

Touching and understanding Tactual language



Activity: Experiencing and naming balls

Compared to sighted people, blind people have a greater need for words that refer to how something feels. That way the world becomes recognisable. When we convey these words to them, they build a dictionary with tactile terms, such as "smooth", "rough", "dent", "bump", "hairy", "rib" or "corner".

Set-up of the activity

0-2

- Give the client a basket with hard and soft balls.
- Help the client to experience that he can press in the soft balls but not in the hard ones.
- Let the hard and soft balls fall together so he can hear what they sound like.

2-4

- Give the client various hard and soft materials, such as various balls.
- State how the balls feel: hard and soft, with spikes, antennas, dents, bumps or hairy.

4-6

- State how the balls feel: hard and soft, with spikes, antennas, dents, bumps or hairy.
- Tell the client whether the balls are made from fabric or from plastic. If possible, ask the client to answer this.
- Let the client sort the balls according to size and characteristic, such as balls with dents or antennas.
- Ask the client which ball feels the nicest and why.

Points for observation and focus

- Observe how the client explores the balls. Is there a difference in exploration between various materials?
- Observe whether he has a preference or an aversion to a specific material.
- Observe whether the client uses tactual language, such as "hard", "soft" or "spiky".
- Check whether the client can associate. He will express this by saying things like: "This feels just like..." or "This is made from...".

Alternative materials

- Various sponges that feel differently
- Exotic fruits
- Kitchenware
- Exploring a room and recognising it through tangible things.

Can also be used in the categories

- Touch sensitivity (TST)
- Tactual exploration (TE)