EBU

The voice of blind and partially sighted people in Europe

Facilitator's Toolkit: Raising Awareness About Visual Impairment

The toolkit is available in electronic format on the European Blind Union (EBU) website: www.euroblind.org

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the "Facilitator's Toolkit: Raising Awareness About Visual Impairment," developed by the Low Vision Working Group within the European Blind Union. This resource equips facilitators and professionals with practical tools to foster understanding and promote inclusion for visually impaired people.

The toolkit includes a variety of activities designed to help participants experience and better understand the challenges faced by blind and partially sighted individuals. Through simulations and experiential learning, facilitators can deliver impactful workshops that cultivate empathy and raise awareness. It also provides creative strategies and actionable resources to encourage inclusive practices in communities, workplaces, and educational settings.

Additionally, the toolkit equips participants with practical skills for interacting effectively with visually impaired people, offers guidance on advocating for their needs, and inspires efforts to build a more inclusive society.

This resource is tailored for teachers, educators, social workers, youth workers, trainers, and facilitators working within organizations supporting visually impaired people. Activities can be integrated into lessons on health, science, or social studies, as well as leadership training, community service programs, or sensitivity workshops.

1.1 How to use this document?

This Facilitator's Toolkit is organized into six chapters and appendices. Each chapter is color-coded and linked through a vertical column of six colors displayed on the right side of every page, along with the chapter number. By clicking on a color / chapter number in the column, you can jump directly to the corresponding chapter, allowing you to locate relevant information quickly and efficiently without unnecessary scrolling. Screen reader users can navigate through chapters using heading (H1).

Specifically designed to support activities aimed at raising awareness about visual impairments, this toolkit avoids an overload of general facilitation tips

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readily available elsewhere. Instead, it focuses on providing detailed suggestions, instructions, and adaptable exercises tailored to visual awareness training. These activities are designed to accommodate diverse needs, depending on your audience's familiarity with visual impairments, the available time, and the specific goals of your training.

The flexibility of this toolkit empowers facilitators to customize it to their specific needs. Depending on your audience and objectives, you can:

- Prioritize certain activities over others.
- Modify activities to align better with your training goals.
- Utilize the evaluation section to measure the effectiveness of your impact.

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2 Understanding Sight Loss

The following information can be used in presentations to help people understand sight loss conditions and their impact on the lives of blind and partially sighted people. There are also some guiding and communication tips. Select the information for your presentation most useful for your audience.

Visual impairment includes blindness and low vision, referring to conditions where a person's ability to see is significantly reduced, impacting daily life. This may involve difficulty seeing objects clearly, narrowing of the visual field, or heightened light sensitivity. These impairments range from mild to severe, and the experience of sight loss is unique to each individual.

The experience of sight loss varies significantly based on whether it is congenital (present from birth) or acquired (developed later in life). Each scenario comes with unique challenges and coping strategies.

2.1 Congenital Visual Impairments

Individuals born with visual impairments often develop adaptive strategies for navigation, communication, and learning, from an early age. These adaptations frequently involve honing other senses, such as touch, hearing, and spatial awareness, to interact with the world around them. Unlike sighted individuals who acquire knowledge of their surroundings automatically through vision, individuals with visual impairments must deliberately learn the representations of many objects in their environment.

2.2 Acquired Visual Impairments

Those who lose vision later in life face a different set of challenges, including adapting to new ways of performing daily tasks, coping with the loss of visual memories, and learning new skills such as Braille, orientation, or mobility techniques. Psychological adjustment is a critical component of this process, as the sudden or progressive nature of sight loss can profoundly impact mental health and independence.

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2.3 Key Definitions

Visual impairment is classified based on visual acuity (the clarity or sharpness of vision) and the visual field (the total area a person can see).

Blindness: Refers to a severe loss of vision, ranging from total absence of light perception to minimal detection of shapes or light.

Low Vision: Describes partial visual impairment that cannot be fully corrected with standard glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery. Individuals with low vision may face challenges in tasks such as reading, recognizing faces, or navigating their surroundings.

For more information, please visit the [WHO's definition of Visual Impairment](#)

However, the European Blind Union (EBU) advocates for the NinePlus framework, which combines medical and functional parameters for low vision assessment. This comprehensive approach is crucial for accurately evaluating the degree of sight loss and its impact on daily life. You can learn more about the NinePlus parameters in the [EBU's brochure](#) "Minimum standards for low vision services in Europe' and the [EBU's toolkit](#) "Implementing standards for LOW VISION SERVICES in Europe".

2.4 Common Causes of Sight Loss

Sight loss occurs due to a variety of medical conditions. Understanding the underlying causes is critical to addressing individual needs effectively. Common causes include:

- **Cataract**: A clouding of the eye's lens which can results in blurred or hazy vision, reduced contrast sensitivity, and difficulty with glare. Cataracts are often treatable with surgery.
- **Glaucoma**: A group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve, often due to elevated intraocular pressure, leading to peripheral vision loss (commonly known as "tunnel vision").
- **Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)**: A progressive condition causing central vision loss, which affects activities like reading, driving, or recognizing faces.

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- **Diabetic Retinopathy**: Caused by damage to the retinal blood vessels due to poorly managed diabetes, leading to blurred vision, dark spots, or complete vision loss in advanced cases.
- **Retinitis Pigmentosa**: a group of rare, inherited eye disorders that cause progressive degeneration of the retina (the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye), leading to symptoms such as night blindness, tunnel vision, and, in advanced stages, complete vision loss.
- **Refractive Errors**: These include myopia (nearsightedness) and hyperopia (farsightedness). While often correctable with glasses or contact lenses, untreated refractive errors can significantly impair vision.

Each condition has a unique progression and impact on vision. Tailored interventions, from medical treatment to rehabilitation, are essential for addressing these varied challenges.

For more detailed information and resources, you can visit:

- [WHO's resources on vision health on the (WHO site)](#).
- [IAPB's Vision Atlas for data and guidance on the (IAPB site)](#).

2.5 Examples of Visual Impairment in Daily Life

The impact of sight loss varies based on the condition and degree of impairment.

- **Central Vision Loss**:
  Example: Someone with AMD may struggle to read fine print or recognize faces, impacting social interactions. Tasks requiring precision, such as threading a needle, may become challenging.
  Compensation: Use magnifiers, text-to-speech software, and rely on peripheral vision with training.
- **Peripheral Vision Loss**:
  Example: A person with glaucoma or retinitis pigmentosa may have difficulty navigating crowded spaces, increasing the risk of tripping.
  Compensation: Orientation and mobility training, systematic environmental scanning, and tools like canes or guide dogs.

- **Blurry Vision**:
  Example: Individuals with cataracts may struggle to identify objects at a distance or read small text.
  Compensation: Use bright lighting, anti-glare lenses, and corrective surgery when applicable.
- **Complete Blindness**:
  Example: Someone with no light perception relies entirely on sound, touch, and assistive technologies.
  Compensation: Structured environments, mobility aids, and tools like screen readers and Braille displays.

2.6 Impact of Visual Impairment on Daily Life

Visual impairment significantly affects daily activities, including mobility, communication, education, and employment. Challenges include:

- Navigating unfamiliar environments safely.
- Reading printed materials or digital content.
- Recognizing faces, which can hinder social interaction.
- Maintaining independence in performing everyday tasks.

These challenges can contribute to feelings of isolation, lowered self-esteem, and mental health concerns such as anxiety or depression. To address these impacts, support systems, inclusive environments, and accessible tools play a vital role. Assistive technologies, including screen readers, Braille displays, and mobility aids, provide individuals with visual impairments the means to maintain their independence and navigate daily life with greater confidence and ease.

2.7 Practical Advice for Interaction
Interacting with blind or partially sighted individuals requires respect, understanding, and adaptability. Every person's experience is unique, so it's essential to communicate and offer assistance thoughtfully.

Guiding Tips

- **Ask First**: Never assume someone needs help. Politely ask if they would like assistance.

- **Offer Your Elbow**: If guiding, let the person take your elbow rather than grabbing or pulling them. Walk at their pace and describe any obstacles or changes in terrain.
- **Describe the Environment**: Provide clear, specific descriptions, such as "There's a step down ahead" or "The door is on your left."

Communication Tips

- **Introduce Yourself**: Clearly state your name and role, especially in group settings.
- **Use Verbal Cues**: Avoid relying on gestures like pointing or nodding. Be specific when giving directions (e.g., "It's directly in front of you" instead of "It's over there").
- **Maintain Engagement**: Include the person in conversations and inform them if you're leaving or moving away.

By adopting these practices, you can help foster a respectful and inclusive environment.

You can find [more practical advice and information about guiding, meeting, and greeting on the RNIB's website](#).

2.8 The Importance of Understanding Visual Impairments

Visual impairment is not just a medical condition; it has profound social, emotional, and practical implications for individuals. Raising awareness of visual impairment not only helps in fostering empathy but also encourages the adoption of inclusive practices in education, workplaces, and public spaces. Small changes, such as offering clear communication or accessible environments, can make a significant difference in the lives of those with sight loss.

As we deepen our understanding of visual impairment, we pave the way for a more empathetic and equitable society, where individuals with blindness or low vision can fully participate and thrive.

3 Activities to Experience Visual Impairments

3.1 Design Principles

When designing activities for sighted participants to better understand visual impairments, it is essential to create experiences that are meaningful, engaging, and respectful. These principles ensure that the activities not only educate but also promote empathy, inclusion, and practical application of the insights gained.

3.2 Collaborating with Visually Impaired Individuals

Collaboration with individuals who have lived experiences of visual impairments is crucial to ensure that activities authentically reflect their realities. Their insights help to design exercises that are respectful, accurate, and meaningful, avoiding stereotypes and fostering a sense of partnership in the learning process.

3.3 Fostering Mutual Understanding Through Co-Learning

The goal is not just to foster empathy but to encourage mutual understanding and shared learning. Activities should simulate key aspects of living with visual impairments, helping participants appreciate the strategies, strengths, and resilience of visually impaired individuals. This approach moves away from merely observing challenges and toward understanding shared experiences and building connections.

3.4 Creating an Inclusive and Supportive Environment

A safe, inclusive environment is essential for meaningful participation. Activities should be accessible to everyone, with adaptations for diverse needs. Participants should feel encouraged to share their reflections without fear of judgment, ensuring all voices are heard during discussions. This inclusive approach creates a foundation for respectful and open dialogue.

