

Incidental learning experiences with deafblind children in India



A summation of the
incidental and
experiential journey of
students, professionals
and family members of
deafblind persons



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International
(India)

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Working with deafblind people throughout India

Incidental learning experiences with deafblind children in India



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Acknowledgement

Sense International (India), with more than 16 years of work in the field of deafblindness has come in contact with thousands of students, professionals and family members having diverse information level, personal goals, interests and needs. This book is a summation of the incidental and experiential journey of some of them.

A very special mention and heartfelt thanks to all deafblind children and their families who have given the consent to share the information related to their condition and experiences, to support this knowledge sharing initiative. We would also like to thank our educator partner organizations colleagues who have shared their Incidental learning experiences, information and knowledge through different case studies.

This book is the result of the unrelenting efforts and initiative of Mr. Sachin Rizal. A special thanks goes to him for finalizing the contents through in depth research related to the various Incidental learning's with deafblindness and defining a scientific rigour and approach to the random experiential format of Incidental learning.

The credit for this booklet goes to the ungrudging efforts put in by the entire team of Sense International (India). Special mention for the contributions, resourcefulness and diligence of Ms. Anna Daniel, Ms. Brahada Shankar, Mr. Deepak Sharma and Ms. Anuradha Mungi is in order. They have reviewed the sections of chapters, by editing, adding, compiling with never ending enthusiasm. We also appreciate efforts of Mr. Shivkumar Sharma for designing the art lay out of the booklet.

We would also like to extend our special thanks to Ms. Manjaree Pant and Ms. Sampada Shevde for their support in reviewing the chapters.

Thanks!
Akhil Paul
Director
Sense International (India)

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Chapter - 1

Introduction to Deafblindness

Deafblindness is a combination of vision and hearing loss. It may seem that deafblindness only refers to a total inability to see and hear. In reality, it is a condition in which there is a combination of visual and hearing impairments. Many people will not be totally deaf and totally blind, but will have some remaining use of one or both senses. Others also have additional psychological/mental, physical and/or learning disabilities. This causes severe deficits and challenges in communication, orientation & mobility and accessing information.

Deafblindness represents other difficulties than those caused by deafness or blindness alone. It is an "umbrella" term, which can include children, and adults who are:

- Blind and profoundly deaf
- Blind and severely or partially hearing impaired
- Partially sighted and profoundly deaf
- Partially sighted and severely or partially hearing impaired

Deafblindness is a unique impairment with specific effects on the lives of individuals. The impact of a dual sensory loss is significantly different from a single loss as the individual's ability to compensate with the remaining sense is reduced. Children with deafblindness are often educationally isolated because impairments of sight and hearing require special and unique educational approaches to reach their full potential.

Though Deafblindness is a low incidence disability slowly, this disability is gaining recognition because of continued efforts to increase awareness in the community. It is estimated that there are more than 4,85,000 deafblind people in India. (population with deafblindness is calculated at 0.04% of the total population. There is no survey or census done in India specifically for people with deafblindness till date. However, door to door survey in our Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes support these figures)

Chapter - 2

Need for this booklet

Since Deafblindness is a unique disability where educational, communication and social needs of individuals are totally different, no single prescription or approach can be relevant to every deafblind individual. For each deafblind person many incidents would have happened and will continue to happen in day to day lives. After most incidents there is learning. However a majority of times even the people in immediate contact of the person with deafblindness may fail to perceive the learning. Because the flow of visual and auditory information is limited, they cannot learn what they do not detect, and they are unaware of what information they're missing. For these children, much essential information is missed, and incidental learning is greatly limited.

Even when they do get involved in incidental learning situations, the knowledge and solution thus created is limited to those people only, who were present at that particular situation. And not many people associated with similar situations elsewhere will ever get an access to this knowledge and experience. And after some time this newly added knowledge will get dissipated and will be lost without anyone's notice. Everybody will have to depend on their own experiences to ever learn the same thing. And this process will go on and on even if someone has found the solutions to it.

This booklet has been prepared to capture the Incidental learning experience of all those people who get involved in incidents, which occur in the day to day life of a deafblind person in both, informal and /or formal situation. It documents and highlights the solutions so that when faced with similar situation, one would know how to react and would have alternative solutions to deal with that situation. But you should always keep in mind that even though this book is a compilation of Incidental learning experiences across different situations and individuals with deafblindness, every child with deafblindness is different. Hence what applies or works with one child may not necessarily work or apply with another child in a similar situation.

This booklet will help the professionals/parents/deafblind people and

all those who are associated with deafblind people to associate the incidental learning with the disability.

This will help them understand the situation more easily, and face the incident without any panic and would be able to address the needs of that particular child at that particular time/situation. It will inspire the sense and attitude among caregivers to value every experience with sensitivity and knowledge based approach to understand the rationale behind the seemingly strange challenges and address the core issues more effectively.

The ultimate aim is to contribute to the body of knowledge around the management of deafblindness in a given context and develop universal solutions drawing from these incidental learning's.



Chapter - 3

What we would like the reader to take away from this handbook ?

This hand book has two purposes:

- 1) To inculcate an understanding and mind set for self-learning
- 2) To provide alternative solutions to common situations and challenges.

This book, will provide a body of knowledge that will help educators, professionals, Para-professionals, parents, and also those people who are not very aware about deafblindness needs but are always willing to help and support them. This will help to understand the inherent needs and identify alternative options at a given situation that present themselves itself during an interaction with deafblind children or persons.

