Tactile Memory Simulation

Instructions

Who:
Ask a family member or friend to be your partner in a deaf-blind simulation.

What:
The family member or friend will cover his or her eyes with a blindfold of some type and block sound from entering their ears using ear plugs or a headset. You will then help the person put on a coat. However, do not tell your partner that this is what the simulation will involve. It is important that he or she experiences the activity tactually without having it explained.

Why:
The purpose of this simulation is for you to begin to get an inkling of what it is like to share a tactile experience with a person who has limited hearing and sight and explore the nature of tactile memories. It does not provide you with an experience of what it is like to be with someone who is actually deaf-blind. As a sighted or hearing-sighted person, your partner in the simulation has visual and/or auditory memories to draw on that cannot be removed. However, a simulation like this provides a chance to view things differently and make you more aware of how you gather information with your senses.

Where:
The simulation can be done in any quiet location.

Anticipated Time:
The actual time required to do the simulation is about 10 to 15 minutes, but you will also spend some time writing written responses to some questions and talking with your partner, so plan for one hour to complete the whole exercise.

Equipment:
- A blindfold that will keep the light out.
- Earplugs or a headset that will keep out as much sound as possible.
• A coat that will fit your simulation partner.

**Before the Simulation**

Inform your simulation partner that:

• They do not know how to complete simple tasks like dressing, eating, grooming, etc.
• They are not to use speech, signs, pointing, or other formal language during the activity.
• They cannot say anything about the experience afterwards until you ask them to share.

Other than this information, do not tell them anything about what will happen during the simulation.

**During the Simulation**

**Step 1:**
Ask the person to sit on a chair with the blindfold on and ears blocked. Move away and wait two minutes.

**Step 2:**
Approach the person with a coat over your arm. Make contact. Use hand-under-hand contact to help him or her put on the coat. Do not rush. Try to make him feel comfortable. Make sure the coat is buttoned or zipped up and fits as well as possible. When he has the coat on, make sure he is sitting securely and then move away (without using language).

**Step 3:**
Before speaking with or uncovering the eyes and ears of your simulation partner, respond to the following questions:

• What do you think was most memorable about the experience of putting on the coat for the person who was simulating deaf-blindness?
• Is there a particular moment that you think made a strong impression for him?
• Which movement, touch, or something else, do you think he will remember best?

**Step 4:**
Uncover the eyes and ears of your partner. Ask this question:

• Which movement, touch, or something else that you experienced while putting on the coat do you remember best?
Give him time to process the question. Do not talk about your own experience. Write down his answers.

**Step 5:**

- Were your answers the same?
- If they were different, ask your partner why their memory made such a strong impression?
- Why did you guess that something else would have been more memorable?
- Talk about the experience from your different "deaf-blind" and hearing-sighted perspectives.

This simulation activity was created by Bernadette Van Den Tillaart in 1999 and revised in October 2014.