



PRO-TACTILE

Empowering Deaf-Blind People

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Learner Objectives

- Identify the three components of Pro-Tactile.
- Differentiate between Pro-Tactile Methods and Tactile Communication.
- Identify five techniques for backchanneling & visual information.
- Identify three techniques to give visual information through Tactile Maps.
- Demonstrate the importance of having a Pro-Tactile “attitude” to empower Deaf-Blind people.

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to
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pioneers in the Pro-Tactile
Movement for training us.

*Content in this presentation is
reflective of their teachings.*



WHAT IS PRO-TACTILE?

Overview

- **The 3 components of Pro-Tactile: philosophy, method, and attitude (PMA).**
- **Puts Deaf-Blind people in the FRONT and CENTER.**
- **“Pro-” means SUPPORT.**

Why the Pro-Tactile Movement Began

- **Deaf-Blind People were:**
 - missing critical visual info
 - not feeling truly connected during interactions with people
 - missing opportunities to do for themselves and grow
 - Feeling stuck to converse with 3 or more DB

PT vs. TASL

Pro-Tactile

- Not a communication method per se
- Environmental/visual information
- Give feedback on wrist, hands, elbows, knees
- Includes philosophy and attitude

Tactile ASL

- Communication method
- Environmental/visual information included
- Give feedback tactilely
- Just a communication method

Who Can Use PT?

- Culturally Deaf DB
- Hard-of-Hearing DB
- All levels of language
- **EVERYONE!**



THE PRO-TACTILE PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy

- **Deaf-Blind people have the right to define themselves and their own culture.**
- **This means to value touch and the DB Way, just as Deaf people value vision, ASL, and the Deaf community.**

Philosophy

- **Pro-Tactile supports the Deaf-Blind COMMUNITY.**
- **Although Pro-Tactile is about touch, it does not discourage any additional access the DB person can use.**



**Pro-
Responsibility**

**Pro-
Touch**

**Pro-
Experience**



PRO-
RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility

- **“Pro-Tactile” is about the DB experience, but it is also about the responsibility of the DB person to:**
 - **Take the initiative, be proactive**
 - **Make decisions for himself**
 - **Seek out information rather than passively through second-hand means**
 - **Do things for himself that they have the capacity to do rather than let others do for him because it’s “faster” or “easier”.**



METHOD



Method #!:
Communicating
“Presence”

Maintain Contact

- **Constantly be in touch – this enables the DB person to know you are there.**
- **Not being physically connected gives the impression that you are not with them or not listening.**
- **Remain in touch even in motion, such as walking.**

ERGONOMICS & BOUNDARIES

Ergonomics and Boundaries

- **Be at a comfortable distance that allows for touch, don't strain or reach over, sit/stand straight**
- **Safe places to touch are: hands, wrist, elbow, arm, upper back & knees (sitting).**
- **Don't grab or pull the hands/arms – tap on DB person's hand to signal you want their hand. Tap again to get the other hand.**

For Deaf-Blind People,
a touch of the hand is
the same as seeing with
the eyes for a sighted
person.



Method #2:
Back -
Channeling

1:1
Communication

Backchanneling

- **Gives “listening” feedback**
 - nodding of the head, “oh”, “I understand”, “I’m following the conversation”
- **Maintains a connection**
 - This allows the DBP know they’re not talking to the wall or to himself
- **Tapping as constant stream of backchannel loop**
 - Tap finger or hand on the person’s hand, elbow, or knee when sitting/standing while DB person is talking.
 - Tap lightly during natural pauses or when you would naturally nod your head, sign “oh”, and show on your face you understand.
 - Maintain your facial expression as a DBP may still be using his vision to support tactile reception. DBP are multi-modal!



EXPRESSING
EMOTIONS

Expression Cues

- **Follow your instincts in what makes the most sense and what is most comfortable.**
- **Use the DB person's own cues if they have their own established system.**

Expression Cues

- **Common touch techniques examples for 1-1 interaction**
 - Laugh
 - Smile
 - Yawn
 - Bored
 - Sad
 - Surprise
 - Shock
 - Mad



Method #3: Back Backchanneling

Giving audience feedback on DB speaker's back

BBC

- The upper back is used as a canvas for audience feedback.
- The DB speaker is the point of orientation.
- Steer DB Speaker to face audience if they are “off” and can’t see the audience.