The material is designed to provide

- Basic information about strategies to address the need of a person with deafblindness at the time of some unexpected or new situation in an informal setting, based on knowledge acquired from the experiences of other educators and parents.
- Development of an attitude and approach on ways to deal with specific situations with a solution, and creating a formal enabling environment for learning and development.
- New ways on communicating with deafblind people using other hidden senses like touch, smell, taste, along with residual vision and hearing.



Chapter - 4 Learning

When sighted and hearing people are young and in the learning phase most of the things learnt, is by seeing and doing or by doing and learning. However this kind of learning is not there with deafblind people.



Different types of learning include:

- **Random learning** refers to unintentional learning occurring at any time and in any place, in everyday life.
- **Informal learning** is 'intentional, but less organised and less structured...and may include for example learning events (activities) that occur in the family, in the workplace, in the daily life of every person, on a self-directed, family-directed, or socially-directed basis'.
- **Non-formal education** is 'any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education. Non-formal education

may therefore take place within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, work skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system and may have different duration.

- **Formal education** is 'education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous "ladder" of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old.

Children, who can see and hear, learn and develop as a result of incidental learning through their senses of vision and hearing. Babies are praised and encouraged when they smile. Their parents and other caring people in their lives "converse" with them by copying their babbling and cooing noises and teach them about the world by naming objects and actions over and over. Without formal classes, children without disabilities learn to communicate. They make choices, reject things they do not like, interpret and respond to body language and make their wants and needs known. The ability to do this makes it possible for these children to actively participate in a social world.

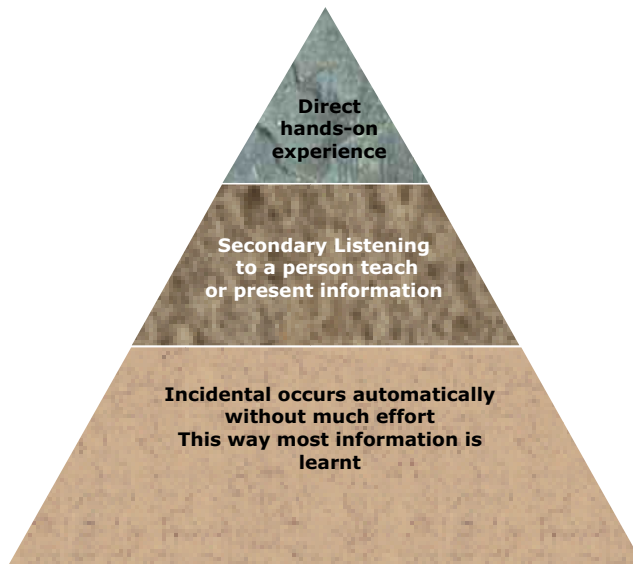


Exploring Incidental Learning.



In this picture, person with deafblindness is facing the audience with physical prompt.

Typical Learning

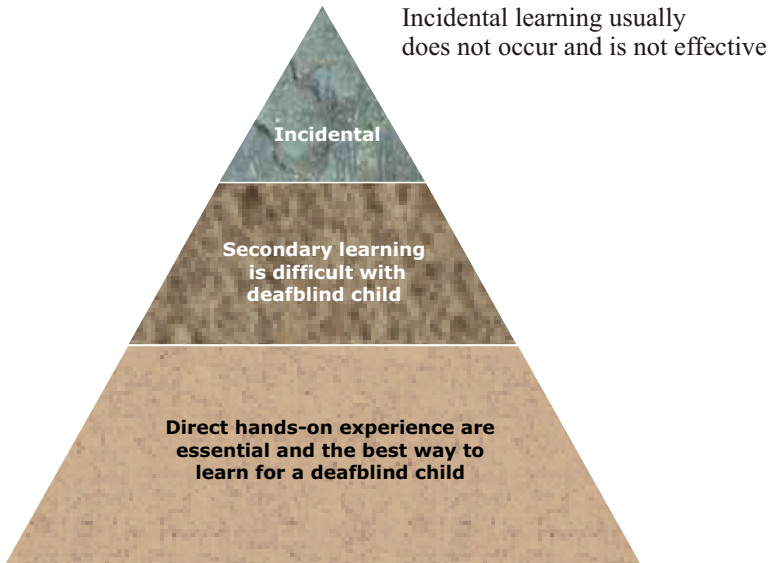


When we look at typical learning for children with normal vision and hearing, then direct learning or that which involves hands-on experience makes up a relatively small portion of their overall life time learning. Secondary learning or that which is obtained by listening to another person or present information, such as a discussion with friends on certain subject, a teacher in a classroom, information from a TV programme etc. this also adds on a much greater contribution in their overall lifetime learning. Many of the information which they learn come directly through various sensory modes. About 83 % of the information is received through vision, 11 % through hearing, 3.5 % through touch, 1.5 % through touch and 1.0 % through taste. Therefore with so much of exposure to the outside world there is not much requirement of learning every action and experience of life as it is received by design. The largest portion of the lifetime learning comes through incidental learning or that which occurs automatically without much effort simply from the flow of sensory information that is constantly available. This is the way most information is learned.

If we look very closely at the basic learning process of deafblind children, we find that it is vastly different from the learning process of the sighted-hearing children. This type of Incidental Learning is not possible for children who are deafblind. Although most children with deafblindness have some usable vision or hearing, it is not enough to provide easy access to information. The information that deafblind children receive is often distorted, fluctuating, confusing and meaningless. Children who are deafblind need to be taught a process that will enable them to become receptive and expressive communicators. The natural flow of visual and auditory information does not occur. Bits and pieces of information may be available, but those will be incomplete, distorted, and unreliable. Complete information cannot be accessed in a clear and consistent way. Hence for these children neither sense can adequately compensate for the lack of the other. Although deafblindness affects all areas of development, learning is especially impacted. For children with deafblindness, learning through independent observation and exploration is difficult.