3.5 Facilitating Reflection and Meaningful Discussion

Reflection and discussion are integral to deepening understanding and reinforcing the lessons learned. After each activity, participants should have opportunities to express their thoughts, share feelings, and engage in dialogue about the insights they gained. Structured discussions encourage critical thinking about inclusivity and accessibility in participants' daily lives.

3.5.1 Reflection Questions:

What assumptions or preconceptions did you have about visual impairments before these activities? How have they changed?

How can the knowledge gained from these activities help create a more inclusive environment in your community or workplace?

What challenges might you face if you had a visual impairment, and how would you adapt?

3.5.2 Discussion Points:

Role of Technology: How can advancements in technology improve accessibility for individuals with visual impairments?

Importance of Advocacy: What actions can individuals or organizations take to advocate for the rights and needs of visually impaired people?

Intersectionality and Visual Impairments: How do other factors like age, gender, or socioeconomic status intersect with visual impairments to create unique challenges?

3.5.3 Tips for Facilitators

Facilitating these activities requires sensitivity, preparation, and adaptability to ensure a meaningful and inclusive experience. The following tips will help you create a respectful and impactful learning environment that fosters empathy and understanding while effectively using the resources provided.

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1. Prepare with Real-Life Context

- Share personal anecdotes, quotes, or testimonials from visually impaired individuals to make activities relatable.

  - o Tip: Use guest speakers, recorded testimonials, or videos to enhance authenticity and foster engagement.

- Frame the activities within real-world scenarios to highlight practical applications, such as navigating public spaces or using assistive tools.

2. An Emphasis on Respectful Interaction

- Set clear expectations by explaining that simulations offer only a partial glimpse into the experiences of visually impaired individuals.

- Encourage participants to reflect on assumptions and maintain respect throughout.

  - o Tip: Discuss how adaptive tools and assistive technologies are empowering, not compensatory.

3. Adapt to Audience Needs

- Adjust activity complexity based on participants' familiarity with visual impairments.

- Ensure inclusivity by offering modifications for participants with additional disabilities.

  - o Tip: Provide materials in multiple formats, such as large print, tactile versions, or digital simulations.

Scaling Tips:

- **For Large Groups**:
  - o Divide participants into breakout groups or stations to ensure hands-on engagement.

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- Assign facilitators or assistants to guide smaller groups and manage discussions.
- Encourage observers to contribute insights during group reflections.
- **For Virtual Sessions**:
  - Use digital tools such as the [Versant Health Vision Simulator](#) to replicate simulations remotely, or apps like [Seeing AI](#) to demonstrate how technology can assist individuals with visual impairments.
  - Leverage breakout rooms for pair-based tasks, such as verbal navigation exercises or role-playing.
  - Share interactive content via screen-sharing tools and gather reflections using polls or chat features.
- **For Settings with Limited Resources**:
  - Replace specialized tools (e.g., simulation goggles) with affordable alternatives like blindfolds or tinted cellophane sheets.
  - Simplify activities to fit available spaces (e.g., use chairs or strings for obstacle courses).
  - Focus on discussion-based activities or use printed materials like high-contrast images or Braille alphabets.

4. Leverage Tools and Resources

- Incorporate assistive apps and tactile tools for hands-on experiences:

  - Use apps like [ViaOpta Simulator](#) for simulations.

  - Provide tactile materials like Braille guides, raised-line drawings, or tactile maps.

- Test simulation tools (e.g., [Versant Health Vision Simulator](#)) in advance to ensure smooth integration.

  - Tip: Use glare shields or contrast testing kits during activities to demonstrate real-world accessibility challenges.

5. Facilitate Reflection and Discussion

- Dedicate time after each activity for participants to share insights and connect their experiences to broader accessibility principles.

  - o Sample Questions:

    - ▪ "What surprised you most about this activity?"

    - ▪ "How can this experience inform your perspective on accessibility?"

- Link discussions to practical applications, such as designing inclusive spaces or improving communication strategies.

6. Focus on Accessibility

- Model inclusive practices in your session setup and materials.

  - o Ensure instructions, spaces, and activities are accessible to all participants, including those with additional disabilities.

  - o Use high-contrast visuals, glare-free designs, and multi-format instructions.

7. Build Empathy, Not Pity

- Highlight the strengths and achievements of visually impaired individuals.

  - o Tip: Share stories of individuals thriving with tools like AI-driven apps, guide dogs, or tactile design.

- Frame activities as opportunities to understand and collaborate, not as efforts to "fix" or "compensate."

8. Use Feedback to Improve

- Collect participant feedback after each activity to refine future iterations.

3.6 Examples of the activities

We grouped activities into specific sections to create a cohesive and structured learning experience. By categorizing activities into themes, we aimed to guide participants through an empathetic and integrated exploration of visual impairments.

This structured approach ensures participants connect their learnings meaningfully. For instance, after navigating a maze with a simulated visual impairment (under Navigation), participants can relate those challenges to other everyday tasks, such as cooking or reading, where similar adaptive strategies are required (under Everyday Tasks).

Additionally, activities like Artistic Expression Through Touch and Awareness of Senses Other Than Sight highlight the importance of activating non-visual senses, offering a holistic perspective on how visually impaired individuals experience and interact with the world.

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3.6.1 Navigation

Activity 1: Simulated Low Vision Maze Navigation

Objective
To provide participants with hands-on experience of navigating a space with simulated sight loss conditions, fostering empathy and understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments.

Materials/Resources Needed
- [Goggles simulating specific visual impairments](#) like cataracts, macular degeneration, or retinitis pigmentosa.

- Blindfolds (optional, for scenarios where goggles are unavailable).

Description
- Set up a maze or obstacle course in a safe, open space. Ensure there are no hazards that could pose risks to participants.
- Provide participants with goggles or glasses that simulate various sight loss conditions.
- Guide participants through the maze or obstacle course while wearing the simulation goggles. If goggles are unavailable, facilitators can explain how the simulation is intended to mimic real-world visual impairments and use alternate approaches (like blindfolds for restricted conditions).
- Participants navigate the course, encountering and reflecting on the limitations and adaptive strategies required for successful navigation.

Discussion
- Reflect on the challenges encountered and discuss ways to create more accessible environments. Suggested questions for reflection:
- What specific challenges did you encounter while navigating the maze (physical or virtual)?
- How did this activity change your understanding of daily experiences for individuals with visual impairments?
- What adaptations or strategies could make environments more accessible for individuals with low vision?

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Facilitator Notes

- Brief participants on safety precautions and ensure the space is hazard-free.
- Emphasize that the goal is to simulate certain challenges while recognizing the unique strengths and adaptations visually impaired individuals use in daily life.
- Use this activity to introduce key concepts about accessibility, empathy, and inclusive design.

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Activity 2: Blindfolded Trust Walk

Objective:

To foster trust, effective communication, and understanding by guiding a blindfolded partner through a predefined path while practicing sighted guide techniques. This includes leading and assisting a blind or visually impaired person to navigate safely and get seated.

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Blindfolds
- A predefined path or obstacle course (free of hazards)
- Sighted Guide Technique video tutorial

Description:

Preparation and Consent:

1. Begin by explaining the purpose of the activity, emphasizing:
   - Building trust and effective communication.
   - Developing practical sighted guide skills.
2. Obtain participants' consent to be blindfolded and guided, ensuring they feel comfortable throughout the process. Participation is voluntary, and individuals can opt out at any time.
3. Provide a safe word or signal to allow participants to pause or stop the activity if they feel uncomfortable.

Pairing and Trust-Building:

1. Pair participants, assigning one as the guide and the other as the blindfolded individual.
2. Facilitate a brief discussion between partners to establish trust and comfort, encouraging them to share preferences such as pace, verbal cues, or other needs.

The Trust Walk:

1. The guide leads the blindfolded partner through a predefined path with simple obstacles or tasks, focusing on:
   - Clear and effective verbal communication.

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- o Practical sighted guide techniques, including offering physical guidance when needed (e.g., guiding around obstacles or assisting in getting seated).
2. Encourage guides to practice feedback loops, such as asking their partner if they understand instructions or feel comfortable proceeding.
3. Emphasize guiding principles such as:
  - o Verbally describing the environment.
  - o Not pulling or rushing the blindfolded individual.

Safety Precautions:

1. Ensure the path is free of hazards and well-monitored by facilitators.
2. Remind guides to communicate potential obstacles clearly and prioritize their partner's safety at all times.

Role Reversal:

After completing the walk, partners switch roles to experience both perspectives—guiding and being guided.

Discussion:

Facilitate a group reflection to consolidate learning and insights. Suggested questions:

1. How did it feel to rely completely on someone else for guidance?
2. As a guide, which communication methods worked well, and what could be improved?
3. What insights did you gain about guiding a visually impaired person and the importance of trust and communication?
4. How does this activity relate to real-life scenarios involving individuals with visual impairments?

Facilitator Notes:

- Emphasize that the activity is not intended to replicate visual impairments entirely but to explore the dynamics of reliance and empathy.
- Reinforce the importance of trust-building and clear communication as essential skills when guiding visually impaired individuals.

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- Highlight the practical application of sighted guide techniques in real-life situations, such as helping a blind person navigate unfamiliar environments or get seated safely.
- Monitor the activity closely to ensure safety, comfort, and a positive experience for all participants.

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Activity 3: Audio-Only Navigation Exercise

<u>Objective</u>

To demonstrate the reliance on auditory cues for navigation and the importance of focus and clear communication in guiding individuals with visual impairments.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>

- Blindfolds.
- Pre-recorded or live verbal instructions (e.g., "Turn left, move forward 10 steps, turn right").
- Optional: Noisy background audio to simulate real-world conditions (e.g., street sounds).

<u>Description</u>

1. Preparation:
   - Explain the activity's objective to participants and emphasize the importance of auditory focus.
   - Brief participants on safety measures and provide an overview of the task.
2. Navigation Task:
   - Blindfold participants or use simulation goggles to replicate limited or no visual input.
   - Guide participants through a room or outdoor space using only verbal instructions.
   - Instruct facilitators to provide clear, concise, and sequential directions (e.g., "Take three steps forward," "Turn left 90 degrees," "Move forward until you hear a beep").
3. Tips for Effective Verbal Instructions:
   - Use specific and descriptive language (e.g., "Turn left 90 degrees" instead of "Go left").
   - Break instructions into manageable steps to avoid overwhelming participants.
   - Confirm understanding after each instruction (e.g., "Did you find the wall?").

