

## Touching and understanding Tactual language



### Activity: Gaining tactile experiences and naming terms

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 many different objects and materials so that he acquires a wide range of tactile experiences.
- Use daily objects, such as a dish brush, nailbrush, abrasive sponge, towel, toothbrush or cutlery.
- Name the tangible characteristics of the objects. Emphasise and repeat this. For example, say: "your soft cuddly bear", "the wooden block", "the plastic plate".

2-4

- Name various characteristics. For example, say: "the brush has bristles", "the glue is sticky", "these are bubbles on the bubble wrap".
- Make requests, such as "grab the soft ball" or "give me a wet face flannel".

4-6

- Let the client experience and name what he is feeling.
- Give the client two cups, one with a dent and one without; or ribbed fabric and smooth fabric. Together look for more ribs or dents in other things.

- Point out and name the corners of the chopping board or the puzzle shelf.
- Use the term "hairy" to describe animal fur.
- Make a book with, for example, pieces of rope that feel differently. Glue these pieces straight or in curves. Also use circles and rings.
- Let the client state what he is feeling and how it feels.

### Points for observation and focus

- Make sure the client is sitting properly at a table that is at the right height (not too high).
- Observe whether he uses both hands.
- Notice how the client feels/touches. Where does he spontaneously begin, is there a pattern, does he continue to touch when he has perceived one detail or does he stop?
- Notice whether the client recognises the material and which words he uses to describe it.
- Check whether the client can associate. He will express this by saying things like: "This feels just like..." or "This is made from...".
- Take notice of any defensiveness reactions.

### Alternative materials

- Shells
- Nuts
- Kitchenware, such as a spatula

### Can also be used in the categories

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