

Tactifying Language Integrations LLC

# Tactifying Co\_Navigation Handbook

Philosophy of Empowerment and Access, Practice, Tactics for working  
alongside DeafBlind.

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## I. Introduction to Co Navigation

Co Navigation is a DeafBlind centered approach in which a DeafBlind person and a CoNavigator travel, communicate, participate, and interact together. The model emphasizes access, autonomy, touch based communication, environmental awareness, and shared experiences rather than dependency or assistance (Hall, n.d.; Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

The Co Navigation model emerged from DeafBlind leadership and Protactile philosophy. It recognizes DeafBlind people as active participants and experts in their own lives rather than passive recipients of services (Hall, n.d.; Touch Seeds, n.d.).

The purpose of Co Navigation is to increase access to information, participation, community involvement, and decision making while maintaining DeafBlind autonomy (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025).

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## II. Core Philosophy

### 2.1 Autonomy

The DeafBlind person directs activities, makes decisions, determines priorities, and chooses how information is used. The CoNavigator provides access rather than direction (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025).

### 2.2 Co\_Presence

Co\_Presence means remaining actively engaged in the same physical and social environment. Information is exchanged continuously so both individuals experience events together (Hall, n.d.).

### 2.3 Shared Access

Access to information should occur as events happen. The goal is equal participation in social, educational, professional, recreational, and community environments (Golden State DeafBlind Service Center, n.d.).

## 2.4 DeafBlind Leadership

The DeafBlind person is recognized as the authority regarding their communication preferences, experiences, goals, and decisions. DeafBlind leadership is central to Co Navigation philosophy (Hall, n.d.; Touch Seeds, n.d.).

## 2.5 Touch Based Communication

Touch provides access to environmental, social, and visual information and serves as a primary means of communication within many DeafBlind interactions (University of Florida, 2007).

## 2.6 Equal Participation

Both individuals contribute to communication and environmental exploration. Participation occurs together rather than through a helper recipient relationship (Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

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## III. The Role of the CoNavigator

As Guest (page 2, 2022):

The CoNavigator:

1. Shares environmental information.
2. Provides visual access.
3. Maintains communication access.
4. Participates in Co\_Presence.
5. Supports environmental exploration.
6. Respects DeafBlind decision making.
7. Adapts communication methods.
8. Shares social information.
9. Supports informed choices.

10. Encourages participation in community life (Golden State DeafBlind Service Center, n.d.; Hall, n.d.).

The CoNavigator does not control activities, make personal decisions, or assume authority over the DeafBlind person's choices (Usher Syndrome Coalition, n.d.).

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#### IV. Co\_Presence and Shared Experience

Co\_Presence is one of the defining characteristics of Co Navigation. Rather than simply transporting someone from one location to another, the CoNavigator remains connected to what is happening around the DeafBlind person and shares information throughout the experience (Hall, n.d.).

Examples include:

1. Sharing audience reactions during presentations.
2. Reporting who enters and exits a room.
3. Describing activity occurring nearby.
4. Explaining social interactions.
5. Sharing environmental changes as they occur (University of Florida, 2007).

The goal is full participation in the environment rather than limited access to isolated information (Hall, n.d.).

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#### V. Communication Practices

A CoNavigator should be familiar with:

1. Tactile ASL.
2. Protactile communication.
3. Tracking.
4. Print on palm.
5. Tactile fingerspelling.
6. Close visual signing.

7. Adapted communication methods preferred by the DeafBlind person (University of Florida, 2007).

Communication should be:

1. Continuous.
2. Accurate.
3. Objective.
4. Respectful.
5. Accessible.
6. Responsive to feedback (DEAF, Inc., n.d.).

Communication access should continue during movement, social interactions, and environmental exploration rather than being limited to formal conversations (Hall, n.d.).

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## VI. Navigation Tactics

Navigation is collaborative rather than directive.

Co Navigation tactics include:

1. Discussing route options.
2. Exploring environments together.
3. Identifying landmarks.
4. Sharing information about obstacles.
5. Maintaining tactile communication during movement.
6. Supporting orientation.
7. Providing information about terrain changes.
8. Sharing environmental observations (Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

The DeafBlind person remains actively involved in decisions regarding movement and direction throughout the navigation process (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025).

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## VII. Environmental Information Sharing

Environmental information allows DeafBlind individuals to participate fully in surroundings and social interactions.

Information may include:

1. Room layouts.
2. Furniture placement.
3. Exit locations.
4. Identity of people present.
5. Facial expressions.
6. Body language.
7. Visual events.
8. Printed information.
9. Public announcements.
10. Environmental changes (University of Florida, 2007; Gallaudet University, 2023).

Information should be objective.

Instead of:

“The teacher looks angry.”

Provide:

“The teacher has crossed arms, is speaking loudly, and is pacing across the room.”

Objective information allows the DeafBlind person to draw independent conclusions (University of Florida, 2007).

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## VIII. Decision Making Practices

The CoNavigator provides information, options, and observations.

The DeafBlind person:

1. Makes choices.
2. Determines priorities.
3. Selects destinations.
4. Chooses activities.
5. Directs interactions.
6. Controls personal decisions (Usher Syndrome Coalition, n.d.).

The CoNavigator's responsibility is to increase access to information, not to determine outcomes (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025).

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## IX. Working with DeafBlind Leadership

Co Navigation recognizes DeafBlind people as leaders, trainers, educators, advocates, and experts in their own experiences (Hall, n.d.).