- - Avoid ambiguous or overly general phrases (e.g., "Keep going" or "Over there").
  4. Optional Complexity:
     - Introduce background noise to simulate navigating a crowded or noisy environment.
     - Add obstacles that require verbal identification, such as "Step over a small bump."

Discussion Questions

- How did relying on auditory cues affect your ability to navigate?
- Were the verbal instructions clear or unclear? Why?
- Based on this experience, how would you improve audio navigation systems or communication in public spaces?
- What strategies did you use to stay focused during the task?

Facilitator Notes

- Provide a brief demonstration of effective verbal guiding techniques before beginning the activity.
- If participants struggle, pause and rephrase instructions to ensure clarity and understanding.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how auditory cues can be critical for accessibility in real-world scenarios, such as crossing streets or navigating transit systems.

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Activity 4: Presentation of Visual Impairments and Mobility Aids

Objective

To increase participants' understanding of visual impairments and how mobility aids and emerging assistive technologies support the independence of visually impaired individuals.

Materials/Resources Needed

- [Simulation glasses or applications](#) .
- Mobility aids such as white canes, tactile maps, or information about guide dogs.
- Everyday objects for participants to interact with (e.g., books, tools, furniture).
- Examples of emerging technologies:
    - GPS-enabled canes (e.g., [WeWalk Smart Cane](#)).
    - AI-based apps (e.g., [Seeing AI](#), [Be My Eyes)](#).
    - Wearable devices (e.g., [OrCam MyEye](#)).

Description

1. Introduction:
    - Provide a brief overview of various types of visual impairments (e.g., macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa) using simulation glasses or apps.
    - Explain how different conditions impact daily life and mobility.
2. Demonstration of Mobility Aids:
    - Show participants various mobility aids, such as white canes and tactile maps, explaining their functions and importance.
    - Discuss guide dogs and their role in providing support and confidence.
3. Hands-On Interaction:
    - Allow participants to use simulation tools or glasses while attempting basic tasks, such as reading a sign, identifying objects, or navigating a short path using a white cane.

- o Highlight challenges and explore how mobility aids address these challenges.
4. Introduction to Emerging Technologies:
    - o Demonstrate or explain innovative assistive technologies, such as GPS-enabled canes and AI-powered navigation tools.
    - o Highlight how these tools enhance mobility and accessibility, providing greater independence in complex environments.

Discussion Questions

- What challenges did you face while completing tasks using simulation tools?
- How do mobility aids (traditional and modern) support the independence of individuals with visual impairments?
- Which of the emerging technologies stood out to you, and why?
- What improvements could be made to mobility aids to further enhance accessibility and usability?

Facilitator Notes

- Encourage participants to think about the diverse needs of visually impaired individuals and how mobility aids are tailored to address those needs.
- Emphasize that assistive technologies should complement, not replace, traditional aids like white canes or guide dogs.
- Reinforce the importance of accessibility in public spaces to maximize the effectiveness of these tools.

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Activity 5: Public Transportation Simulation

Objective

To highlight the challenges visually impaired individuals face when using public transportation and to explore the role of accessible design features, such as tactile markings, in supporting independent navigation.

Materials/Resources Needed

- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.
- Access to a public transit system or a mock-up of a bus/train station.
- White canes (optional).
- Information on accessibility features in public transit, such as tactile ground markings, braille signage, and audio announcements.
- Public transportation smartphone applications.

Description

1. Preparation:
   - Explain the activity's purpose and objectives, emphasizing empathy and awareness.
   - Brief participants on safety measures and the role of tactile and auditory cues in navigation.
2. The Simulation:
   - Blindfold participants and guide them as they attempt to locate the correct platform or bus stop using available information.
   - Encourage participants to rely on tactile features (e.g., raised ground markings, tactile signage) and auditory cues (e.g., announcements or sounds of approaching vehicles).
   - If accessible features are not present, simulate the experience by providing verbal or tactile guidance.
3. Tasks:
   - Locate the appropriate platform or bus stop.
   - Check schedule via smartphone app or web platform.
   - Identify the correct vehicle using provided information (e.g., verbal instructions or tactile signage).
   - Board the vehicle safely and find a seat or standing position.
4. Optional Complexity:

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- Introduce scenarios where participants must ask for assistance or adapt to unexpected changes, such as schedule updates or platform changes.

Discussion Questions
- What challenges did you encounter while navigating the transit system?
- How did tactile or auditory features help you during the simulation?
- What improvements could be made to public transportation systems to enhance accessibility for visually impaired individuals?
- How important is station staff assistance, and what training should they receive to better support visually impaired passengers?

Facilitator Notes
- Highlight the importance of tactile markings, such as raised ground indicators for platform edges, and their critical role in ensuring safety and independence.
- Emphasize the value of clear audio announcements for orientation and wayfinding.
- Provide participants with an overview of best practices for public transportation accessibility, including design standards and user feedback integration.

3.6.2 Everyday tasks (e.g. Reading, Writing, Cooking, Using Assistive Devices)

Activity 1: Simulated Vision Loss Tasks

Objective
To allow participants to understand the practical challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments when performing everyday tasks, and to reflect on the emotional impact of navigating inaccessible environments.

Materials/Resources Needed
- Everyday items such as menus, coins, books, glasses, or objects to pour and sort.
- Goggles simulating specificvisual impairments like cataracts, macular degeneration, or retinitis pigmentosa.
- Blindfolds (optional, for scenarios where goggles are unavailable).
- You can also use the print-ready handouts provided in Appendices 3 to 5.

Description
1. Introduction:
   - Brief participants on the purpose of the activity and explain the visual impairments being simulated (e.g., cataracts reduce clarity, macular degeneration impacts central vision).
   - Ensure participants understand safety precautions and the limits of the simulation in fully representing the lived experience of visually impaired individuals.
2. Task Execution:
   - Participants will wear simulation goggles and attempt various everyday tasks, such as:
     - Reading a menu or book (or completing an exercise from Appendices 3 to 5).
     - Sorting coins by denomination.
     - Pouring liquid into a glass.
     - Locating specific objects in a cluttered area.
   - Optionally, introduce a time limit to simulate the added stress of completing tasks in real-world conditions.

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3. Optional Reflection on Emotional Impact:
    - Encourage participants to consider how inaccessible environments or tools (e.g., unclear signage, lack of tactile markers) amplify the challenges they faced.

Discussion Questions:
- What tasks were most challenging, and why?
- How did it feel to navigate tasks with limited vision, and how did the inaccessibility of the environment affect your experience?
- What adaptations could make these tasks or environments more accessible?

Facilitator Notes
- Encourage participants to focus on problem-solving strategies and adaptive tools rather than solely on the challenges.
- Emphasize that accessibility should prioritize empowering independence rather than emphasizing disability.
- For deeper reflection, ask participants to imagine scenarios where time pressures or unfamiliarity with the environment could compound challenges.

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Activity 2: Braille Demonstration

<u>Objective</u>

To familiarize participants with the Braille alphabet and its role in daily life for visually impaired individuals, while exploring the global significance of Braille literacy.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>

- Braille alphabet chart.
- Braille books or tactile reading materials.
- Braille slates, styluses, or embossing tools (optional).

<u>Description</u>

1. Introduction and Hygiene:
   - Begin by explaining the history and importance of Braille as a tactile reading and writing system for individuals with visual impairments.
   - Emphasize hygiene by asking participants to sanitize their hands before handling tactile materials, ensuring respect for shared resources.

2. Exploration:
   - Introduce participants to the Braille alphabet chart, explaining how the six-dot system forms letters, numbers, and symbols.
   - Provide Braille materials for participants to explore, encouraging them to feel the dots and attempt to identify simple letters or words.

3. Interactive Activity:
   - Challenge participants to decode short words or phrases written in Braille.
   - Optionally, provide participants with tools (e.g., Braille slates and styluses) to try writing their own names or simple words in Braille.

4. Global Perspective:
   - Discuss the global importance of Braille literacy rates and how they impact education, employment, and independence for visually impaired individuals.

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- Highlight how modern technologies, such as Braille displays and tactile e-readers, are helping to preserve Braille's relevance.

Discussion Questions
- How did it feel to rely solely on your sense of touch to interpret text?
- Why is Braille still relevant despite advancements in audio and digital technologies?
- How does Braille literacy empower individuals in education, employment, and daily life?
- What factors influence global Braille literacy rates, and how can we improve access to Braille resources worldwide?

Facilitator Notes
- Ensure participants understand that while Braille is vital, it complements rather than replaces other accessible tools, such as screen readers and audio formats.
- Provide statistics or examples of how Braille literacy rates vary across regions due to socioeconomic factors and availability of resources.
- Encourage participants to think about ways to support Braille literacy in their communities, such as promoting access to Braille materials in public spaces like libraries.

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Activity 3: Reading a Map or Navigating a Labyrinth

Objective:

To demonstrate how contrast and glare impact the ability to read maps or navigate visual paths, emphasizing the need for accessible design in wayfinding tools.

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Versions of a printed or digital labyrinth map or print-ready handouts are provided in appendix 6 and in appendix 7:
  - **Low-contrast version**: Light gray lines on a white background.
  - **High-contrast version**: Black lines on a white background.
- Portable desk lamps or reflective surfaces to simulate glare.
- Optional: Simulation goggles or low-vision filters.

Description:

1. Setup:
   - Provide participants with the low-contrast version of the maze or map under bright lighting conditions to simulate glare.

2. Participant Task:
   - Ask participants to navigate through the maze or locate a destination on the map.
   - Repeat the task using the high-contrast version under glare-free conditions.

3. Optional Complexity:
   - Add small, detailed symbols or text within the maze or map that participants must identify or read during navigation.
   - Introduce a time limit to mimic real-world pressure, such as locating a room in a busy building or finding directions quickly.

Discussion Questions:

- How did glare and low contrast affect your ability to navigate or read details?
- What changes in design (e.g., thicker lines, bold text, matte finishes) made the task easier?

- How can maps, signs, or wayfinding tools be designed to improve accessibility for visually impaired individuals?

