

Active Learning

An approach for clients with visual impairment and profound intellectual multiple disabilities

Martien Rienstra, occupational therapist
Specialist in visual impairment and (profound) multiple disabilities
martienrienstra@visio.org
Royal Dutch Visio



Intervention

Active Learning, developed by dr. Lilli Nielsen, gives a theoretical and practical basis for treatment, structure and special materials. **The aim of the intervention is to stimulate interaction between client and environment.**

By exploring their environment and making more contact with materials, objects, and persons surrounding them, clients become more conscious of their own contact and acting possibilities. But how can the client be aroused?



Approach and interaction

- Choose a suitable approach:
 - offering
 - imitation
 - interaction
 - sharing the work
- Give the initiative back to the client
- Treatment with your hands on your back
- Every client is unique

Environment

- borders
- fixation
- special materials
- daily materials
- play area
- limited distractions

Client

- visual functions
- sensomotorical functions
- intellectual functions
- social and emotional functions
- initiative/active participant
- alertness
- favorite play/toys
- preferred sense(s)

Problem

Clients make very little contact with their environment. Therefore they are typically not aware of their ability to influence the world around them. Often stereotypical movements are developed, and sometimes this leads to self-harming and/or aggressive behavior. Other clients turn inwards upon themselves and stop making contact at all.

Target population: PIMD clients with visual impairment Profound Intellectual Multiple Disabilities (PIMD):

- Intellectual development of 24 months or less
- Physical disability, for example coordination disorder, inability to grasp or grip, to control certain movements, to sit without support

- Sensory integration difficulties
- Changing levels of arousal and alertness
- Additional problems, such as epilepsy, reflux, sleeping problems

Visual impairment:

There is a very high prevalence (50%-70%) of (cerebral) visual impairment in this PIMD group.

- Low vision or blindness
- Cerebral Visual Impairment, indicated by behavior such as: variable visual attention, superficial looking behavior, very restricted visual curiosity, staring into light sources
- Eye-movement problems
- Visual field problems, also due to physical problems and eye movement problems

Problems in daily life:

These disabilities result in a severe lack of skills like playing, acting, moving without support, contact and communication. This leads to inactivity, turning inwards, self-harming, etc.. During the day there are many "empty" moments: they just sit in their chairs, doing nothing.

Project

In the next two years this intervention will be implemented in Royal Dutch Visio at all locations where the target population lives or stays during the day. Caregivers will take courses for this special intervention. During interviews with caregivers after an Active Learning intervention we can measure the value of Active Learning.

More information: martienrienstra@visio.org, www.activelearningspace.org