Learning in a person with deafblindness



The learning of children with deafblindness is a very complex process. The methods which are meant for single disability are not necessarily useful or compatible for deafblind people. The process of learning is even more complex with limited senses and the challenges are very unique. It is very difficult to generalize a correct approach, as every individual child is unique in themselves. Therefore family and educators must contribute to the common knowledge pool and



develop skills sets and share with each other for the growth of each individual child and ensure no reinvention of the wheel happens in the life of deafblind person and their care givers.



Chapter - 5

What is Incidental learning?



In the context of deafblindness, the author defines “Incidental Learning as the process of learning by the deafblind person and their caregivers, which is acquired from a particular situation or an incident and can be applied in similar circumstances for better quality of living of self or other deafblind individuals.”

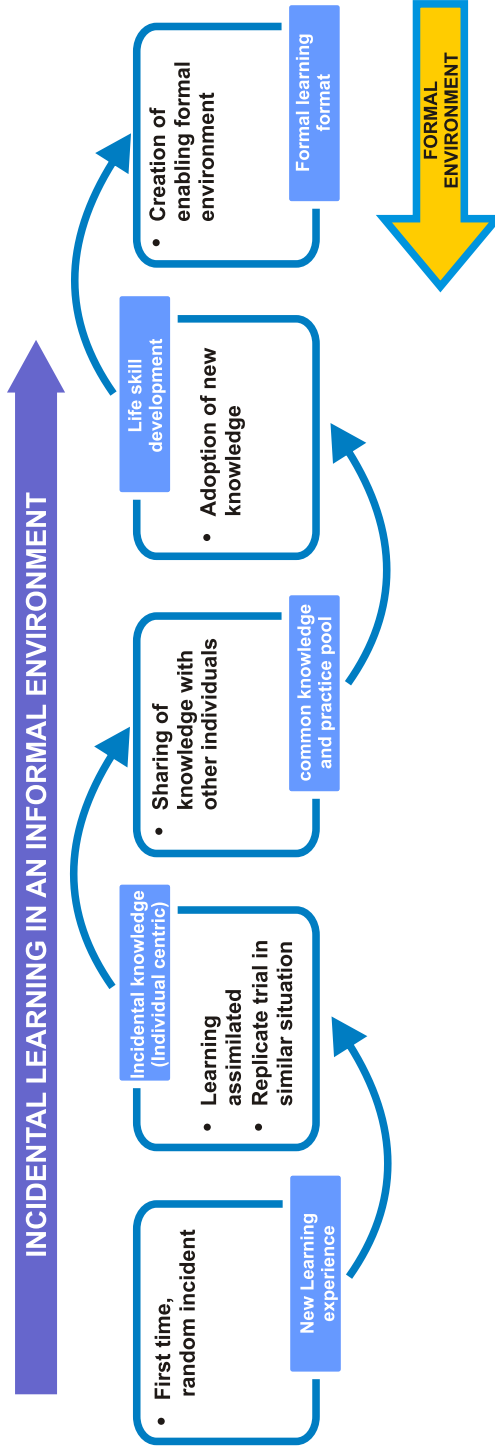
Mostly Incidental Learning happens in a situation which is unplanned, unorganised and in an informal situation. But sometimes Incidental Learning can also be planned according to the need and outcomes from that particular incident, in that circumstance, it can be organised and processed in a predetermined situation.

Incidental Learning describes the process in which, knowledge is gained from interactions with the environment. This learning process lacks a formal structure or objectives, and is guided by real-world experiences. Through Incidental Learning, people, especially children learn fundamental skills that they will use throughout their life.

D. Schneider defines Incidental Learning as some form of indirect additional /unplanned learning within an informal or formal learning situation.

Incidental Learning can be characterized as follows:

- It does not take place in special educational establishments standing out from normal life and professional practice;
- It has no curriculum and is not professionally organized but rather originates accidentally, sporadically, in association with certain occasions, from changing practical requirements;
- It is not planned educational conscious, systematically according to subjects, test and qualification-oriented, but rather unconsciously incidental, holistically problem-related, and related to situation management and fitness for life;
- It is not unrealistic stockpile-learning, but is experienced directly in its "natural" function as a tool for living and survival.



Chapter - 6

What is an Incidental Learning situation?



Incidental learning is knowledge acquired, from a particular incident that occurs for the first time and for which we find a solution at that particular time.

Incidental learning can happen mostly in two different setups.

I. Informal situation

II. Formal situation

Informal situation - Incidental Learning happens most of the time in an informal setup, where the person is not aware of what is going to happen next. In such incidents they rely on their own indigenous reaction and solutions. These solutions then may be repeated again if any similar situations arise on their own.

Formal situation – Incidental Learning takes place in a formal setup where an environment is created artificially in a planned manner to achieve certain learning's from that incident, the situation can be created according to the need of an individual and turn this into a learning tool.



Chapter - 7

How to making Incidental Learning experiences more meaningful?

Deafblind people learn through Incidental Learning's significantly, but they need more time, pace and lots of repetition to acquire certain skills, for e.g. to make a deafblind child to hold a glass of water could be a very big task even if the child is thirsty the child may not know what is inside the glass. Child may understand the presence of water which is inside the glass only after he/she feels it.

Therefore the caregivers need to be more creative, to think on these issues and to make the child understand that the water inside the glass is the same water which he/she drinks regularly. To make the child understand the educator or person who is working with the child can create an incident for developing the concept in the child in more concise way.