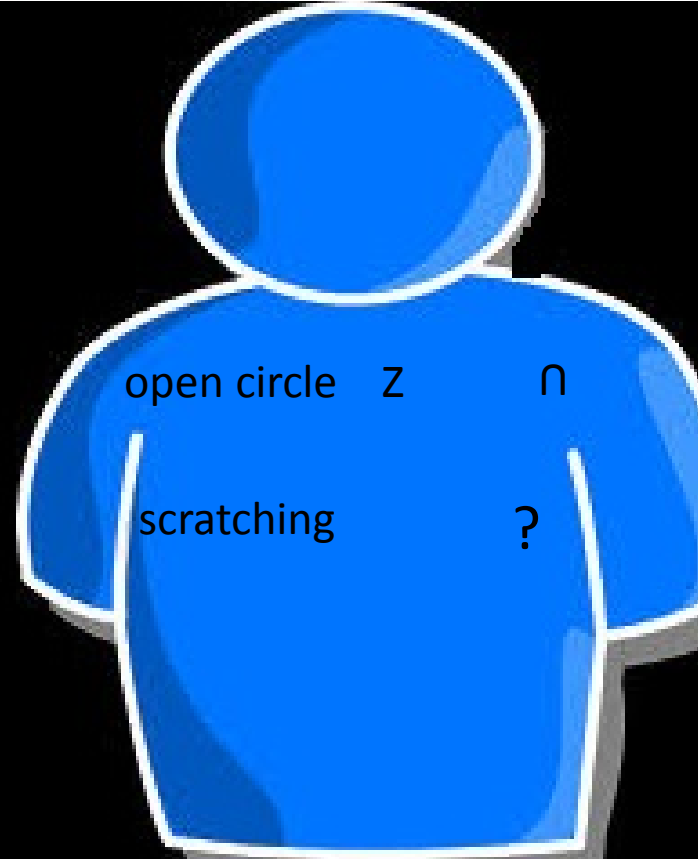
BBC

- Orientation – from the point of view of the DB speaker, where people are, where the door is
- Layout – U Shape, Theatre style
- Placement – Where in the layout to put the touch cues
- Judgment – Use judgment to pick the cues DB speaker want as much as possible

Common BBC

- Quizzical
- Sleeping
- Someone coming in, leaving room
- Raising hand
- People watching
- Applause
- Yawning
- Nodding Head
- Pager
- Typing/writing
- Crying
- Interpreter switch
- Laughing
- Smiling
- Blank face / bored





Successful Strategies to Incorporate Pro-Tactile

Ways to Increase Sensitivity

- Make cues larger
- Add a little more pressure
- Use two hands instead of one
- Move slower

Before Interpreting

- Show up early.
- Discuss what cues the DB speaker wants.
 - Some want a short list to minimize being overwhelmed.
 - Some want to know “everything” that’s happening in the audience.

During Interpreting

- While DB speaker is signing/speaking, do Back Backchanneling.
- When someone else is signing/speaking, i.e., question from audience, slide to the side of the DB speaker to interpret (tactile or close vision).
 - Include mood, facial expressions, environmental information while interpreting.

Team Interpreting

- Both interpreters show up early to discuss and test together with DB person.
- One can focus on Back Backchannel and the other can focus on interpreting, depends on setup, and switch as appropriate.
- Include the cue “interpreter switch”.

After Interpreting

- Debrief what touch cues worked, didn't work
- How was the pace?
- Were there any cues they did not know?
- Was there a situation or facial expression there were no cues for?
- Any other feedback for next time?

CAT
STUCK
IN TREE



Method #4 Tactile Maps

Tactile Maps

- Help DB to understand and explore spatial information and the direction of visual environment.
- Draw on the other person's hand or arm or back to:
 - describe the surroundings
 - describe what's happening
 - give directions

