

This booklet is the second of four booklets on congenital deafblindness and communication which are written to inspire all partners involved in communication with deafblind persons.

Chapter one is an introduction to contact and social interaction. The interactions and early communication with congenitally deafblind persons in everyday situations have been described as 'conversations with bodies'. In a process without words people understand each other without formal language and thus on the basis of other communicative acts that mainly consist of emotional bodily expressions, tactile cues, muscle tension, postures, natural gestures, and sounds. These acts can differ totally from one person to the next. To make contact and to 'keep in touch with each other' in this world of proximity and touch requires high levels of sensitivity, special insights and considerable skills of the sighted and hearing communication partner. Good contact can be seen as the basis and result of harmonious interactions.

The second chapter describes how the social potential of deafblind persons will unfold only in a certain developmental context. If caregivers provide infants with appropriate stimuli and are responsive to their reactions, then coordinated social interactions become possible and can lead to genuine social relationships and good communication between "You and I".

Chapter three describes how the focus of social interaction moves away from the participants to include objects and events in the external world, when children are about five or six months of age. Infants regulate their reaction to a novel object or event on the basis of the mother's emotional reaction to the same object or event. At this point triadic interactions appear. A third element can be a part of the interaction: "You, I and it".

The second part of this booklet contains information about the DVD that is enclosed together with guidelines for watching the video. It illustrates examples of essential concepts used within establishing and developing contact and social interaction with persons with congenital deafblindness.