

INFLUENCE OF SENSORY LOSS ON DEVELOPMENT: The Communication Bubble

Sandra L.H. Davenport, M.D. Sandra L.H. Davenport, M.D.
SensoryGenetic/Neuro-development
5801 Southwood Drive, Bloomington MN 55437-1739
952-831-5522 slhdaven@tc.umn.edu

Are all five major senses working?

The chart below is not based on any reliable data. Estimates are quoted in the literature that the percentage of information that we take in via our eyes is anywhere from 60 to 90%. Of course, if you are listening to an audio tape, vision doesn't matter at all. If you are watching a film strip, hearing is of no consequence. In addition, some people are visual learners and some people are auditory learners. It is well-known that two people with identical audiograms may have strikingly different abilities to understand speech and other sounds. Perhaps the one who understands speech better is actually an auditory learner. But even that person misses information. If he/she uses speech-reading extensively, then a vision impairment on top of a hearing impairment will cut down on understanding as well.

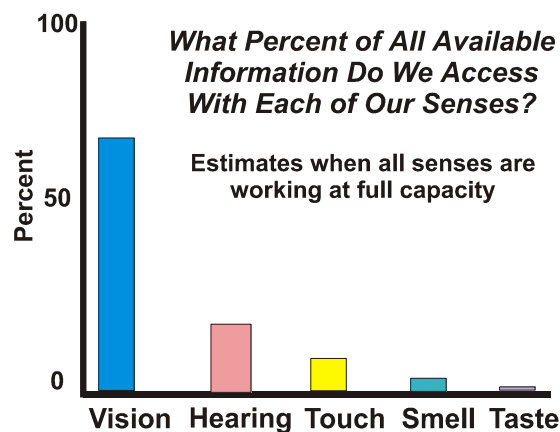
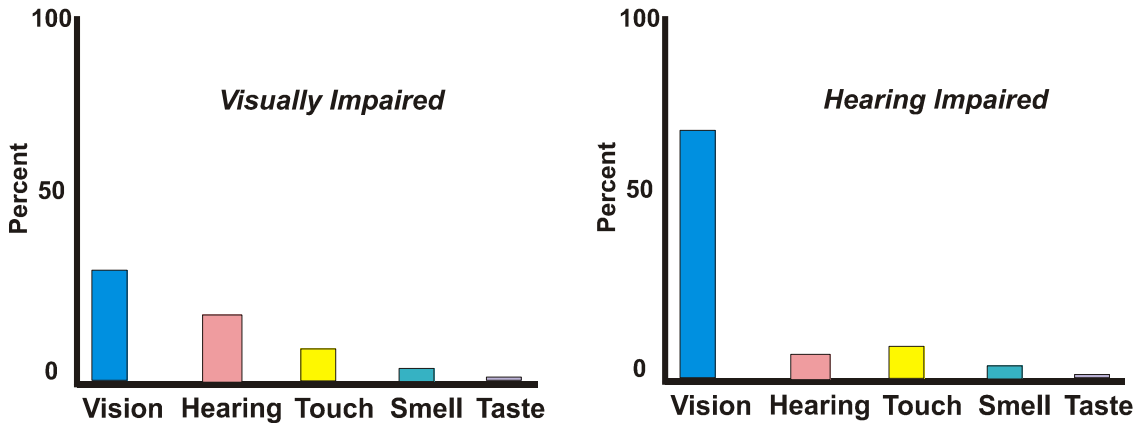


Figure 1: Full access to information from all senses.

However, consider what happens if a child is visually impaired AND hearing impaired. If a child has moderate visual impairment, the Vision bar might be half as high. If the child is moderately hard of hearing, the Hearing bar would be shortened by half. Relatively speaking, then, the other senses become more important.



Figures 2 & 3: Compare the differences when half of either vision or hearing is gone.

Now consider how less information is available when half of BOTH the vision and the hearing are missing. Notice how much more important the senses of touch and smell become.

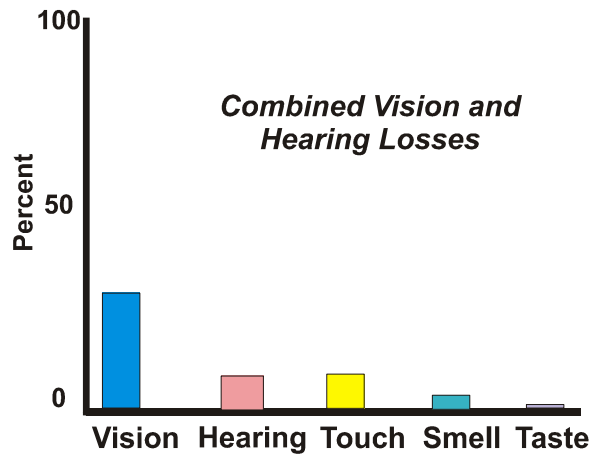


Figure 4: Combined vision/hearing loss with half of each gone.