Pro-Tactile is the socio-cultural philosophy currently shaping Deaf-blind practices in the areas of language, interpersonal communication and politics, according to two Pro-Tactile leaders in the Deaf-blind community—AJ Granda and Jelica Nuccio. The information from this fact sheet is focused on the language and interpersonal aspects of Pro-Tactile practices.

**THE DEAF-BLIND WAY**

Touch is a big part of Deaf-blind culture/community and extremely important for Deaf-blind individuals. Deaf-blind individuals can be called tactile people, in a similar way to how Deaf individuals are called visual people, and how Blind individuals are called auditory people.

There are many ways touch supports the lives of people who are Deaf-blind, including orientation of where they are, as a form of language, to connect with the environment and others, and for pleasure.

Pro-Tactile communication strategies were created by Deaf-blind people in order to provide important information that has been missing in other forms of tactile communication.

**ENHANCING COMMUNICATION THE PRO-TACTILE WAY**

First, let’s talk about a communication strategies called back-channeling that are commonly used by hearing and deaf people when communicating with each other. Back-channeling shows that you are paying attention and listening to the speaker/signer, reacting and/or agreeing/disagreeing with the other person. When we are listening to or watching a conversation, we naturally give feedback either as a verbal or visual response (back-channeling) to the speaker/signer. When we are responding to communication in sign language, Back-channeling might be a head nod, a facial expression, or a specific sign like “oh-I-see”. When we are responding to a speaker in spoken English, we might nod our head or say things like really?, wow! or oh-no! to show our response.

Without back-channeling, Deaf-blind people can feel like they are talking/signing and nobody is there, nobody is paying attention. However, that natural feedback or reaction is important for everyone (including Deaf-blind people) when having an interactive conversation. Back-channeling is used to help Deaf-blind people know how people are reacting to what they are saying in order to get a full picture of what being communicated around
It's a way to stay 100% connected to the person you are talking to by providing a constant stream of feedback using touch.

**Pro-tactile Back-Channeling is:**

* Showing feelings, expressions, and cues that we see on people’s faces through touch on the hands, legs, or back of the Deaf-blind person. For example, tapping the leg to show understanding.

* Using touch to show emotion and sharing feelings that are being expressed.

* Genuine expressions that do not follow rules but come from one’s ability to emotionally connect during communication.

Information adapted from:
Personal communication with AJ Granada