Facilitator Notes:
- Discuss how accessible maps and wayfinding tools benefit not just visually impaired individuals but also those in high-stress or low-light environments.
- Introduce principles like tactile maps, larger fonts, and anti-glare coatings as real-world solutions.

Activity 4: Identifying Food Labels Under Glare

Objective:
To understand how glare and insufficient contrast make it challenging to identify packaged items, such as food la bels.

Materials/Resources Needed:

- Packaged items (e.g., canned goods, boxed snacks) with labels in:
  a) Low-contrast designs (e.g., small, light-colored text on a light background).
  b) High-contrast designs (e.g., bold, dark text on a light background).

- Lighting setups to create glare, such as overhead lights or reflective surfaces.
- Optional: Magnifying tools or glare shields for adaptation.

Description:

1. Task Execution:
   - Participants attempt to read and identify items on low-contrast labels under glare-heavy conditions.
   - Provide the same items with high-contrast labels and reduced glare for comparison.

2. Optional Challenge:
   - Include simulated time pressure (e.g., identifying ingredients for a recipe) to highlight the impact of glare on efficiency.

Discussion Questions:

- What made it harder to identify items in the low-contrast setup?
- How did glare impact readability, and what adjustments helped?
- How can label designs or store lighting be improved to aid individuals with visual impairments?

Facilitator Notes:

- Relate this activity to real-world scenarios like grocery shopping or using kitchen items.
- Highlight design principles for accessible packaging, such as bold text, clear fonts, and glare-resistant materials.

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Activity 5: Accessible Kitchen Tasks

Objective

To enhance participants' understanding of the challenges visually impaired individuals face in the kitchen and demonstrate how adaptive kitchen tools foster independence and culinary creativity.

Materials/Resources Needed

- Adaptive kitchen tools such as:
    o Liquid level indicators.
    o Talking kitchen scales.
    o Non-slip cutting boards.

- Common kitchen items (e.g., bowls, measuring cups, ingredients).
- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.

Description

1. Introduction:
    - Explain the role of adaptive kitchen tools in promoting independence and confidence for visually impaired individuals.
    - Provide an overview of the tools participants will use and how they function.

2. Task Execution:
    - Blindfold participants or have them wear simulation goggles to replicate vision loss.
    - Assign simple kitchen tasks, such as:
        o Pouring liquid using a level indicator to avoid spillage.
        o Measuring ingredients on a talking kitchen scale.
        o Chopping or sorting ingredients on a non-slip cutting board.
    - Encourage participants to focus on using touch, sound, and adaptive tools to complete the tasks successfully.

3. Culinary Creativity:
    - Discuss how these tools enable visually impaired individuals to not only perform basic tasks but also engage creatively in cooking and experimenting with new recipes.

Discussion Questions
- How did using adaptive tools enhance your ability to complete the tasks?
- What challenges did you experience, and how did the tools help overcome them?
- How do adaptive kitchen tools contribute to independence and creativity in the kitchen?
- What additional adaptations could improve the cooking experience for visually impaired individuals?

Facilitator Notes
- Highlight that adaptive tools are designed to empower users, not replace their skills or independence.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how accessible design in kitchen tools benefits everyone, not just visually impaired individuals (e.g., universal design principles).
- If time permits, demonstrate additional tools, such as talking timers or tactile labels for spice jars.

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Activity 6: Matching Socks

Objective
To demonstrate how technical aids assist visually impaired individuals with household tasks, highlighting their role in fostering independence and efficiency.

Materials/Resources Needed
- Socks in various colors and patterns.
- A talking color identifier (e.g., Colorino or a similar device).
- Clips or bands for organizing socks once matched.

Description
1. Introduction:
   - Begin by explaining the challenges visually impaired individuals may face in completing tasks like matching socks.
   - Introduce the talking color identifier, describing how it works and its importance in supporting independence.

2. Task Execution:
   - Blindfold participants or use simulation goggles to replicate vision loss.
   - Provide them with a pile of mismatched socks in various colors and patterns.
   - Instruct participants to use the color identifier to find matching pairs of socks.
   - After matching pairs, participants will organize them efficiently using clips or bands.

3. Optional Complexity:
   - Add additional tasks, such as differentiating between patterns or materials (e.g., wool vs. cotton), to demonstrate the versatility of technical aids.

Discussion Questions
- How did the talking color identifier simplify the task of matching socks?
- What other household tasks could benefit from similar adaptive tools?

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- How did this activity change your perspective on the importance of technical aids in promoting household independence for visually impaired individuals?

Facilitator Notes
- Encourage participants to reflect on how seemingly simple tasks can become more complex without vision and how adaptive tools make these tasks manageable.
- Highlight the broader applications of color identifiers, such as organizing clothing, identifying food packaging, or sorting other items.
- Reinforce the idea that technical aids not only assist with tasks but also promote confidence and autonomy.

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Activity 7: Blindfolded Ball Game

<u>Objective</u>

To demonstrate how visually impaired individuals can engage in adapted recreational activities, showcasing the importance of sound cues in sports and games.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>

- A lightweight, sound-producing ball (e.g., a ball with a bell inside, designed for safe indoor use).
- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.
- Optional: Soft mats or padded surfaces for added safety.

<u>Description</u>

1. Introduction:
   - Explain the role of sound in enabling visually impaired individuals to participate in recreational activities and sports.
   - Brief participants on the basic rules of the game and emphasize safety guidelines.

2. Game Setup:
   - Arrange participants in a circle or semicircle while seated on the floor.
   - Provide blindfolds or simulation goggles to simulate visual impairments.

3. Playing the Game:
   - Participants roll the sound-producing ball across the circle, aiming to keep it on the ground.
   - Other participants must use auditory cues to locate and stop the ball before passing it to the next person.
   - Encourage teamwork, communication, and attentiveness during the game.

4. Optional Complexity:
   - Introduce additional challenges, such as multiple balls or specific targets, to increase the game's difficulty.

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- Discuss and demonstrate other adapted sports, such as goalball, which use similar sound-based principles.

Discussion Questions:
- What strategies helped you succeed in locating and passing the ball?
- How did this activity change your perspective on the adaptability of recreational activities for visually impaired individuals?
- What other adaptations could make sports or games more inclusive?
- How can these principles be applied to recreational spaces or activities in your community?

Facilitator Notes
- Ensure the sound-producing ball is lightweight, safe for indoor use, and appropriate for all participants.
- Highlight the broader importance of adapted sports like goalball, which are specifically designed for visually impaired athletes.
- Encourage participants to think about how recreational activities foster inclusion, social connection, and physical fitness for individuals with disabilities.

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3.6.3 Activating other senses

Activity 1: Artistic Expression Through Touch

<u>Objective</u>
To encourage creative expression using tactile perception, helping participants understand how visually impaired individuals interact with and create art.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>
- Various textured materials (e.g., clay, fabric, sandpaper, soft objects, foam).

- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.
- Optional: Pre-made tactile artworks or sculptures for inspiration.

<u>Description</u>
4. Introduction:
   - Explain how tactile perception enables visually impaired individuals to experience and create art.
   - Share examples of renowned visually impaired artists, such as Esref Armagan, a blind painter, or Beverly Frassinetti, known for her tactile art, to inspire participants and provide context for the activity.

5. Creative Task:
   - Blindfold participants or use simulation goggles to replicate vision loss.
   - Provide them with a variety of textured materials and ask them to create a tactile piece of art, such as a sculpture or design.
   - Encourage participants to focus on how different textures and shapes can convey meaning or emotion in the absence of sight.

6. Sharing and Reflection:
   - Once completed, participants will describe their creations to the group, focusing on the textures, shapes, and feelings they intended to convey.
   - Allow them to compare their experiences with the work of visually impaired artists to draw parallels.

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Discussion Questions

- How did it feel to rely solely on your tactile perception for artistic creation?
- How did this experience change your perspective on the role of touch in art?
- What insights did you gain about how visually impaired individuals might approach creativity?
- How can art spaces and exhibits be made more accessible for individuals with visual impairments?

Facilitator Notes

- Encourage participants to embrace imperfections in their tactile creations, as the focus is on the process rather than the outcome.
- Highlight how tactile art can be both a means of personal expression and a way to make art accessible to visually impaired audiences.
- Discuss how incorporating tactile elements into mainstream art spaces can foster inclusivity.

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Activity 2: Awareness of Senses Other Than Sight

Objective

To raise awareness of how individuals with visual impairments rely on non-visual senses, such as touch, sound, taste, and smell, to interact with and navigate the world.

Materials/Resources Needed

- Everyday objects for touch (e.g., keys, spoons, textured items).
- Essential oils or scent-based items (e.g., lavender, mint, citrus) for smell.
- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.
- A sound-producing ball for auditory exercises.
- Tasting items (e.g., candies, fruits, spices) for taste recognition.

Description

1. Introduction:
   - Explain how individuals with visual impairments rely on other senses to compensate for vision loss and navigate their environment.
   - Highlight the importance of these senses in providing critical information and fostering independence.

2. Multi-Sensory Tasks:
   - Touch: Participants reach into a bag containing everyday objects and guess what they are based on tactile perception.
   - Smell: Participants identify scents from essential oils, herbs, or spices while blindfolded.
   - Taste: Participants taste a variety of items (e.g., candies, fruits) and guess the flavors.
   - Sound: Participants play a sound ball game, using auditory cues to locate and pass the ball while keeping it on the ground.

3. Optional Complexity:
   - Introduce background noise during the sound task to simulate real-world conditions.
   - For the taste test, include combinations of flavors to challenge participants' perception further.

Discussion Questions
- Can you recall a time when you relied primarily on senses other than sight?
- How do senses like touch and sound enhance your understanding of the world?
- What challenges did you face during the activities, and how did you adapt?
- Do you think non-visual senses are often taken for granted, and why?

Facilitator Notes
- Encourage participants to take their time with each task and reflect on how non-visual senses provide valuable information.
- Highlight the unique role each sense plays in building a complete understanding of the environment.
- Discuss the importance of designing inclusive environments that consider sensory accessibility for individuals with visual impairments.

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Activity 3: Grouping Different Seeds by Touch

Objective

To demonstrate the importance of tactile discrimination skills by engaging participants in a hands-on activity, highlighting how such skills are essential for tasks like Braille reading and other daily activities for visually impaired individuals.

