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J Neurol Disord 2018, Volume 6
DOI: 10.4172/2329-6895-C11-056

Creativity and neuroplasticity: Creating a new non-disabling identity of blindness through perceptual navigational instruction

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Neuroplasticity tells us that our body and brain are plastic. Plasticity makes our bodies and brain malleable. Through learning we can harness the adaptability of our senses and brain to develop bodily and sensorial capacities which are traditionally not ascribed to the human body and senses. Like independent navigational abilities in blind people. The perceptual navigational approach of the World Access for The Blind (WAFTB) or Visioneers is based on the scientific understanding of the plasticity of the human brain and childhood developments. The perceptual navigational instruction introduces the use of the full-length cane and echolocation or Flash sonar. Full-Length cane is much longer and lighter than the traditional white-cane that is prescribed for the use of the blind. It is flexible and makes for easy maneuverability during use. It extends the tactual spatial perceptions of blind users and consequently expands their peri-personal space. Therefore, adding to their navigational confidence and improves their idiothetic navigational abilities. Echolocation or Flash sonar echolocation or Flash sonar allows blind people to acquire spatial information that is beyond the reach of the longest usable cane, trains the visual brain to process spatial information with the use of sound, trains hearing to use sound to carry out the job of obtaining three-dimensional spatial information in real-time and thus expand the function of hearing. Beyond the functions of language and communications and music that is traditionally associated with hearing. The result of the perceptual navigational instruction produces more navigationably confident and competent blind individuals, whoever is able to carry out navigational tasks which are culturally and scientifically presumed to be impossible for the blind. Thus, the perceptual navigational instruction of the World Access for the Blind or Visioneers challenges the cultural and scientific understanding of the capacities of blind people. From inherently limited views of their capacities as primarily idiothetic navigators to broader and more positive views of their capacities as people capable of carrying out allothetic self-proposition navigations. Thus, the perceptual navigational approach has the potential to change the contemporary cultural and scientific landscape of thinking about blindness and blind people from inherently disabled and incapacitated to normal and non-disabling people.

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