**Hand Under Hand**

**Purpose:**

* To provide access to the experience of how people use their hands in relation to one another, including direction of movement, amount of force, speed or tempo (without engaging the student’s startle reflex or opposition to having hands picked up)
* To provide spatial awareness of the distance between hands, for people who are blind or have low vision
* To involve the student in routine tasks that they cannot yet perform independently
* To stimulate curiosity, the desire to do things themselves, and to reduce passivity and dependence

**Important Points:**

* Too much touch distracts the brain
* Too much talking distracts the brain
* Provide the student with daily “observation” time (with their hands as their “eyes” even if they have some vision)
  + Keep both of their hands engaged on yours throughout the task. Make it a brief task.
  + Start with something the student likes!
* This is teaching active participation and learning
* Students with “tactile defensiveness” accept this better than your hand over their hand because they are doing the touching with their palms/fingers rather than being touched on the sensitive back of their hand or wrist.

**Directions:**

Try positioning yourself behind or beside the student, depending on their body size and response, so that your arms and hands are positioned to operate as though they were the student’s hands and arms.

You may have to sit on a chair behind or beside them or squat to get your shoulder level down closest to their level. Young children can sit in your lap.

Position their hands on top of your fingers and hands. This can be accomplished by:

* Tell them to do it,
* Placing your hands under their hands and reach for the task, or
* You may be able to lightly “clamp” their hands to yours with your thumbs in the initial stages of training them to observe with their hands.

If the child pulls his or her hands away or becomes upset with hand to hand contact, the student may need more sensory/motor awareness of their hands. Consider incorporating a hand lotion time (adult massages their hands) as part of their daily routines.

*Adapted from material by: Geraldine G. Larrington, MA,OTR/L, Arizona Schools for the Deaf & Blind*