Materials/Resources Needed
- Different types of seeds (e.g., chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds).
- Small cups or containers for sorting.
- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.

Description
1. Introduction:
   - Explain how tactile discrimination is a vital skill for visually impaired individuals, enabling them to perform tasks such as identifying objects, reading Braille, or organizing items.

2. Task Execution:
   - Blindfold participants or have them wear simulation goggles to replicate vision loss.
   - Provide a mixed bowl of seeds and ask participants to sort them into separate containers based on their texture, size, and shape using their tactile perception.
   - Encourage participants to focus on the subtle differences between the seeds to complete the task.

3. Optional Complexity:
   - Increase the variety of seeds or introduce other small objects with similar textures to make the task more challenging.
   - Add a time limit to simulate the pressure of completing tactile tasks efficiently in real-life scenarios.

Discussion Questions
- How did it feel to rely solely on your tactile discrimination skills to complete this task?

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- What strategies did you use to distinguish between the seeds?
- How do tactile skills support activities like Braille reading and other daily tasks for visually impaired individuals?
- What insights did you gain about the importance of sensitivity in touch for independence and accessibility?

Facilitator Notes
- Emphasize the connection between tactile sensitivity and the ability to read Braille, identify objects, and perform everyday tasks effectively.
- Highlight the importance of fingertip sensitivity and the role of training in developing tactile skills.
- Discuss how activities like this one can help sighted individuals appreciate the nuanced skills required for tactile tasks.

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Activity 4: Recognizing the Material by Sound

Objective

To raise participants' awareness of how visually impaired individuals rely on auditory cues to identify objects and navigate their environment.

Materials/Resources Needed

- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.
- A variety of materials that produce distinct sounds when tapped (e.g., plastic, glass, wood, metal, ceramic).

Description

1. Introduction:
   - Explain how sound serves as an essential tool for visually impaired individuals to identify objects, navigate spaces, and assess their surroundings.
   - Discuss real-life examples, such as identifying the presence of a door or recognizing specific surfaces through sound.

2. Task Execution:
   - Blindfold participants to simulate vision loss.
   - Facilitators will tap or strike different materials one at a time, allowing participants to listen carefully.
   - Participants must identify the material based solely on the sound produced.
   - To increase engagement, facilitate this as a group activity where participants take turns guessing and can discuss their reasoning with the group.

3. Optional Complexity:
   - Introduce background noise to simulate a more realistic, noisy environment and challenge participants' auditory focus.
   - Use similar-sounding materials to increase the difficulty of differentiation.

Discussion Questions

- Can you recall a time when you had to rely only on sound for identification or navigation?

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- How does sound help visually impaired individuals interpret and interact with their environment?
- Was it challenging to distinguish between the materials? What strategies did you use?
- What insights did you gain about the importance of sound in daily life for individuals with visual impairments?

Facilitator Notes
- Highlight the critical role sound plays in navigation, orientation, and decision-making for visually impaired individuals.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how subtle differences in sound can provide valuable information.
- Auditory cues, along with other non-visual senses, are vital for how visually impaired individuals interact with the world.

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Activity 5: Recognizing Smells at a City Market

<u>Objective</u>

To raise awareness of how individuals with visual impairments rely on smell for identification and sometimes also for navigation, and to explore the challenges and potential adaptations in mixed-scent environments.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>

- Blindfolds or simulation [goggles](#).
- Access to a simulated or real market environment.
- A variety of scented items (e.g., fresh produce, herbs, spices, coffee, flowers, cheese).

<u>Description</u>

1. Introduction:
   - Explain the importance of the sense of smell for visually impaired individuals, particularly in identifying items and navigating environments like markets.
   - Discuss the complexities of mixed-scent environments where multiple scents overlap, making it harder to distinguish individual smells.

2. Task Execution:
   - Blindfold participants and guide them through a simulated or real market setup with multiple "stalls" or scent stations.
   - At each stop, participants smell the items provided and attempt to identify the type of product or its category (e.g., fruits, spices, or flowers).
   - Encourage participants to rely solely on their sense of smell to make distinctions.

3. Optional Complexity:
   - Combine multiple scents at certain stations to simulate the challenges of mixed-scent environments.
   - Include uncommon or subtle scents to test participants' ability to discern them in complex environments.

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Discussion Questions

- How did you approach distinguishing individual smells in a mixed-scent environment?
- Why is smell a crucial sense for visually impaired individuals, especially in contexts like markets?
- What challenges did you face when identifying scents, and how might adaptations such as scent markers help?
- How can public spaces or businesses incorporate smell to improve accessibility for visually impaired individuals?

Facilitator Notes

- Highlight how visually impaired individuals use smell not only for identifying items but also for contextual clues in navigating spaces.
- Discuss potential adaptations, such as the use of distinct scent markers to label specific areas, aisles, or items in mixed-scent environments.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how smell is integrated into daily experiences and how its role could be expanded in accessible design.

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3.6.4 Interaction (Guiding, Communicating, and Personal Story Sharing)

Activity 1: Guide Dog Interaction

Objective

To educate participants about the role of guide dogs in supporting mobility and independence for visually impaired individuals, and to promote understanding of proper guide dog etiquette.

Materials/Resources Needed

- A guide dog and its handler (if available).
- Informational videos or resources on guide dogs (e.g., YouTube: "The Role of Guide Dogs"), if a handler is unavailable.
- Printed materials on guide dog etiquette.

Description

1. Introduction to Guide Dogs:
   - Explain the role of guide dogs in enhancing mobility, safety, and independence for visually impaired individuals.
   - Highlight key features of guide dog training, such as obedience, navigation skills, and the ability to respond to environmental cues.

2. Interaction with a Guide Dog and Handler:
   - If a handler is present, introduce them and their guide dog. Encourage participants to ask thoughtful questions, such as:
     - How does the guide dog assist in daily life?
     - What was the training process like for both the guide dog and handler?
     - What are the biggest challenges of using a guide dog?
   - If a handler is unavailable, show an informational video.

3. Guide Dog Etiquette:
   - Discuss the importance of proper etiquette, including:
     - Avoiding petting, feeding, or distracting a guide dog while it is working.
     - Always addressing the handler, not the guide dog, when offering assistance.

o   Respecting the guide dog's training and space.

- Distribute or display a checklist of guide dog etiquette for participants to reference.

Discussion Questions
- What surprised you most about the role and training of guide dogs?
- How does a guide dog differ from other forms of mobility aids, such as white canes or technology?
- How can understanding proper guide dog etiquette help foster inclusivity and support for visually impaired individuals?

Facilitator Notes
- Emphasize the guide dog's role as a working animal and the importance of respecting boundaries.
- Encourage participants to reflect on how guide dogs enhance independence while requiring ongoing commitment and care.
- Provide additional resources for participants who are interested in learning more about guide dog organizations or training programs.

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Activity 2: Everyday Situations Simulation

<u>Objective</u>

To help participants experience the challenges visually impaired individuals face in daily interactions, highlighting the importance of clear communication and appropriate behavior in various real-life scenarios.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>

- Open space for practice.
- [Blindfolds or simulation goggles](#).

<u>Description</u>

1. Introduction:
   - Explain that the activity is designed to simulate common social situations that visually impaired individual's encounter.
   - Emphasize the importance of clear, respectful communication in fostering inclusion and understanding.

2. Simulated Scenarios:
   - Handshaking:
     - A sighted participant attempts to shake hands with a blindfolded participant.
     - The goal is to complete the handshake successfully, with others observing how communication or guidance might improve the interaction.
   - Unannounced Departure:
     - Two participants engage in a casual conversation. The sighted participant quietly walks away mid-conversation without informing the blindfolded participant.
     - Discuss the disorientation or frustration this might cause and the need for verbal communication.
   - Offering Assistance in an Unfamiliar Setting (Additional Scenario):
     - A blindfolded participant is placed in an unfamiliar part of the room or space.
     - Sighted participants are tasked with offering assistance, ensuring they ask for consent, provide clear verbal instructions, and respect the blindfolded participant's preferences.

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3. Optional Complexity:
   - Add environmental noise or simulate a crowded area to mimic real-world conditions.
   - Introduce role-playing scenarios where participants simulate offering help at a store, on public transportation, or during an event.

Discussion Questions
- How did it feel to rely on clear communication from others during these scenarios?
- What strategies worked well, and where could communication or behavior be improved?
- How do these scenarios relate to real-life interactions with visually impaired individuals?
- What steps can you take to improve your communication and support in similar situations?

Facilitator Notes
- Encourage participants to reflect on their assumptions and adjust their behavior based on feedback from the simulations.
- Highlight the importance of consent and collaboration when offering assistance to visually impaired individuals.
- Reinforce that good communication involves being clear, direct, and patient.

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Activity 3: Describe the Picture

<u>Objective</u>

To practice identifying and verbalizing essential visual details, fostering an understanding of how to effectively communicate visual information to visually impaired individuals.

<u>Materials/Resources Needed</u>

- A variety of images, including:

  - o Landscapes (e.g., a forest, mountain, or beach).
  - o Portraits (e.g., individuals or groups).
  - o Abstract art (e.g., patterns or non-representational visuals).

- Blindfolds or simulation goggles.

<u>Description</u>

1. Introduction:
   - Explain that the activity focuses on developing the skill of describing visual elements in a way that is meaningful and accessible for visually impaired individuals.
   - Highlight the importance of selecting essential details to convey, avoiding overloading with unnecessary information.

2. Descriptive Task:
   - Pair participants, with one as the describer and the other as the listener (blindfolded or using simulation goggles).
   - Provide the describer with an image and ask them to describe it in detail while the listener visualizes it based on the description.
   - Encourage the describer to focus on key aspects, such as colors, shapes, emotions conveyed, and the overall scene or context.

3. Role Reversal and Feedback:
   - Switch roles so each participant has the opportunity to both describe and listen.
   - After removing the blindfold, the listener views the image and provides feedback on the accuracy and clarity of the description.

4. Diverse Image Selection (Optional Complexity):

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- Use a mix of image types (landscapes, portraits, abstract art) to challenge participants' descriptive skills and adaptability.
- For abstract art, encourage creativity in interpreting and verbalizing patterns and emotions.