If **Formal Incidental** Learning experiences are to have meaning, then the incidents or the situation should be planned in such a way, that it involves some activities and the learning's need to be defined. It should focus on interest of deafblind person, and the goal with which you as an educator/ parent have planned for the child and through that incident or situation some outcomes may be expected.

If we take the above after recording this solution, we can apply the knowledge and learning's to another deafblind child in a formal setup with the preferred goal and outcomes. But again the strategies which have worked with one child may or may not apply as it is to another child in a similar situation. Record what works for your own child and share it with others as different approach.

As far as possible the outcome of situation/activities should be made clear to the child. The steps taken towards completion should be as simple as possible and suited to the child's abilities. The child needs to experience by doing first, then moving towards independence. This incident or situation can be repeated for some time till the child gets the idea of learning's.

Chapter - 8

Where can incidental learning experience take place and how do we get it?

Incidental Learning can take place anywhere and everywhere, we cannot have a specific situation for these kinds of learning's, it may occur at home or outside home, in the classroom or outside, at the market place, on the road at places where one has never imagined. It does not need any curriculum nor should it be in an organized way. It happens mostly in an unplanned way where the people are not aware of it. It is not subjective or nor does it needs any tests to quantify. And mostly it is experienced in a natural way in the day to day life.

Incidental Learning experience is the information/knowledge and solutions that may have been gained at the split of time while working with the deafblind/MSI children or person, which has not been captured and it exists only with those people who were present at that situation. Therefore we may not find this in the books. So to get that knowledge and transfer it to the needy ones, it needs to be shared by talking to them and collecting information.

Example of a common situation in any of our lives

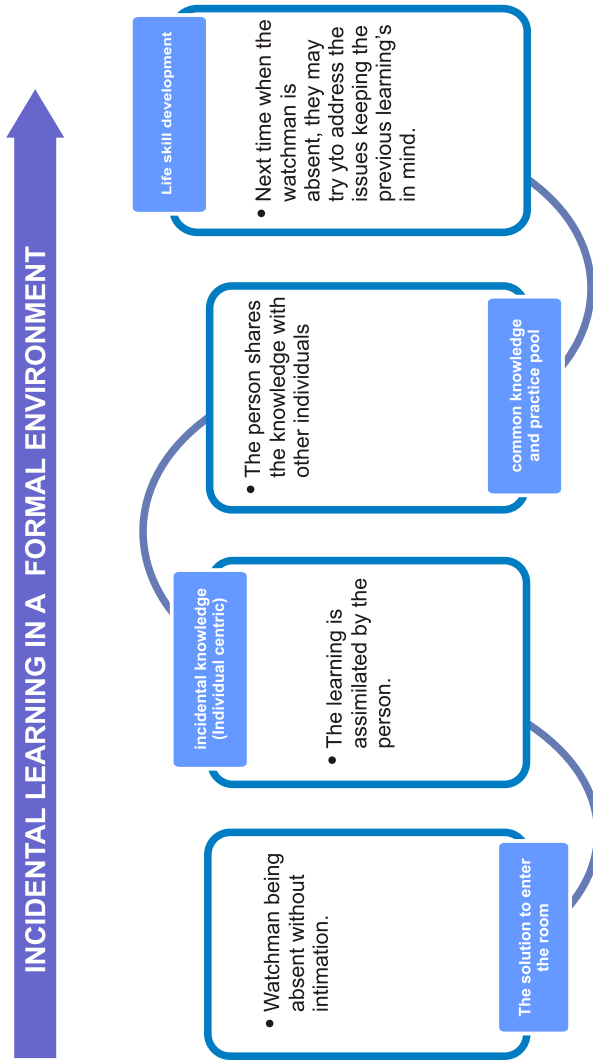
If the watchman of your school who handles all the keys takes a day's leave without any information, and you happen to come to the school early in the morning how would you address the problem? You may have a bunch of keys in your hand and you don't have any idea of the appropriate keys for the specific door. Initially you will be very nervous and angry, but at some point of time you may try to find the solution for it.

- The first option that may come to your mind may be to break the lock
- Alternatively you may look around and see if you can enter inside without breaking the door, by trying to find some solution.
- Or lastly you would sit there and try to open the door by trying each of the keys that you have got from the incharge, and in the process also label them.

This will obviously be very cumbersome, and will also take a pretty long time and energy, but finally you will find a solution that can also be applied by someone else in the future.

In the above mentioned e.g. there are various learning at different stages, which could be as follows

1. Here the situation which happens incidentally is the watchman being absent without informing.
2. The new finding is how you discovered to enter the room.
3. The learning is recorded and the knowledge is shared as you label each key.
4. And the knowledge is utilized in a concrete manner if one tries to share with another person.



Through your own Incidental Learning experience, you may make it more comfortable and easier for you and others as the real test arises, when the time comes to give the keys to another person to open the classrooms.

Chapter - 9

Handling deafblind person through Incidental Learning Experiences

There would be few ways on how you would forward your learning to others at the same situation

1. One is just to give the keys like you had got it.
2. Let them know how you entered the room and what kind of techniques you had applied. Or
3. Indicate the key that you had marked for particular classrooms, which he/she would be very happy, it's not that he/she will not be able to open the locks without your support but it will make the task easier and will make the person more at ease.

In our day to day life we learn to do thousands of things and learn so many new things by ourselves but we rarely share with others. It becomes very necessary and important for you to record the learning's that you have gained from that particular situation and share your learning's with others.

