

THE EXPERIENCE BOOK

as developed by

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SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE "EXPERIENCE BOOK"

I. Rationale

- a) A book about himself/herself is very motivational for an individual. An experience book will often elicit more language than most anything else.
- b) An experience book provides the intervenor with an opportunity to introduce, teach and review concepts and vocabulary related to a planned activity.
- c) The experience book provides the intervenor opportunities to reinforce language experiences that do not occur frequently. For example, if a time when an individual was hurt or hospitalized was depicted in an experience book, you would have a tool available to reinforce those particular concepts without re-living the actual experience.
- d) Experience books are one of the few ways we have of reliving past events with individuals with deafblindness - this can be especially important for persons with unique language needs.
- e) The experience book allows the intervenor to reinforce important language in a quiet, relaxed atmosphere with the best possibility for sensory input. This reinforcement is often difficult during the actual event. For example, there are only a few ways to reinforce bath or swim time language with the hearing aids on - the experience book is one of them.
- f) The experience book provides a source of individualized, printed material appropriate to the visual, tactile, conceptual and communication needs and abilities of the individual.

II. Individual Considerations

- a) Always use representative materials appropriate to the individual's visual and conceptual abilities.
- b) The individual who has no residual vision will require a tactile approach. A completely tactile approach sometimes presents a greater challenge to produce, but with creativity, continues to be a very viable tool.
- c) Learning proceeds from the concrete to the semi-concrete to the abstract. Whenever possible, use actual objects or materials associated with the activity. Ongoing assessment is necessary to ensure that the individual does truly understand the concept of concrete representation, which can then be followed by picture representation. The individual should be actively involved in creating the pictures that are represented in the book whenever possible.
- d) Remember, the book relates to the INDIVIDUAL'S experiences. Focus on the information or the concepts that the individual:
 - found interesting about the activity
 - was motivated by
 - requires in order to make the experience a learning experience for them

***Note: The focus may end up being different from your initial intended purpose.

III. Suggestions For Making Entries More Meaningful

- a) Entries to the experience book should be made during the activity or as soon as possible after the activity.
- b) Use a variety of approaches to produce drawn pictures. For example,
 - Intervenor draws and individual watches
 - Intervenor and individual work co-actively with varying degrees of physical support provided, as required. The support may range anywhere from manipulation through to slight prompts
 - Intervenor and individual take turns

- Individual draws
- c) Ensure that your choice of language is conceptually correct. Refer to actual persons, places or objects with the appropriate signed and verbal label and to pictures of these same persons, places or objects as "a picture of". For example, there is a big difference conceptually between pointing to a picture of a ball and calling it a ball and pointing to that same picture and calling it "a picture of a ball".
- d) Emphasize important details like colour, shape, size, texture, relationships and feelings to help develop the concept.
- e) Establish a few simple techniques for making sure the individual understands that you are drawing him/her:
- Draw his/her face while looking at him/her, relating each feature as you draw it on the page with the actual body part
 - Draw his/her face from a photograph that he/she has previously recognized as himself/herself
 - Draw in hearing aids and glasses as they often provide significant information that allows the individuals to differentiate between themselves and others
 - Make a life size drawing of the intervenor, family members, friends, etc. and the individual themselves by tracing their bodies on paper and colouring it appropriately
 - Use the name signs (initially of familiar persons) in conjunction with the language "picture of"
- f) Involve the individual in the production of his/her own book as much as possible. Allow the individual to collect and save a few small things from the activity to put into the experience book (popped balloon from a party, popsicle stick from an ice-cream treat, leaves from a lawn raking activity, french fry container or straw from a trip to McDonald's, postcards). Provide him/her with a box or bag specifically for collecting items.
- g) For those items that will not stay glued into a book, an envelope or a zip locked bag can be secured at the top of the page to hold these items. Items can then be removed, discussed utilized on the page if appropriate and then returned to the envelope or bag.

- h) If photographs of the activity have been taken, they can be added to reinforce and augment the drawings. The use of digital cameras assists intervenors in providing pictures that are most suitable for an individual's vision as well as being a tool that may help in teaching the initial concept of 2 dimensional representation.
- i) The following ideas may further increase an individual's motivation to participate and their ability to be interactive with the book.
- pages with items or pictures covered by flaps
 - pages with objects attached with velcro, so the individual can take them on and off
 - a cassette tape with recorded voices, sounds or music that when used in combination with the book correspond with the theme or concept of the book and pictures (whenever possible have the individual a part of making the cassette tape as well as the book)
 - initially ensure that the pictures and the object or person they represent are as realistic a representation as possible prior to using more abstract methods such as stick figures
- j) The back of the previous page is often a good place to put pictures of the signs or any other directions for the use of the book that may assist others to utilize it more effectively with the individual.
- k) Initially, one primary concept per page will simplify things and make the conceptual understanding process a little easier.