Discussion Questions
- How did you decide which details were most important to include in your description?
- As a listener, how well were you able to visualize the image based on the description?
- Did the type of image (e.g., landscape vs. abstract art) affect your approach to describing or listening?
- How can effective descriptions enhance inclusivity for visually impaired individuals in art galleries, museums, or daily life?

Facilitator Notes
- Encourage participants to use descriptive language that is vivid yet clear and concise.
- Discuss how different contexts may require varying levels of detail (e.g., an art gallery versus giving directions).
- Highlight real-world applications of this skill, such as audio descriptions in media, museum tours, or workplace presentations.

Activity 4: Creating a Visual Story

Objective

To practice creating a cohesive narrative from a series of visual cues, encouraging participants to identify key elements and translate them into a descriptive story. This activity differs from "Describe the Picture" by focusing on constructing a broader narrative across multiple connected images rather than describing a single visual element.

Materials/Resources Needed
- A sequence of related images that collectively tell a story (e.g., a day at the park, preparing a meal, or a journey through a city).
- [Blindfolds or simulation goggles](#).
- Optional: Audio recording devices for participants to narrate their stories.

Description
1. Introduction:
   - Explain that the activity involves creating a verbal story from a series of related images, focusing on how they connect to form a cohesive narrative.
   - Highlight the importance of identifying key events and maintaining a logical flow in storytelling.

2. Task Execution:
   - Pair participants, with one as the storyteller and the other as the listener (blindfolded or using simulation goggles).
   - Provide the storyteller with a sequence of images that depict a clear progression or theme. For example:
     - A child building a sandcastle, the castle being washed away by the tide, and the child starting a new castle.
     - A series of steps in cooking a meal.
   - The storyteller narrates the sequence as a coherent story, describing the events, emotions, and context in a way that allows the listener to visualize the progression.

3. Role Reversal:

- Switch roles so both participants experience storytelling and listening.

4. Optional Complexity:
   - Use abstract or less linear sequences of images to challenge participants to create imaginative narratives.
   - Introduce time limits to encourage concise yet engaging storytelling.

Discussion Questions
- How did you decide which details to include and which to leave out when constructing the story?
- As a listener, how clear and engaging was the story? What could have improved it?
- How does this activity help you think about the needs of visually impaired individuals when sharing visual information?
- How can storytelling techniques like these be applied to make experiences such as presentations, events, or media more accessible?

Facilitator Notes
- Encourage participants to focus on the flow and coherence of their stories rather than overwhelming the listener with unnecessary details.
- Highlight the importance of using expressive language to convey emotions and context in addition to describing physical elements.
- Discuss the broader applications of this skill in creating accessible content, such as audio descriptions for films, narrated presentations, or inclusive museum tours.

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4 Evaluation Tools, Reflection and Feedback

Evaluating the effectiveness of an educational program is essential for understanding its impact and improving future sessions. This chapter outlines simple yet effective tools for assessing participants' learning, emotional engagement, and skill development, as well as facilitators' performance.

4.1 Evaluation Tools

1. **Pre- and Post-Surveys**

   o Use short surveys before and after the training to measure changes in participants' knowledge and confidence.

   o Example Questions:

      ▪ How comfortable are you guiding someone who is blind or has low vision?

      ▪ How familiar are you with assistive devices like guide dogs or white canes?

   o Participants rate their responses on a 5-point scale, with space for open-ended feedback. Comparing results helps track progress and identify areas for improvement.

   o [Example of pre and post survey.](#)

2. **Direct Observation**

   o Facilitators observe participants during activities to gauge:

      ▪ Engagement (e.g., active participation).

      ▪ Task completion (e.g., successfully navigating or guiding).

   o Observations highlight areas where participants may need extra guidance or support.

Tip: Use a simple checklist to streamline observations and ensure consistency.

3. **Participant Reflections**

   o After each activity, ask participants to reflect on their experiences.

      ▪ Example Prompts:

         ▪ What did you learn during the activity?

         ▪ How did it make you feel?

         ▪ Was it easier or harder than expected?

   o Group discussions or short written responses provide valuable qualitative feedback.

4. **Facilitator Self-Assessment**

   o Facilitators evaluate their own performance to ensure continuous improvement. Key questions include:

      ▪ Were instructions clear and easy to follow?

      ▪ Did I respond effectively to participants' needs?

      ▪ Did I create an inclusive and supportive environment?

4.2 Reflection and Feedback Themes

Sample reflections can help guide future improvements:

- **What did you learn?**
  "I learned how important clear communication is when guiding someone with visual impairments."

- **How did it make you feel?**
  "The trust walk made me feel vulnerable but also more empathetic toward those who rely on others for navigation."

- **Was it easier or harder than expected?**
  "It was harder than I thought, but with practice, I felt more confident."

4.3 Applying Evaluation Results

Use the collected data to identify:

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- **Successes**: Increased confidence in guiding and understanding visual impairments.

- **Challenges**: A need for more hands-on practice or clearer instructions.

- **Improvements**: Adjust activities to allocate more time for practical skills or introduce additional resources.

These insights will help refine future sessions and ensure continuous growth for both participants and facilitators.

4.4 Key Takeaway

Keep evaluation simple and actionable. Use quick surveys, observations, and reflections to gather meaningful insights without overloading participants or facilitators. Let the feedback shape your program's development over time.

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5 Conclusions

Understanding sight loss goes beyond its medical and practical implications. It involves fostering empathy, promoting inclusion, and creating environments where individuals with visual impairments can thrive. This **Fascilitator's Toolkit: Raising Awareness About Visual Impairment** equips facilitators with the resources and activities needed to spark meaningful conversations, build awareness, and inspire positive change in communities, workplaces, and educational settings.

Through immersive exercises, practical insights, and discussions, this toolkit helps participants experience the world through the perspective of someone with a visual impairment. By doing so, it promotes understanding, breaks down barriers, and inspires action. As facilitators, your role is essential in shaping attitudes, encouraging reflection, and empowering others to champion inclusion in their own spaces.

The exercises in this toolkit, will enable you to encourage participants to share their insights, challenge their assumptions, and take tangible steps to improve accessibility in their communities

You can gauge the toolkit's effectiveness by gathering feedback, noting shifts in participant perspectives, and observing increased empathy and engagement. Reflecting on these outcomes allows you to refine your approach, ensuring the toolkit fosters lasting and meaningful change.

By using this toolkit, you are contributing to a movement where equality, respect, and accessibility are not just aspirations but realities. Together, we can create a world where everyone, regardless of visual ability, can participate fully and confidently. Thank you for being a catalyst for change and for championing the values of inclusion and awareness.

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6 Resources and Support Materials

The following resources are designed to support your facilitation efforts, providing participants with hands-on experiences and opportunities to explore key aspects of visual impairments.

1. Vision Loss Simulation.

   - Vision simulation glasses provide a convenient way to simulate various types of vision loss, such as reduced visual acuity and restricted visual fields. They are lightweight, easy to transport, and relatively affordable, making them a practical tool for raising awareness about visual impairments: SimuSpecs, Cambridge simulation glasses.
   - Smartphone apps like Tengo Baja Vision provide an interactive way to simulate different types of vision loss, such as blurriness or tunnel vision. These apps can be used on their own or paired with Virtual Reality 3D glasses for smartphones to create a more immersive and realistic experience.
   - The Vision Simulator is an online webpage that allows users to explore and visualize different types of vision loss, such as low vision, tunnel vision, and central vision loss, providing an interactive and educational experience.

2. Digital Tools and Applications
   Interactive apps and tools that demonstrate assistive technology in action:
   - Seeing AI (Microsoft): An AI-driven app that uses the device camera to narrate the environment, recognize and read text. Download Seeing AI for iOS, download Seeing AI for Android.

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- Be My Eyes: A volunteer-driven and AI-driven app connecting blind individuals with sighted helpers for assistance in real-time [Learn More about Be My Eyes](#).
- OrCam MyEye: A wearable device providing real-time text-to-speech and object recognition. [Learn more about OrCam MyEye](#).

3. Educational Resources and Further Reading
   - [The Sighted Guide Technique video tutorial](#)
   - [European Blind Union resources](#).
   - Perkins School for the Blind –. [Low Vision Apps: Comprehensive FAQs about vision simulation tools](#).
   - Teaching Students with Visual Impairments: A resource offering simulation activities and educator guidance. [Explore Activities](#)
   - IAPB Vision Atlas: Data and resources for understanding global vision loss. [Visit the IAPB Vision Atlas](#).

6.1 Integration Notes for Activities

Each resource can be aligned with specific activities in the toolkit:

- Simulated Low Vision Maze Navigation: Use goggles, Versant Health Vision Simulator, and physical obstacle setups.
- Braille Demonstration: Supplement with printed Braille alphabets and tactile materials.
- Public Transportation Simulation: Enhance with real-world audio samples or apps like Seeing AI.
- Recognizing Smells in a Market: Introduce pre-scented kits or localized sensory items.

6.2 Acknowledgment of Contributors

- **Appendix 1:** The EBU Toolkit Key Terminology was prepared by **Lisa Hughes**, Senior Campaigns Officer at **RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind and Partially Sighted People)**.

- **Appendices 2 and 8:** The Example of Evaluation Form and Exampe of high/low contrast labyrint was prepared by **Vilmantas Balčikonis**,

Vice President of the **[Lithuanian Association of the Blind and Visually Handicapped](#)** **(Lietuvos aklųjų ir silpnaregių sąjunga)**.

- **Appendices 3-7:** The exercises included in these appendices were developed by **Susanne Trefzer**, an optometrist and low vision rehabilitation expert trainer from **[SZBLIND](#)** (Schweizerischer Zentralverein für das Blindenwesen).

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: EBU Toolkit Key Terminology

7.1.1 Core Terms Related to Sight Loss

Blindness – The term "blindness" encompasses a wide range of visual impairments, from total blindness (no light perception) to low vision (some remaining vision). Some blind individuals may have residual peripheral (side) vision, allowing them to detect movement or objects in their side vision or residual central vision (tunnel vision).

Partial Sight/Partial Vision – A level of visual impairment where vision is significantly reduced but not entirely absent.

Visual Impairment – An umbrella term for any significant loss of vision, including blindness and partial sight.

Low Vision – A condition where visual function is reduced, causing difficulties with day-to-day activities, and conventional corrective methods (glasses, surgery) do not fully restore sight.

Peripheral Vision – The ability to detect objects and movement outside the central field of vision, often diminished in conditions like glaucoma.

