



Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Outreach Programs

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What is ProTactile and What Are Its Benefits?

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Abstract: ProTactile is a socio-cultural philosophy with its own sets of philosophy, attitude, culture, and language. This emerging concept has become a way of life for the deafblind community. ProTactile plays a significant role in deafblind world. Members explore the world through touch, and most importantly communicate through touch. ProTactile is a language that the deafblind community embraces and benefits from as a way of life.

ProTactile is a socio-cultural philosophy with its own sets of philosophy, attitude, culture, and language. The ProTactile Movement was begun by two deafblind women, aj granda and Jelica Nuccio. The overall approach emerged as a language as recently as 2010 by Jelica and aj along with a hearing-sighted woman named Dr. Terra Edwards. This concept has actually been around for some time, since 2007, in the deafblind community. It was not recognized until recently due to lack of opportunities for deafblind members of the community to share their amazingly unique language, which is done through touch. This movement emerged in Seattle, Washington where there is a large and amazing deafblind community. Seattle is considered a mecca for the deafblind community because of accessibility through ProTactile.

Pro in ProTactile signifies its meaning as in pro touch, pro connection, pro experience, pro accountability, pro ownership, pro identity. If you were to look up synonyms for the Pro word, you would get these answers: for, favoring, with, support. Therefore, ProTactile (PT) is about supporting access to the world that surrounds a deafblind person through touch.

Attitude reflects on the stigma society has placed on the deafblind members of the community as well as those who are deaf disabled in general. ProTactile strives to shift the attitude from a medically-based view to a culturally-based view. Medical views are considered oppressive by the deafblind community despite how "supportive" they may appear, while cultural views provide the deafblind community a sense of ownership, acclaimed identity, culture, community, and language as a marginalized group in a hearing-sighted dominant society. The aim is to shift the attitude of society's expectations for individuals to rely on sight as a way of life to support and encourage the belief that one can be autonomous and rely on touch as a way of life. After all, touch is a fundamental component of human nature; people communicate through touch (handshakes, hugs). Touch is a powerful communication tool.

ProTactile also plays an important part in deafblind culture. Members explore the world through touch, and most importantly communicate through touch. ProTactile is a language that the deafblind community embraces and benefits from, not be deprived of. Through ProTactile, they become included rather than excluded, neglected, left to fend for themselves. Body cues can be sensed through touch; for instance, if one is laughing or upset, this would be communicated through a hand movement on their arms or legs. Story-telling or exchanging valuable

information can be expressed and conducted through PT. ProTactile is a form of communication that can be done two-way or more, not one-way.

There is a misconception that ProTactile provides one with visual information on their back, which is not the case. ProTactile is a whole, rounded approach where both parties exchange information. PT is not one way, PT is a reciprocal language, goes both ways between two people (or more) communicating. Like any other language, ProTactile is constantly evolving. Most importantly, PT encourages inclusion, autonomy, and equal access.

For more information about ProTactile and to request a training or workshop go to <https://protactileconnects.weebly.com>. Through this site, there is a resource page with supplemental information, articles, and videos. You will also find deafblind artists and writers as well as a link to order PT shirts to show your support by raising awareness of PT.

To learn more about ProTactile, please visit <https://protactileconnects.weebly.com/>ProTactile Connects is a group of consultants who provide their expertise and knowledge of ProTactile, ensuring autonomy and access to ProTactile language for the deafblind community. ProTactile Connects offers workshops/trainings on ProTactile and deafblindhood. If you or your agency are interested in learning about ProTactile, you can send an email to protactile.connects@gmail.com for further information on having a training or workshop.

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