



Fact Sheet

Teaching Body Language

We communicate a lot of information about our feelings through our body language: our facial expressions, the way we position ourselves, distance from others, and gestures. We receive this information primarily through our vision. The child with dual sensory impairments does not get this information from others. He also is not aware of how others see him. These children must have help to learn to express their feelings through appropriate body language. If their feelings and body language do not match, their communication may be misunderstood and the child may be frustrated. You can help the child in the following ways:

1. Have the child feel your face while you say/sign the name of the feeling expressed. Have him feel the tension in your muscles when you are angry, relaxed muscles when you're happy, and a frown when you're unhappy.
2. Also have him feel your shoulders and hands to learn about body position related to the different feelings. An upright body frequently shows a positive attitude and confidence. A slumped body sometimes signals sadness or fatigue.
3. If you feel comfortable allowing the child to feel your heart rate, this will also give a lot of information. You can have a young child feel your heart. An older child can feel your neck or wrist. Your heart rate will show when you're angry, happy, excited, etc.
4. Have the child feel his own face, posture, and heart rate to become aware of how he appears to others.

Adapted from Sternberg - White, S., Chen, D., Watts, J., 1992, Developing Social - Emotional Skills, INSITE, USU, Logan, Utah

Fact Sheets from the Colorado Services to Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with vision and hearing loss. The information applies to children and youth, birth through 21 years of age. The purpose of the Fact Sheets is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through personalized technical assistance available from the Colorado project. For more information call (303) 866-6681 or (303) 866-6605. Updated: 1/09