

Top Tips for working with a learner with Multi-Sensory Impairments (Deafblind)

Our learners with MSI all have some loss of their vision and hearing. These are the distance senses that give information about their environment without having to be close to the stimuli. The distance senses enable us to make quick decisions about how to react to the environment and decide whether to 'fight or flight'.

1. Be aware that learners with MSI may experience anxiety; routines and predictability will help them learn to anticipate events and reduce this e.g. using the same music every morning
2. Always alert your learner to your presence before you start working with them e.g. by wearing the same bracelet all the time as a signifier
3. Indicate what part of their body will be used in the activity, or any change of position, before you begin, e.g. by using non-invasive touch
4. Use touch cues to indicate changes of direction or position, indoors or outdoors
5. Position yourself so that the learner can use their residual vision and hearing most effectively e.g. by sitting on the side where their hearing is best
6. Use clear language which reduces the unnecessary information given to learners. This will help them to process the important information.
7. Learners with MSI will need more time to process and respond to information.
8. Learners with MSI will become tired more easily than seeing and hearing learners - allow for frequent breaks
9. Always look at the response the learner is making; this may be subtle and hard to spot but try to react to how the learner is responding.
10. Offer vibro-tactile objects; these can be more easily perceived by the learner.
11. Maintain physical contact when working with a learner so that they know you are still there e.g. touch your knees together
12. Provide the learner with opportunities to complete work in an environment that is quiet and has few distractions.
13. When physically supporting a learner to explore using their hands, use hand under hand methods to guide the learner to give them control.