The CoNavigator should:

1. Respect DeafBlind expertise.
  2. Follow DeafBlind communication preferences.
  3. Accept feedback.
  4. Learn from DeafBlind experiences.
  5. Support DeafBlind leadership opportunities.
  6. Recognize DeafBlind culture as distinct from hearing and Deaf cultural experiences (Touch Seeds, n.d.; Hall, n.d.).
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## X. Differences Between CoNavigators and SSPs

Although both roles may provide access, the philosophy and practices often differ.

Example 1: Grocery Store

SSP

The SSP guides the DeafBlind person to products and reports requested information.

#### CoNavigator

The CoNavigator shares information about displays, crowd activity, product options, store layout, and environmental changes while the DeafBlind person directs the shopping experience (Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

#### Example 2: Community Event

##### SSP

The SSP may focus on transportation and basic information sharing.

##### CoNavigator

The CoNavigator continuously shares audience reactions, performances, social interactions, environmental changes, and opportunities for participation (Hall, n.d.).

#### Example 3: Medical Appointment

##### SSP

The SSP assists with logistics and communication access.

##### CoNavigator

The CoNavigator shares room activity, visual demonstrations, staff movement, environmental changes, and supports continuous participation throughout the appointment (University of Florida, 2007).

#### Example 4: College Classroom

##### SSP

The SSP reports information from lectures and classroom activities.

##### CoNavigator

The CoNavigator provides access to visual demonstrations, student reactions, classroom movement, group interactions, and social participation opportunities (Gallaudet University, 2023).

### Example 5: Walking Through a City

#### SSP

The SSP focuses primarily on travel safety and reaching destinations.

#### CoNavigator

The CoNavigator shares architecture, landmarks, crowd activity, weather changes, environmental observations, and opportunities for exploration while traveling (Golden State DeafBlind Service Center, n.d.).

#### General Comparison

Traditional SSP models often focus on transportation, task completion, and information access. Co Navigation emphasizes Co\_Presence, DeafBlind leadership, participation, exploration, environmental engagement, and partnership (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025; Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

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## XI. Do's and Don'ts

### Do

1. Respect autonomy.
2. Share objective information.
3. Maintain communication access.
4. Follow DeafBlind leadership.
5. Support informed decision making.
6. Share environmental details.
7. Participate alongside the DeafBlind person.
8. Encourage participation.
9. Remain adaptable.

10. Maintain professional boundaries (Hall, n.d.; DEAF, Inc., n.d.).

Don't

1. Make decisions for the DeafBlind person.
2. Assume preferences.
3. Speak over the DeafBlind person.
4. Withhold information.
5. Rush interactions.
6. Control movement without consent.
7. Act as a caretaker.
8. Override communication preferences.
9. Treat access as charity.
10. View the DeafBlind person as dependent (Usher Syndrome Coalition, n.d.; Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

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## XII. Professional Disciplines of a CoNavigator

### 12.1 Autonomy Discipline

The CoNavigator respects the DeafBlind person's right to make decisions and direct activities (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025).

### 12.2 Co\_Presence Discipline

The CoNavigator remains physically, socially, and communicatively engaged throughout shared experiences (Hall, n.d.).

### 12.3 Touch Based Communication Discipline

The CoNavigator develops competence in tactile communication systems and adapts communication methods to individual preferences (University of Florida, 2007).

### 12.4 Environmental Information Discipline

The CoNavigator provides objective environmental, social, and visual information that supports informed decision making (Gallaudet University, 2023).

### 12.5 Team Navigation Discipline

The CoNavigator and DeafBlind person navigate environments together as partners rather than through a leader follower model (Golden State DeafBlind Service Center, n.d.).

### 12.6 DeafBlind Leadership Discipline

The CoNavigator values DeafBlind expertise and remains open to learning from DeafBlind leaders and community members (Hall, n.d.; Touch Seeds, n.d.).

### 12.7 Confidentiality Discipline

Information learned through assignments is treated confidentially and handled professionally (DEAF, Inc., n.d.).

### 12.8 Adaptability Discipline

Communication and navigation methods are adjusted according to individual needs, preferences, and environmental circumstances (Canadian Deafblind Association National, n.d.).

### 12.9 Do With, Not For Discipline

The CoNavigator works alongside the DeafBlind person rather than performing tasks on their behalf whenever possible (Minnesota Department of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Services, 2025).

### 12.10 Continuous Learning Discipline

The CoNavigator pursues ongoing education in DeafBlind culture, Protactile communication, tactile language practices, and Co Navigation methods (Protactile Language Interpreting Institute, n.d.; Western Oregon University, 2025).

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## XIII. Practice Scenarios

### 13.1 Restaurant

The CoNavigator shares seating options, identifies who is present, describes food presentation, reports activity within the restaurant, and supports communication access throughout the meal (University of Florida, 2007).

### 13.2 Community Meeting

The CoNavigator identifies speakers, reports audience reactions, describes visual presentations, and supports participation in discussion (Hall, n.d.).

### 13.3 College Classroom

The CoNavigator shares information regarding demonstrations, classroom movement, student interactions, visual materials, and group activities (Gallaudet University, 2023).

### 13.4 Medical Appointment

The CoNavigator reports room activity, identifies providers entering and exiting, shares visual demonstrations, and supports communication access during the appointment (University of Florida, 2007).

### 13.5 Public Festival

The CoNavigator shares crowd activity, performances, environmental changes, social opportunities, and information regarding the layout of the event while supporting exploration and participation (Florida CoNavigators, n.d.).

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