

2. WHO I AM

SIGHT DESCRIPTION

a) Let's talk about ... (slide 3)

It is important that the child with a visual impairment has an awareness of their unique visual diagnosis. This is the first step towards understanding and accepting their visual impairment. This requires sensitive support and can be a long process. Having knowledge about their vision encourages self-advocacy skills and should enable the child to be able to share information with others about their visual needs.

Children with VI require certain adaptations in school because of their sight loss (for example, extra light at the table, sitting in the first row, using magnifiers, braille, having longer time when writing tests, etc). They need to know why they have these adaptations or additional individual help from professionals in order for them (and the family) to explain these differences to peers, friends and other family members.

As qualified teachers of visually impaired children, we often observe in practice the problems that children may have with understanding and accepting their own visual impairment. If we ask them what kind of visual impairment they have or their understanding of it, they often don't know how to explain it or deny that they have a visual impairment.

It is vital for parents to understand the importance of encouraging their child to discuss their visual impairment and to practice social skills at home as well as in school. This understanding of social skills is important for making friends, having a support network, vital for independence, maintaining good mental health and necessary for employment in future life.

b) Reflect (slide 4)

- Do you talk about your child's vision?
- Does your child know/understand their vision?
- Do you think it is important for them to be able to explain their vision to peers or adults?

- Are low vision aids accepted and used?
- Do you think your attitude towards your child's visual impairment affects your child's self interpretation?

c) Possible causes (slide 5)

- Insufficient explanation of the sight condition from an ophthalmologist, unknown terminology
- Parents may not know how to talk about visual impairment with their children through fear or lack of knowledge.
- Some parents find it difficult to accept their child's visual impairment, or feel guilty and blame themselves.

d) Consequences (slide 6)

- Children with VI may deny or ignore their unique challenges, regardless of the daily problems they face, as they try to be as similar as possible to their peers in order to fit in.
- Due to a lack of understanding, sighted peers and adults can misinterpret the needs and abilities of the child with VI. This can lead to low expectations of their academic and social potential. It can also lead to low motivation.
- Stereotypical ideas of how a person with VI looks and behaves may need to be addressed. Peers and adults may be puzzled when they find out that the person with VI may have some visual ability.
- If a child doesn't understand their visual impairment, they will not be able to communicate their needs, and could have difficulties with adaptive behavior or social interactions. This can lead to social isolation, emotional and communication problems which cause low self-esteem.

e) How to support ... (slide 7)

Teach a child with VI:

- To understand their unique visual impairment and be able to explain it in simple terms
- To be aware that he/she is a child with unique abilities and needs.

- To be aware of challenges as they arise and have the confidence to discuss these.
- To be able to show others the equipment that they use.
- To be aware of the support that they need, for example the size of enlarged print, braille, lighting requirements.
- To explain the purpose of the support they are receiving
- Strategies to deal with other people's reactions to their sight loss.
- To encourage peers to ask questions and answer them.
- To be able to talk about how others can help.
- To be aware of VI role models

The most important thing is that your explanation should be based on your child's strengths and talents!!!

f) Video/Image (slide 8)

g) Other tips (slide 9)

Parents discuss about other possibilities

- Activity: Parents wear simulation glasses and discuss how and what they see.
- Express acceptance with a positive point of view.
- Ask your child: How do you see? What do you see?
- Get involved with support groups and other families who have experienced the same situation as your family.