Central Vision – The ability to see directly ahead, essential for activities like reading and driving, often affected by macular degeneration.

7.1.2 Common Causes of Sight Loss

Glaucoma – A group of eye diseases causing optic nerve damage, often resulting in progressive vision loss.

Cataracts – A clouding of the eye's lens, leading to blurred vision and eventual blindness if untreated.

Macular Degeneration – A condition that damages the retina, causing loss of central vision, often age-related.

Diabetic Retinopathy – A diabetes complication causing damage to the retina's blood vessels, leading to vision impairment.

Retinitis Pigmentosa – An inherited disorder causing the gradual deterioration of peripheral vision and night vision.

Congenital - Relating to a condition or trait that is present from birth.

Refractive Errors - Conditions like myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness), and astigmatism, which can usually be corrected with glasses or contact lenses.

7.1.3 Assistive Tools and Accessibility

White Cane – A mobility tool that helps visually impaired individuals detect obstacles and navigate independently.

Guide Dog – A trained service animal assisting visually impaired individuals with mobility and safety.

Screen Reader – Software converting digital text and images into speech for blind users.

Magnification – Software that enlarges text and images.

Braille – A tactile writing system using raised dots, enabling blind individuals to read through touch.

Accessible Design – Designing environments, tools, and content to be usable by everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

7.1.4 Inclusive Practises and Awareness Concepts

Reasonable Accommodation – Modifications to workplaces, schools, or public spaces to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Inclusive Communication – Ensuring information is accessible to visually impaired individuals, such as using large fonts, braille, or audio descriptions.

7.1.5 Support Terms

Accessibility - Ensures that people with disabilities can fully participate in daily life, with accommodations spanning physical spaces (e.g., tactile paving) to digital solutions (e.g., screen reader compatibility).

Advocacy – Efforts to promote rights, remove barriers, and raise awareness for individuals with disabilities.

Assistive Technology – Devices or software that enhance functionality for people with disabilities, such as magnification tools or text-to-speech programs.

Inclusion - Focuses on societal attitudes and systems, promoting full integration and participation of individuals with sight loss across all aspects of life.

Mobility training - Equips visually impaired individuals with the skills to navigate independently, encompassing techniques like white cane use, guide dog coordination, and travel training in unfamiliar environments.

Simulation Exercises – Role-playing or activities that simulate the experience of sight loss to build understanding and empathy.

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7.2 Appendix 2:Example of Evaluation Form

7.2.1 Evaluation form

Fill this form before and after the event. Note final score change.

1. **On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your understanding of the daily challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments?** 1 = Very low, 5 = Very High

1	2	3	4	5

2. **How confident do you feel in your ability to interact effectively and respectfully with someone who has a visual impairment?** 1 = Not Confident at ALL, 5 = Very Confident

1	2	3	4	5

3. **How likely are you to advocate for accessibility improvements within your organization or community?** 1 = Not Likely 5 = Very Likely

1	2	3	4	5

4. **List two ways you can contribute to creating a more inclusive environment for people with visual impairments in your community or workplace.**

1.		5 points
2.		5 points

Add numbers from the answers and write them here _____

7.2.2 Impact and Behaviour Change Questions

1. The session changed my perception of the capabilities of individuals with sight loss.

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2. I feel empowered to take action to make my environment more inclusive for people with sight loss.
3. The session has encouraged me to use inclusive communication methods.
4. I am now more likely to challenge stereotypes or biases related to sight loss.
5. The session provided me with tools or strategies to create a more accessible workplace or service environment.
6. I feel better equipped to advocate for the rights and needs of people with sight loss.
7. The session inspired me to seek out further information or training about accessibility and inclusion.
8. I am likely to apply what I learned in this session in my personal or professional interactions.

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7.3 Appendix 3: Connecting Numbers (Exercise 1)

An activity titled 'Connecting Numbers' designed to simulate low vision. The task involves connecting numbered points on a page while wearing simulation goggles to create a specific shape

Connect numbers with simulation googles.

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7.4 Appendix 4: Connecting Numbers (Exercise 2)

A low vision simulation exercise titled 'Connecting Numbers.' The task involves connecting dots in numerical order to reveal what the vulture is waiting for. Participants wear simulation goggles while completing this task.

What is the vulture waiting for? Connect the dots and find out (with simulation goggles).

7.5 Appendix 5: Differentiation of Shapes (Exercise 3)

An activity titled 'Differentiation of Shapes.' Participants are tasked with identifying which picture is different from the others while wearing simulation goggles to simulate low vision.

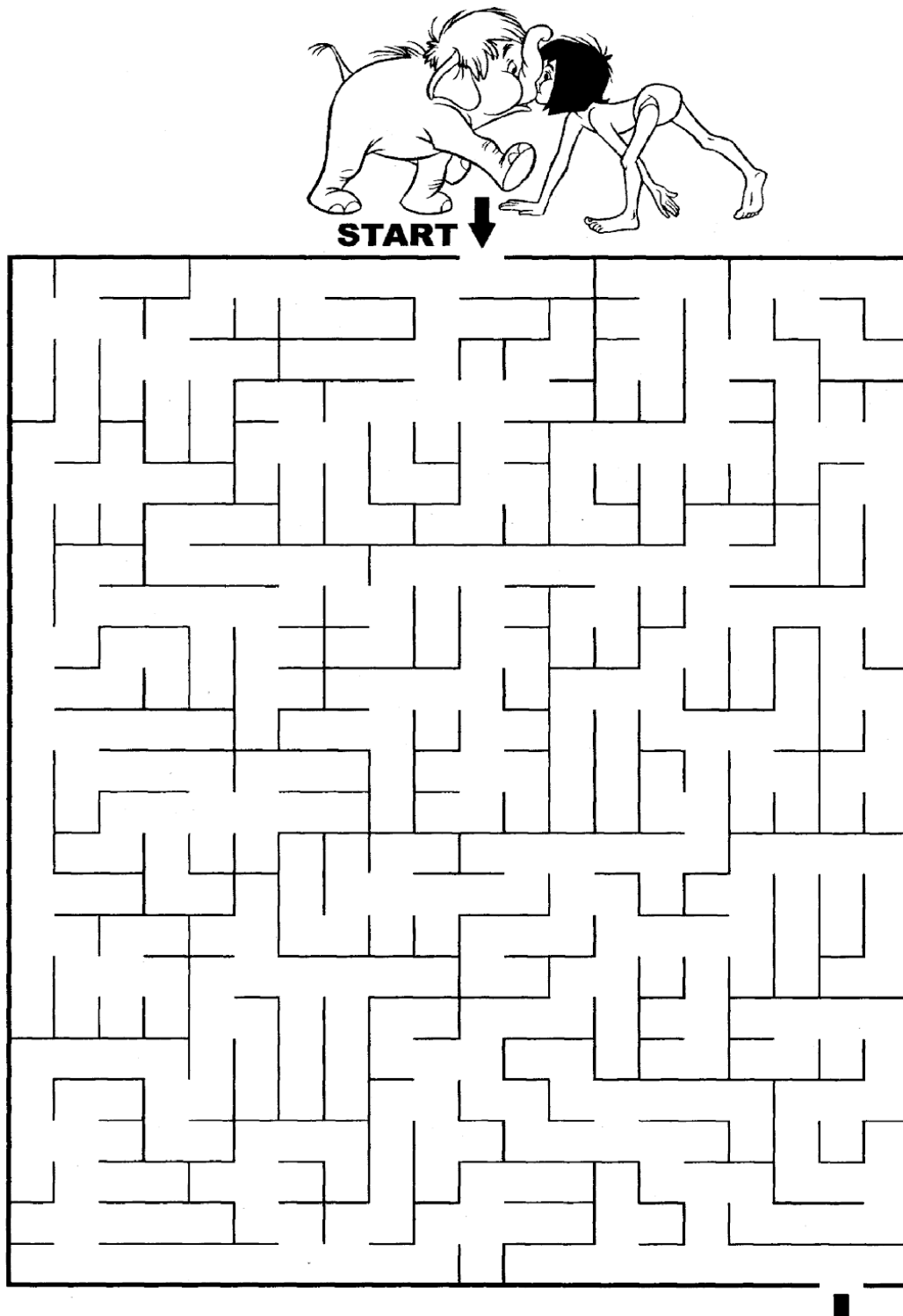Which picture is different from the others?