These learning's could be your experience and solutions that you may have gained at the split of time while working with the deafblind /MSI. And the important point to remember is that the learning's could be a deafblind child's learning, your learning or anybody who is working with the child's learning. It is not always necessary that it should be the learning's of only deafblind child.

1. For e.g. what and how you would have solved the problem when you came to know that a Deafblind child has learnt how to lock a door from inside.

Learning's- Here the incident is deafblind child getting locked inside the room, the solution is how you find alternatives to ensure the child does not get to lock the room again and the learning what will you do to not let same kind of situation again. And taking it forward if similar situation occurs with others.

All these answer may be existing with individual caregivers, but no one was aware about it because they have never shared that learning with others and one day when a new person faces these situation they have a task in front of them and may have to learn the same process on their own yet again. So to illustrate the practical advantage of using the process of Incidental Learning for universal knowledge and skill development the following chapter defines plausible skills to manage 13 common situations that are challenging and yet frequently faced.

Chapter - 10

Incidental Learning in Formal Settings



What is the need of incidental learning in Formal settings?

The foremost need of identifying and preserving the Incidental Learnings comes here, as by now we are very much aware of the learning style of deafblind children or a person. Even though they get involved into such incidents, it is very difficult for them to remember about the learnings and sometimes the deafblind child does not even understand what just happened at that time. Therefore, it becomes obligatory for an educator to create similar kind of incident in a formal setup with an expected outcome, till the child understands and gets something from that incident. The repetition of the incident can be from the same incident, which occurred with the child or as per the particular area to be addressed, and the learning's can be taken from the incidental learning experiences shared by others. Now it's the repetition of the same incident in a formal setup with solutions and outcomes so that the child would go to the core of the understanding and some concept and learning's is built in the child.

While selecting the incident, we should always keep in mind about the specific need of that particular child. There are thousands of deafblind people in this world but no one is alike. Every individual's need is different, and therefore the Incidental Learning experience shared here in this book may be applicable to some without changes or adaptations, but for some it may need some kind of adaptations while designing the situation.

Points to remember in Incidental Learning in formal settings:

When working with children who are deafblind, begin by developing an emotional bond with them.

The child with deafblindness needs to be encouraged to use his residual vision and/or hearing, and then receive positive reinforcement for his attempts.

Give more time and pace to the child so that he himself discovers his limits and skills.

It is important to provide a reactive or responsive environment for a child who is deafblind rather than a directive environment. The Environment – particularly their ability to

- Get information from their 'distance senses' (hearing and vision) about their world,
- Learn through 'incidental' learning – a deafblind child will not learn by just 'noticing what is going on around them' – they will need to be 'taught' in a much more 'concrete' way,
- They will have difficulty with structuring Information. It is hard for them to understand which bits of information go together - when does one activity or event start and stop etc?

Need for more Time – for everything!

Motivation – why would you be motivated to do things if you do not see or hear 'the point' or do not get the encouragement?

Bonding – deafblindness can affect the child's ability to build relationships - even the earliest and most important ones with caregivers.

Everyone around the child contributes to a responsive environment by providing situations which encourage him to explore, communicate, solve problems, and make choices

Chapter - 11

Creating a conducive environment for learning



People work better in an organized and pleasant environment. A pleasant and organized environment allows children, too, to make most of every opportunity to learn, as they begin to make sense of the world and what they are able to do.

A sense of security is essential for successful learning. To establish basic security about their world children must discover that the world is ordered, and that they are able to use this order to make predictions about events. Learning follows as a child begins to understand his/her ability to alter and control events. Confidence in the world allows children to tackle new types of learning.

Children also need emotional security, to develop feelings of well-being and of trust in those they are working with. Lack of trust in others prevents the child from using his/her potential to learn. In making a child secure, energy is released and can be spent on the capacities in the child for further development.

Children need to feel physically secure. They need to be comfortable, warm enough, and to have their other physical needs

taken care of. They need comfortable positions in which to work, which may include sitting, standing, using a wedge, sitting with an adult to provide a secure, friendly hold.

Based on the Incidental Learning experiences – the deafblind person and the person is likely to subjective construction of themselves and their relationship to the surrounding world.

The teacher of deafblind children must make the most of every opportunity for learning. Although children who are deafblind will have sensory impairment in common, they will differ as learners because of the degree of sensory difficulty, and the existence of other disabilities, especially physical and movement disorders. The learner will consider how to arrange the learning and the physical environment to maximize each child's learning, and how to priorities learning goals and pursue them.

Chapter - 12

Illustrations

Below illustrated cases are those few situations with its solutions which have occurred while being or working with deafblind person. These learning's has been shared by the parents, family members, educators and the people associated with the deafblind people in their day to day life.

CASE - I

A deafblind person gets locked in a room alone.

When obvious methods of looking for duplicate keys etc fail or are not possible, we need alternatives that stimulate the other senses of the deafblind person to reach out to her or him.

You can look for something that creates fragrance like deodorant, perfume etc as you know deafblind olfactory sense is very strong. You can spray from below the door the fragrance will reach the persons nose and will know that there is someone waiting outside and will open the door. Even smoke may get the same results. But it is always suggested to use this method with them who have the understanding of it, because sometimes the smoke may trigger feelings of fear in some children as well so cannot be used randomly. This could be very person specific. And if someone is having residual vision, then use switching on and off a bright bulb would be helpful. If you know the room is not a very big one than you can bang the door loudly and he/she will come to know there is someone outside, this is because of the vibration that reaches them.