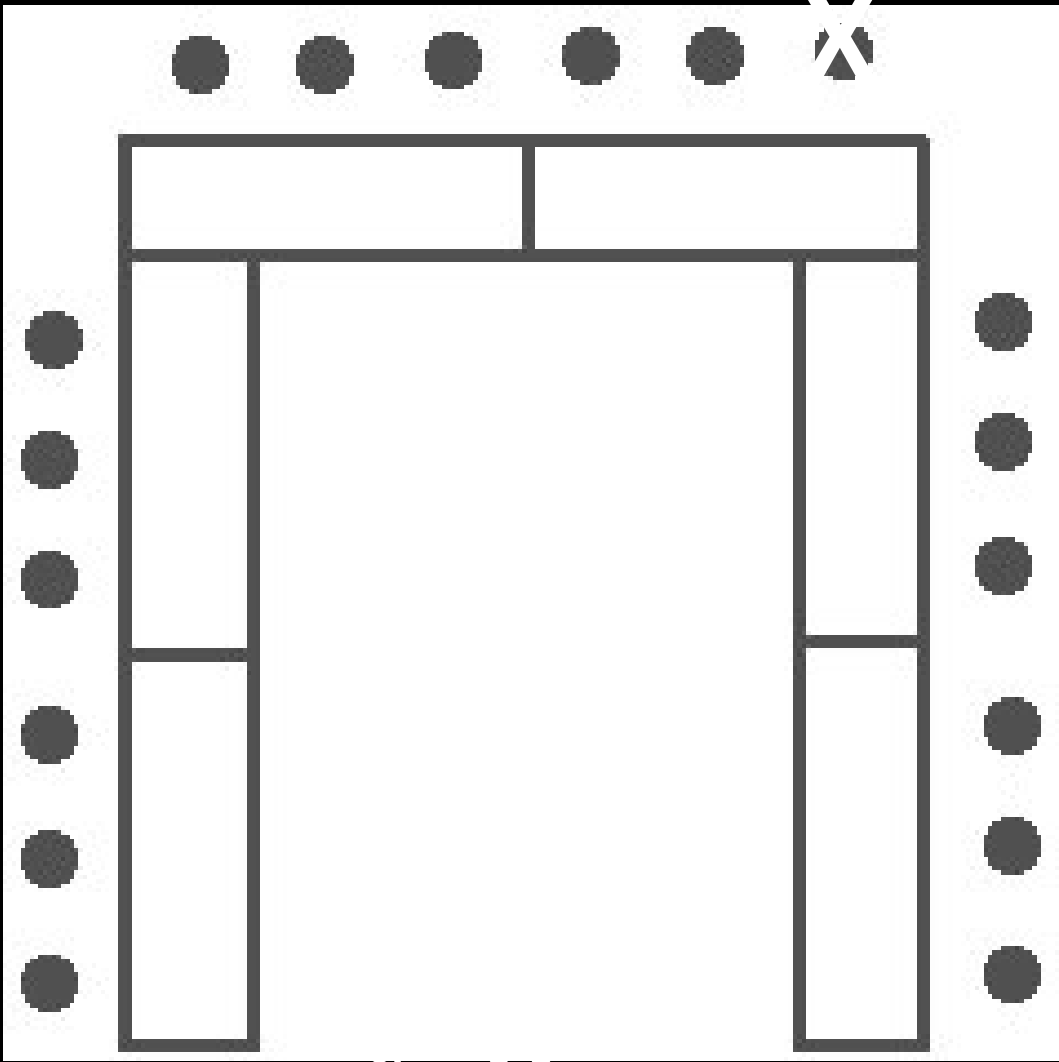
Which Hand to Use?

- If DB uses tactile communication, use their “non-listening” hand to draw maps and the other hand to communicate what you are drawing.
- Remember to tap hands to get DB to bring their hands to you – don’t grab or pull.
- They will bring up their non-listening hand first. Tap again or sign “give other hand please” to get other hand to draw map.

Point-to-Point

- Use index finger only or in combination with thumb
- Going around point-to-point
- Going from starting point to another point and back to starting point then a different point