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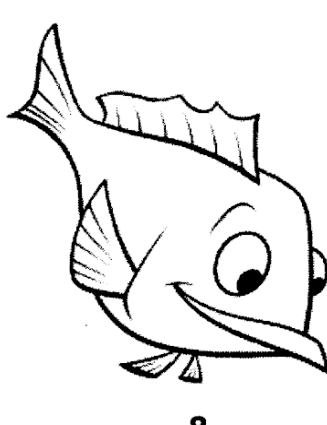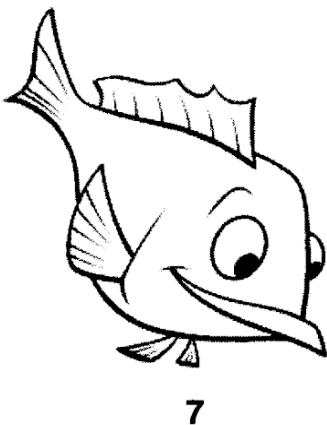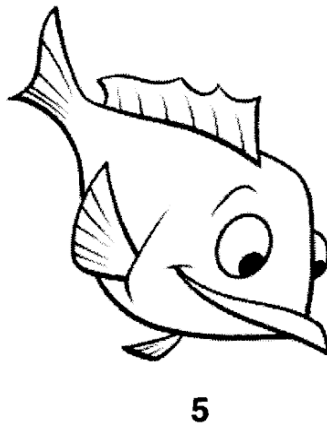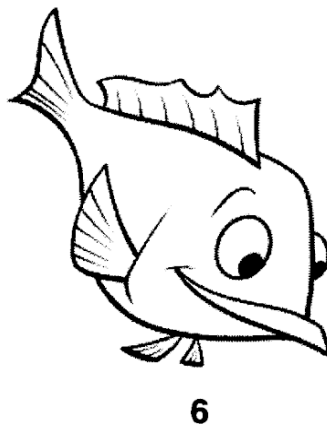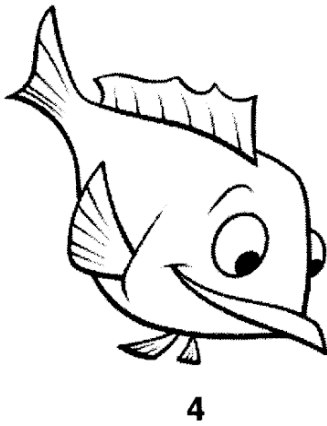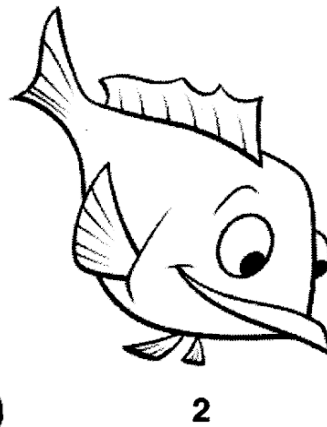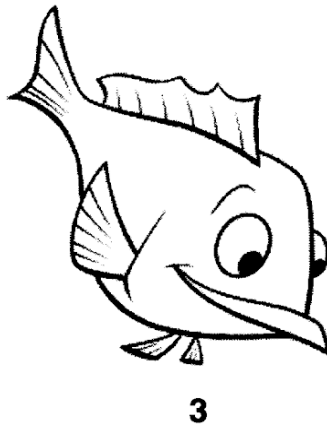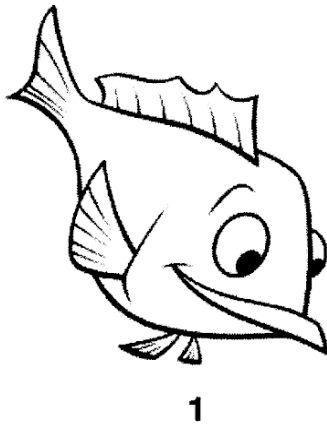
7.6 Appendix 6: Labyrinth (Exercise 4)

A low vision simulation exercise titled 'Labyrinth.' Participants are tasked with navigating through a maze to determine the correct path while wearing simulation goggles.

Which path leads through the labyrinth?

START ↓

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7.7 Appendix 7: Effect of the Contrast (Exercise 5)

Exercise assessing the significance and effect of contrast in visual tasks.

The activity involves identifying differences between two pictures while wearing simulation goggles. Participants are encouraged to reflect on how contrast and reduced visual acuity impact their ability to complete the task.
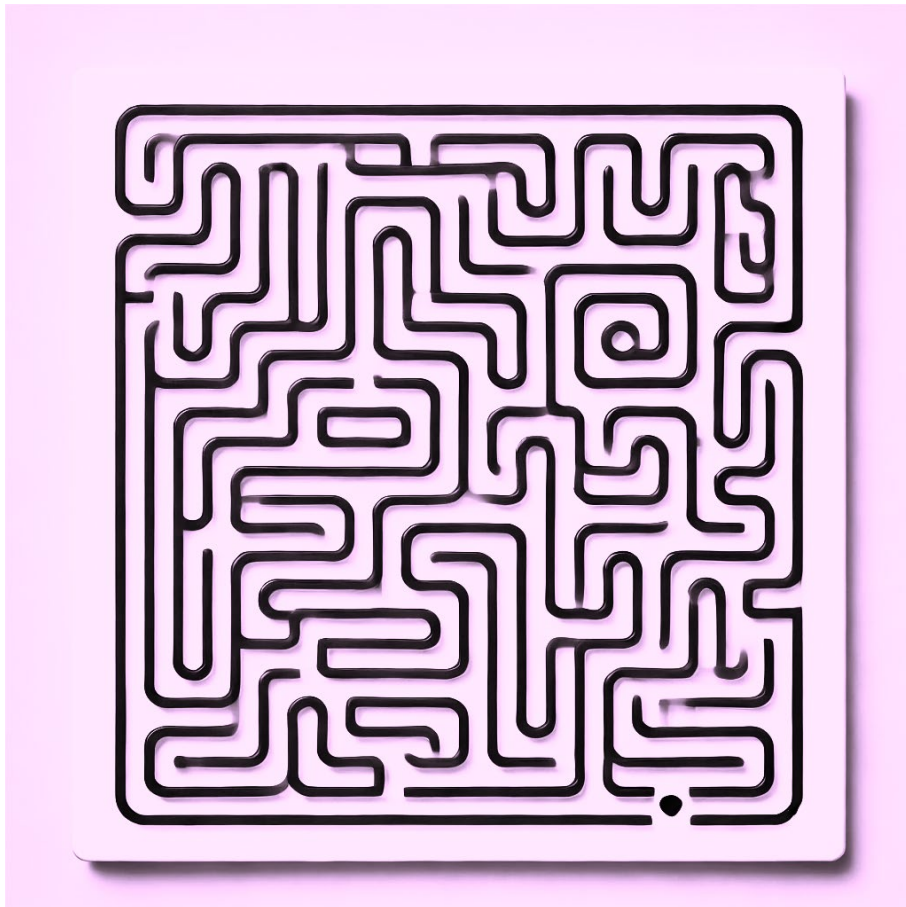
Picture 1

Picture 2
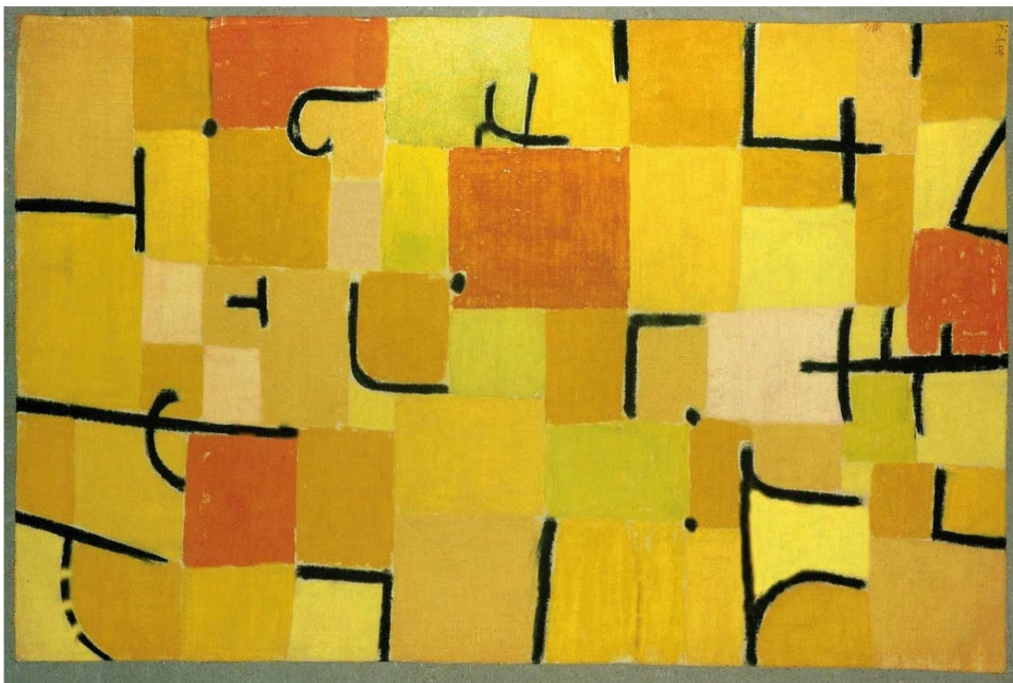
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7.8 Appendix 3: Example of Low Contrast Labyrinth and High Contrast Labyrinth

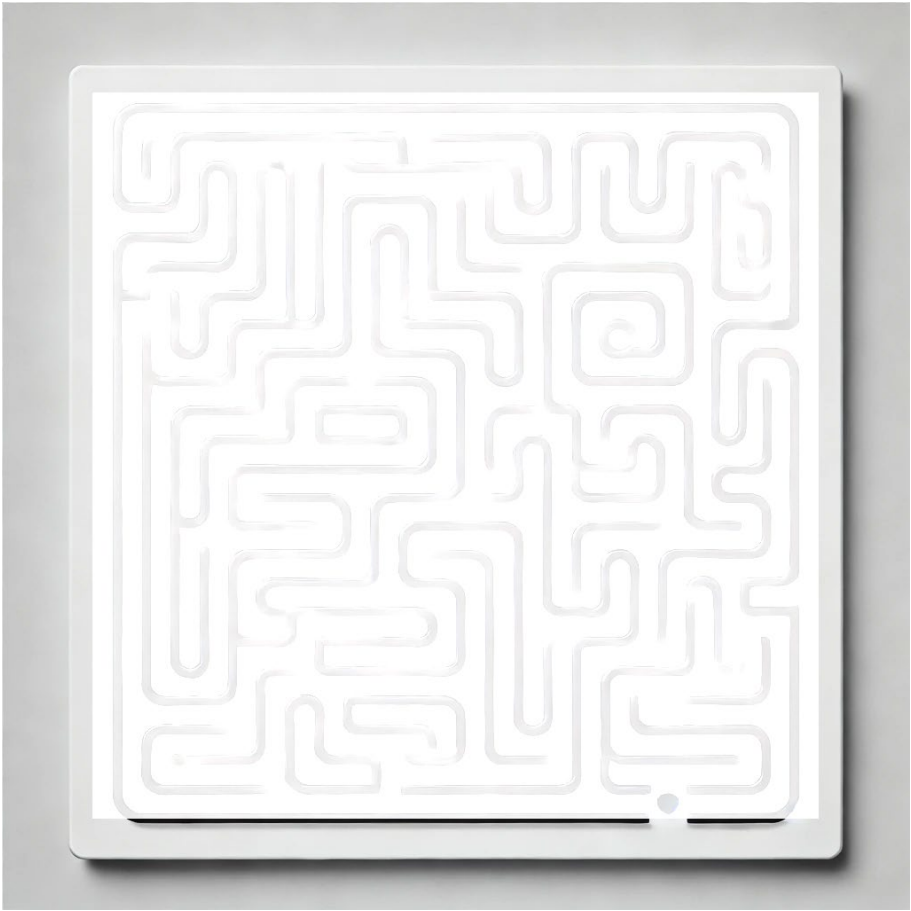Which path leads through the labyrinth?

High contrast

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Low contrast