CASE - II

If an adult deafblind person with very good cognition and communication skills is at a far - end of the table and needs to be communicated with

While sitting on the big table the deafblind person, is on the opposite side and there is no one around you to give the message, in that time you can just bang the table 2 – 3 times which could create vibration and make sure that the vibration from the table reaches to him/her, it is more likely for the person with deafblindness to understand that the

other person is trying to communicate with him/her. But this act can be performed only with very high functioning deafblind person.

CASE - III

Introducing new techniques to persons with deafblindness

When I started out to teach my MR\blind student how to brush his teeth, it became a very difficult task. All efforts seemed to go a waste. I could not understand why such a simple act was so difficult to accomplish. It was only after a while I found the real reason was that no one in his family brushes his/her teeth!! Hence the apparently simple goal of teaching him to brush his teeth was very difficult. I then had to first counsel the family on the importance of brushing teeth and then work with the child. Now with the touch cue, the child has learnt the activity and has shown remarkable progress as well.

The Incidental Learning here was that the child's learning is dependent on the child's immediate environment, surroundings and community and all these have to be considered before introducing a new activity.

Contributed by: Suresh kumar Singh, Sriganaganagar

CASE - IV

Introducing everyday processes to children with deafblindness

When Ankit joined school, he did not know the presence of water in the steel glass and therefore he had problem to hold a glass of water and drink from it. As he was not aware that the same glass contained water inside it. All efforts or reinforcements were in vain. One day when he was not in such a good mood, we went to the mall with him. The air conditioned environments immediately settled him down. After that I got him popcorns, his favorite food. After a mouthful when he wanted water I gave it to him in a disposable glass which is not quite stiff and has to be held with caution. Then I squeezed the glass slowly so that some amount of water could reach his hand, I did this through hand over hand. Slowly he understood the presence of water and even how to hold the glass. We repeated the experience in disposable glasses and gradually introduced the steel glass filled with

water in the next few days. He has now begun to hold a steel glass confidently and drink out of it independently.

The incidental learning here was that finding alternative and new ways to introduce the concept becomes critical. We assume that a deafblind person can perceive the whole object in totality at one go. In reality the deafblind person breaks down the whole information in to small bits. She can absorb and understand one aspect of the object at a time. Eventually, these bits of information come together to give a full picture.

Contributed by Mrs. Usha Pawar, Navi Mumbai

CASE - V

Listening is as important as telling

I have been working for more than 16 years in the vocational training unit. Since all the students here are of my age group we are more friendly rather than formal student and teachers. One of my students here is Khushi who is deafblind since her birth. She can do her own ADL and vocational activities. She is a little moody as well and doesnot like interference in her work. Infact even a change in seasons affects her. She loves new things and new clothes and that peps up her mood too.

For a couple of days Khushi was in one of her bad mood spells. And not showing any interest in regular activities. She was keeping away from physical activities like swimming, walking etc and refused vehemently when asked. In spite of being asked repeatedly she did not share the reason. The general consensus was that she has turned lazy and her peers gave up on her. The following weekend was full of action for me and when I returned to work next Monday , I was sharing with Khushi how my legs are aching after all the shopping and activity of the weekend. So she started teasing me that “Vaishali is acting lazy” on this I teased her back that I am avoiding work for just a day, you have been like this for more than a week now.

That's when she opened up and guided my hand and signaled pain and itching in her private parts and lower abdomen. On examination we found that due to lack of hygiene, there were severe rashes and that was the source of her pain that she had been suffering from for over a week. The next lessons were on personal hygiene and use of shavers etc independently. Application of medicinal powder etc gave her relief as well in the immediate future. All this made her very happy and she hugged me out of sheer pleasure and gratitude. Now she readily shares her personal issues as well, with the trust that there would be solutions available. This is a lesson that behind every violent reaction of a deafblind child there is a reason. And all the bodily changes after a certain age are a huge area that needs attention. Some times change in season brings change in skin etc, which reflects on the moods of the child.

The incidental learning here is that even if topics such as this are a taboo and not open for discussion it is important to create a platform for open discussion and resolution. This would go a long way in winning the trust of our deafblind children and offering them protection.

Contributed by Vaishali Allelu, Mumbai

CASE VI

If the child is hyperactive and gets agitated by human contact

My 12 yrs old son is a child with MR and deafblindness. He is hyper active. When he is angry he cries out aloud; sprawls and throws his feet around. Doesn't allow other people to continue with their deed or even come close to him and is ready to hit them. Often would throw things in his periphery. He would throw similar tantrums often. The only way to pacify him would be to take him out for a drive. But this wasn't possible all the time. Once I tried to sooth him down by holding him against my cheek and holding him close to me. Just like the movie "Munna Bhai MBBS" and it worked. Now every time he is agitated we hold him close enough to feel our heart beats and calm breathing and it instantly soothes him down. It is then easy to get him involved in conversations and his favourite activities.

The Incidental Learning here was that the child needed an emotional reinforcement on a regular basis to cope with any new development in the surroundings.

But side by side you need not wait for the child to throw a temper tantrum for the satisfaction of his/her emotional needs. It needs to be a part of his regular life. Also it is reinforcing behaviour we do want to encourage in the child. Having said that, we should also keep in mind about the growing age of a child and should not over do the exercise which may turn a habit later on.

