

T O U C H F O R H E A L T H F O R A L L T H E S E N S E S

This paper is actually a paradox, because the subject - how to present information on all sensory levels - is presented to you only visually. So use your fantasy and hopefully you will get some new ideas about how to share information with your class, if you are a TfH instructor, or with your friends.

The idea of sharing about this subject came to us one year ago, when we went to Hungary to teach to first TfH class there. To introduce TfH in a new country is a challenge in itself, but in that class we had to confront an even bigger one, the biggest challenge we ever had as a teacher: one of the students, and actually the one who was most eager to learn, was completely blind. That meant that we couldn't rely on our usual ways of teaching if we really wanted to get through all the information to him. And to do that was extremely important, as Zsigmond (that was the name of the blind man) couldn't go back to written notes, couldn't consult the book, couldn't get hints from pictures.

The class worked actually very well out, Zsigmond was very satisfied and we had a definite feeling that, thanks to our efforts to make all the information super-clear for someone who can't see, even the rest of the class had a much higher understanding of the material than we ever before was able to generate.

What we did was that we were extremely careful in verbalizing all information with precise words and at the same time we used always Zsigmond to show all the techniques, points, muscles, ranges of motion etc on him, so he had not only a verbal, but even a kinesthetic experience of the material. Verbalizing the information in a very precise way gave Zsigmond also a kind of exact notes to go back to after the class was over, as he was taping the whole weekend.

You might ask yourself, why are we telling you all this? The reason is that when the class in Budapest was over, we realized that what we did wasn't some "extra" for the sake of Zsigmond - it was just what we are supposed to do any time we want to share some information with more than one person.

The reason is that in almost all groups you will find people, who, as far as learning process concerned, are either blind, deaf or numb. Does

that sound dramatical? To find out, make a little experiment: ask your friends how they learn easiest?

You will hear that some of them have to see the thing or the action they want to learn (visual), others want to have a precise verbal description of it (auditive), while a third group basically have to do the thing or in some way feel it themselves (kinesthetic). You probably recognize that even you belong to some of these groups, although the boundaries between them are not always as clearcut as we present it here.

The problem is that even teachers have their preference regarding sensory channels. That's why we for many years presented for example meridians with the verbal description of "it begins here and it goes there and it ends here", while we were pointing to different places on the body. People who are basically visual probably could follow what we called "here" and "there". But auditive people would have needed the name of the anatomical landmarks and kinesthetic people would have needed to be touched upon to show where the meridian was running on them. It took us many years to learn that a lot of people we considered to be "slow learners", people who kept asking the same question again and again on things we just showed them, missed the information because of our unawareness of the different predominant sensory channels they had.

That's why our meeting with Zsigmond became a turning point in our development as teachers. From that time we always imagine that we have at least one blind, one deaf and one kinesthetically numb person in all our classes. In order to satisfy all of them we write and draw things on the blackboard, at the same time we describe everything with the most precise possible words, using exact (but not exclusive) anatomical terminology, and we get people paired up to touch each other and to repeat loudly for each other the information we are simultaneously verbalizing and showing on ourselves.

Do you believe us, that during this last year we made a surprising discovery? It seems to us that the number of slow learners in the world, or at least in our classes and at our lectures, is decreasing radically!

Bippan Norberg and Péter Szil, Sweden