child’s curiosity *and* make it easy for them to engage in self-initiated learning on their own.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl sits on the couch. An adult puts a vibrating toy near her leg. The girl reaches for the toy.

To create these opportunities, caregivers must

* Identify things the child likes and finds interesting, and
* Put those items within their reach

**[Visual Description]** A young girl moves toward a light up cylinder. She smiles happily.

**[On Screen Text]** What’s going to motivate my child?

To identify what the child likes, have caregivers consider, “What’s going to motivate my child?”

These might be objects with different shapes and textures the child can feel or toys that light up or make sounds when touched. They should have features appropriate for the child’s preferred sensory modalities.

**[On Screen Text]** Sundie Marx, Teacher of the Deaf-Blind, Utah Schools of the Deaf and the Blind

**Sundie Marx:** Typically our little ones with dual sensory loss like very extreme textures, because they're such sensory seekers. So maybe it's not the soft blanket that they love. Maybe they prefer, you know, laying on a hard surface. Um, or, you know, prefer bumpy textures versus the really soft blankies that we keep giving them.

**[Visual Description]** A young girl sits on wood chips at a playground. She leans forward and puts her face in the wood chips.

So in that sense, I would just say, you have to look really, what I mean, really, really deep into what are some of those preferences early on that we can then create a responsive environment. We're not going to keep giving them the soft blanket if that's not a texture that, you know, they prefer.

**[Visual Description]** Series of images - A young boy sits in a highchair, on the tray in front of him is a sensory water mat that contains marbles and small toys. A young child places their feet in a sensory tub containing marbles and other objects. A young boy wears a vest with objects attached to it. A young boy reaches for items suspended from a frame in front of him.

**[On Screen Text]** Place the items next to the child’s body, near their hands or feet.

**Narrator:** To put items within a child’s reach, have caregivers place them next to the child’s body, near their hands or feet. For example, they might be arranged within a small space, attached to a vest the child wears, placed on a tray, or hung from a frame.

**[Visual Description]** Series of images - A young girl plays on the floor. She shakes a toy with bells attached near her ear. A young boy lies on the floor. He bats at objects suspended above him.

**[On Screen Text]** Avoid directing the child’s attention.

Encourage parents to provide times throughout the day for their child to engage in independent exploration in these ways. Remember these activities should be self-initiated: Caregivers should avoid directing the child’s attention to items. It’s best for the child to accidentally bump into things and be surprised by a new object, texture, light, or sound.

**[Visual Description]** Series of images - Adults helping children put on hearing aids. A baby lying in a crib with a wooden frame around it. Objects are suspended from the frame for the baby to interact with.

Encourage parents to check that the child’s glasses and hearing devices are on and operable so they can make the most of their usable hearing and vision as they explore.

And, make accommodations for the child’s positioning or other needs due to physical or medical conditions.

Over time, consider adding new things, one at a time, including some at a slightly higher developmental level than the child's current one.

At first, the child might be cautious about exploring what’s unfamiliar. But gradually they’ll become curious and start to investigate this interesting new object. The more a child’s interest and curiosity grows, the more self-initiated learning you will see.

**[On Screen Text]** Nancy Hatfield, Early Childhood Consultant, Deafblindness Former Director of the Washington State Deaf-Blind Project

**Nancy Hatfield:** So when we've set up spaces for active learning, and we have some objects in there, it's really important that the child's reaching and exploring be their idea that they're initiating their reaching and exploring.

**[Visual Description]** A baby interacts with objects suspended on a frame above them.

And one of the hardest things for us adults to do is to stay out of it. And so it's just too tempting. It's really difficult not to want to make those bells jingle or help the child's find the object hanging over here. But we really need to just sit back and let the child initiate the exploration, and as long as the objects are within the reach of their hands or their feet, whatever we need to stay out of it. It may take time. It might take minutes or hours or even days, for the child to find that object, but we don't want to deprive them of the joy of discovering it themselves.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images. A young girl sits at a small table, on the tray in front of her are a variety of toys and objects. A child sits on the floor playing with toys.

**Narrator:** A number of ready-made toys and devices are available that are specially designed to encourage self-initiated, active learning. Although many are excellent, they may not always be readily available or affordable for families to have at home.

As much as possible, adapt what’s already in the home (such as kitchenware, fabrics, lights, and toys) when making decisions about creating spaces for self-initiated learning.

Let’s take a break and check what we’ve learned...

How does the “good fairy syndrome” impact the motivation of a child who is deafblind to explore their world?

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

Placing things in front of a child or taking them away without the child knowing how or why they appeared or disappeared, does little to promote independent exploration, stimulate curiosity, or help the child learn they have control over what happens. It’s far better to intentionally create opportunities that motivate a child to want to learn.

This ends Part 1 of Lesson 3. In Part 2, we’ll learn how to further expand a child’s engagement with their world and make stronger connections with others.

**[On Screen text]** National Center on Deaf-Blindness  
 Developed and produced by NCDB  
 Narrated by Shelby Morgan  
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 Special thanks to: State deaf-blind projects, the many young people, 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.  
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