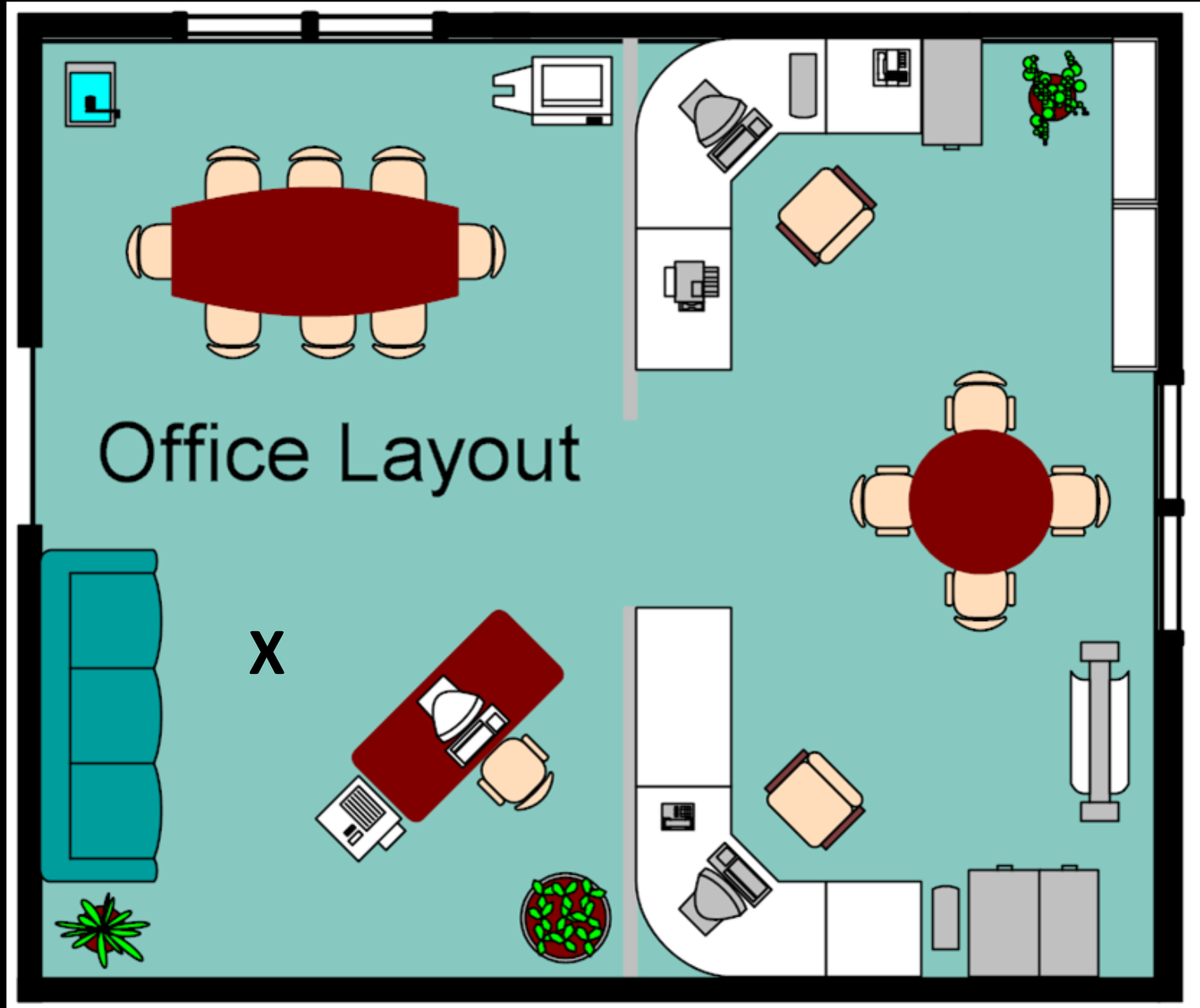
SIMPLE ORIENTATION



Deaf-Blind
Person

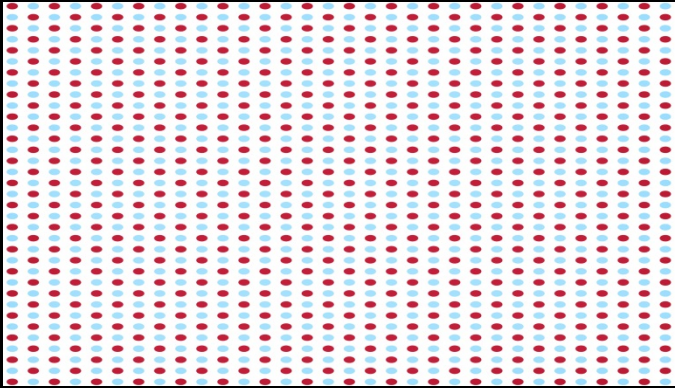
Presenter

ADVANCED ORIENTATION WITH DETAILS



Size & Pattern

- **Smaller shapes - use one finger**
- **Thicker lines or bigger shapes – use three fingers or index finger and thumb**
- **Pattern – use one or two hands**



Tactile Classifiers

- Another form of Tactile Maps
- Describes what's happening on the DBP's hand/arm
- “Cat Stuck in Tree”



ATTITUDE

Attitude

- Pro-Tactile is inclusive and empowering.
- People who practice the PT attitude include DB in all activities.
- Never leave DB alone in a communication void. If you're leaving, even for a few minutes, let them know and when you'll be back.
- Hook up, introduce DB to friends who happen to stop and chat with you, never leave DB out.

Promote Equality

- Be sensitive how you promote sighted privileges that make DB feel deflated or left behind.
- When walking past a DB person, stop, identify yourself, and say hello. Sighted people can see each other and wave, we DB can't see who is walking by so stop to say hello to give them equal access..
- Give visual info what's happening, who's there, what they're doing, mood, etc so DB can make informed decisions and participate the same as everyone else.

Promoting Autonomy

- **A DB person who incorporates the Pro-Tactile Way does things by himself (with or without support).**
- **Example: Approaching an elevator with an SSP**
 - **The SSP stays in “touch” with the DB person at all times, guides the DB person to the elevator and indicates where the button is so the DB person can push the button himself.**

EMPOWERMENT

“DB people can DO anything,
except hear and see,
using touch and their intelligence,
when they are given access.”

- Jelica Nuccio & aj granda



WRAPPING UP

Pro-Tactile Happy Hour

- A place to practice Pro-Tactile, socialize and have fun in a relaxing environment
- Meets monthly at different places
- Everyone is welcome – not for DB only!
- To get announcements of future events:
 - Join “Pro-Tactile Happy Hour in Boston” Facebook group, or
 - Send email to pearlblue7@gmail.com to get on mailing list

Vlogs about Pro-Tactile

By Jelica Nuccio and aj granda

www.protactile.org



The Power of Touch