Contributed by Tejendra R Achar, Ahmedabad

CASE VII

Every time we had guests coming over at our house, Ashutosh would become extremely agitated and hyper. He would make loud noises, would want to hold and hug the guests and some time even push physically in over excitement. What was strange was that he would never do such a thing when we would go to someone's house. The problem was so severe and embarrassing that often we would wish that no one ever came to our house. Then we realized the root cause. Ashutosh has partial hearing abilities. But he cannot see. So when guests would ring the bell or call out loudly, he knew that some strangers were there but could not recognize them. Hence this extreme behavior. Now we have instructed our friends to walk in without making noise. We tell Ashutosh in advance who to expect. And when they come we gradually introduce him to them and give him a chance to familiarize. This way Ashutosh does not over react.

The child derives his/her cues of activities happening around him/her only from the different developments happening in the environment and is left to interpret it in his/her own way. That's what makes the child overtly excited or frustrated. It is important to help the child anticipate what is going to happen next and also help him be prepared, so that he/she can express his/her emotional reaction in a more lucid way.

Contributed by Tejendra R Achar, Ahmedabad

CASE - VIII

Child shows inhibition towards objects such as water

When my child started going to school we realized he did not like water. And would withdraw from its touch. We tried many ways but could not break the inhibition. So the other day when we went to a mall, we saw an artificial waterfall, we took him near a waterfall and allowed him to play there. There he enjoyed himself so much that his fear of water vanished. Now he is comfortable with water and uses it like any child his age.

The Incidental Learning here is that, even everyday exposures like that to water may leave a child with deafblindness puzzled and hence the resistance. The fear comes out of lack of familiarity. Hence that has to be addressed at the root cause. The play way method to teach a new concept to the child therefore is most appropriate.

Contributed by Rashmi Jadav, Navi Mumbai

CASE - IX

Customizing learning methods to the needs of the child is important for best results

I had to teach Ankit the concept of Braille dots. But he was not able to understand it on the Braille slate. So I used a peg board instead and used thread to make small blocks just like those on the Braille slate.

The cognition of each deafblind person varies from another one. Hence even if the concept is the same, each child will have to be introduced to it at a level and method that suits him. In this case even the universal concept of Braille had to be simplified even further through pegs for better understanding and interest of this child.

Contributed by Rajeshwari, NAB Delhi

CASE - X

Whenever I go to office mostly I try to catch a auto rickshaw independently, one day I decided to come to office a little late and couldn't find the same auto rickshaw so, I lost my way as the new auto rickshaw driver took me to different place, somewhere around 14 kilometers away from my home. It was very difficult for me to find the right way back home, because of my profound deafblindness.

I tried many ways but the people in the sighted-hearing world really do not have any understandings about the deafblind's world, and I was left as an alien. Whenever I tried to mention through POP (Printing on Palm) they got scared, and when I could explain them after touching, it took extra 10 or 20 minutes for them to understand and to realise that I needed help.

Some time people come very close to my ears and try to speak and then grabbed me to answer their questions. This obviously is not appropriate.

Another day I took one of the local transport, but the driver did not stop at the right place. And when I got down of the bus it was completely a new place for me.

From that day, I realised that every deafblind person when travelling alone should carry communication cards with them, so that they will be able to show the people around and get help easily. It should have some simple picture and the text should be in local language and as well as in English too.

I also carry documents translated in Gujarati (local language of Gujarat) and Hindi for strangers who do not know English very well. I strongly feel that the governments should support the rights of a deafblind person, and should support in creating awareness about what are the various means of communication for deafblind persons from schools, colleges, offices, traffic and administrations. So that wherever they meet deafblind persons like me they should not regard us as helpless or useless, which I usually face.

The Incidental Learning here is that it is important to have a communication method or link which is understood by both, the deafblind person and also a lay person. Each locality will have a different way of approaching people with disabilities. It is important to understand that and find ways to connect and communicate with the seeing- hearing world around the deafblind person.

Contributed by a deafblind person Zamir Dhale, Ahmedabad.

CASE - XI

This incident occurred while I was travelling alone in the Handicap compartment of the Indian Railways. I booked my ticket in the handicap compartment. It is neither at the front nor at the back of the train and is not connected to other compartments. In a way it makes a disabled person more disabled.

Other people with physical handicap, MR and MI were also in the compartment. I tried to communicate with my co-passengers and found it very difficult, because they communicated orally and I am a deafblind person. They also tried to write on my palm with a pen in local languages like in Hindi, Gujarati or Marathi. When the train stopped at the next station, I got down and got tea and mineral water from a shop, which was in the middle of the platform. But, I could not reach back to my compartment before the train started. So, I got into another coach and waited for the next stop so that I could get back to my compartment.

When the train reaches the destination, I got ready to get out but the door was stuck and I could not open it. I tried to get out through the other door. But, there was no platform over there. I climbed down slowly with my trolley bag and while walking I fell into a drainage. My left foot was covered in dirt.

I feel that the Government of India and the Railway minister should understand the needs of people with disability. The handicap compartment should not be at the end and it should be connected to other coaches as well. There should be an escort in all the handicapped compartments; they should understand the sign

language and should have orientation about disability and should be willing to help the disabled people.

People without disability can go from one coach to another and have access to pantry car even when the train is running. But people with disability do not have the access and they have to be satisfied with whatever they have. And not even other hawkers comes to cater us, I think the government is doing a very good job but it could have been better with little more appropriate support, so that they have access to facilities just like a sighted and hearing person.

Contributed by a deafblind person Zamir Dhale, Ahmedabad.

CASE - XII

Opening doors of communication

In our family we go for spiritual meetings every Sunday morning. All this time Ashish stays home alone and is now even capable of taking messages for us if need be. Although there was a time when he refused to open the door when we returned as he could not recognize us from the inside. So we had to literally climb down from the neighbor's house in to our backyard. However we decided to create and teach him exclusive with typical signs. Now he recognizes and understands our typical signs and recognizes us and opens the door promptly.

The learning here is that the child with his/her best intentions sometimes cannot respond appropriately because they cannot identify loved ones from unknown people. They have to be taught the difference between family/ friends and unknown people and also a language has to be developed which can help him/her understand and express appropriately.

Contributed by Om Prakash Baveja, Sriganaganagar

CASE - XIII

Creating alternatives to break old habits

Another child would suck his thumb very often and was not ready to let go of this habit. So I suggested to get loose stringed trousers made for the child. The child is busy pulling his trousers up and has no time to suck his thumb!!!

Even if it may sound like a well heard joke, sometimes a practical solution may arise from similar incidents. The idea here is to keep the child engaged in another activity long enough to help him forget or break the cycle of a habit that should best lost.

Contributed by Om Prakash Baveja, Sriganaganagar

Chapter - 13

Frequently Asked Questions

On the road if you meet a deafblind person how would you identify and help him/her as a sighted guide?

If you see the person with a red and white cane then it signifies that he/she is a deafblind person and sometimes a person may not be carrying a red and white cane and sometimes the cane could be of a visually impaired person. In all the cases you go to the person and use your speech say “hello”, as there are various degrees of loss of vision and hearing so, it could be the deafblind person may have some residual vision. If he/she is not able to answer you will find out that the person is a deafblind

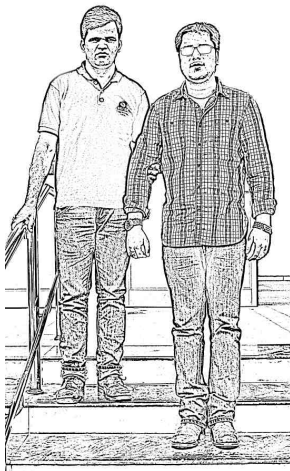
Then you can slightly take your hand forward to his/her hand and pat it, if he/she is ready to seek your help they will response positively and you give them your help or else don't.

If a person says he/she needs help then following the above mentioned mode of tactile communication, palm printing, signs or gestures ask their needs and requirement, it is not at all to understand their language for e.g. if they want to cross the road they will wave there hand from one end to other then you will come to know that they want to cross the road, if they want to go to the bank they will show you the bank pass book or communication book if they want to go to the bus stop they will sign the steering wheel, if they want auto to go home they will sign the auto and home. How simple is it to understand them...through the above mode of communication but it always we who make it so difficult and completed in understanding in them.

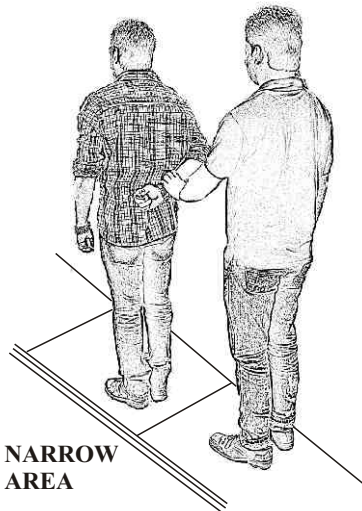
How to hold and guide a person with deafblindness while walking on the road?

If deafblind person is a signer and the sighted guide is right handed, then the guide should walk on his/her left so that the deafblind left hand is on the guide's right hand which is the guide's dominant signing hand.

- Ask him/her to keep his/her cane aside or fold it,
- Place his/her hand on your arm (right or left) and walk to the destination.
- If you stop he/she will automatically stop, if you walk he/she will walk along with you, but always maintain the same pace.
- If you come in a narrow space just place your hand behind he/she will understand that there is a narrow space and he will come behind you.
- While walking if you come to a stairs you stop a second and then move or you can give a sign. He/She will come to know that there is a stairs, as you go up or down your height and level will rise or decrease and the deafblind person will come to know that there is a flight of stairs.



STAIRS

NARROW
AREA

If you are sharing a room with a deafblind person what must you keep in mind?

Always keep a set of the keys with you.

Ask a deafblind person never to lock additionally, with the extra latch

or chain from inside when you are out. The auto lock will any way keep them secure as the key is either with them or you.

If you want to go out leaving a deafblind person alone and the electric switch can be operational only if the key is inserted, then ask the reception if there is an extra key if they do have then the problem is solved, but sometimes the hotel don't have the extra keys in that situation you can use the help of a spoon or visiting card, take the keys out of the switch and with the help of the spoon switch it on and take the keys alone with you, but don't forget to inform your room mate that you will be out and not to lock with the additional latch/chain from inside.

If a child with deafblindness at a very young age is exhibiting knowledge/interest in Sex beyond his/her years, should it be taken seriously?

These could be telling signs of inappropriate exposure or abuse.

- If the child has started doing this after coming back from home, there are chances that he/she might be abused at home.
- He/She may have seen elders engaging in sexual activity.
- There is a chance that he/she is being abused by an older child in the hostel or that he/she has seen someone else in the hostel engaging in sexual activities.

Therefore it is necessary to investigate and take the senior management into confidence.

Chapter - 14

Conclusion and Way Ahead

Incidental learning is a constant and gradual process towards creating a more conducive environment around the deafblind child and also develops the capabilities of the child to cope with the realities around. Hence it is critical that this learning is not only practiced often enough it is also important that knowledge thus created is collated and shared with others.

Sense International (India) is committed to support development of such a repository of knowledge created in local contexts. We invite all to contribute and draw from this repository and develop the knowledge base.

Please send your experiences at- sachin@senseintindia.org or

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This project is funded by
the European Union



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