

BabyGym[®] Visual Exercises for Adults

Charlotte Gouws

On 28 September 2014 28 year old Jean Bougard was in a terrible motor vehicle accident. His injuries were profound with very little hope of his vision recovering at all. A MRI scan showed significant damage to the Occipital lobe in the brain. The doctors said "Jean will have No vision again". October 2014, the first eye test was performed at "The Eye Institute" and showed no sign of any vision. He could not even see a finger at short distance from his eyes and therefore also "failed" the eye test.

27 November 2014, I met with Jean to discuss BabyGym and how it could help him. His family was very excited, but he had his doubts. His eye contact was zero which was understandable due to him having no vision. He was also very despondent and very moody. We started with BabyGym massages, mostly outlining his body as his right arm was still in a cast. I decided not to exclude the injured arm when the outline and hand massage was done. His grandmother, Pam, made sure she massaged Jean between 4 - 6 times a day! This was tiring for her, but she was determined to help him.

04 December 2014: Only 1 week later, Jean visited me again, this time with much improvement! His mood was lighter and more relaxed. His sense of direction also improved. Sight was slightly better but still blurred. Due to the upcoming holidays I did week 2 as per the BabyGym brain injury protocol:

- I asked him to sit on a gym ball, and while supporting him by his shoulders I guided him left to right, forward and backwards. These were very small movements to make his body aware of the different directions and balance
- On the trampoline, on his back, I bounced his entire body, top to bottom, left and right with small bouncing movements
- Still on his back, on the floor, I rocked him backwards and forwards
- We incorporated BabyGym exercises from Week 3 focusing on the mouth: emulating the "coo eee" and "hee ooh" sounds, tongue stretches, palm stretches, blew soap bubbles, and I suggested he drinks from a sports bottle that has a spout.

All of these movements were extremely uncomfortable for him, Jean wasn't happy about performing exercises that were suitable for babies, but he and his family were determined to reach improvement and therefore repeated these exercises daily.

30 January 2015: 9 weeks after starting with BabyGym, Jean showed remarkable improvement all round. His balance had improved so much that he no longer needed any assistance when walking. He could now do the gym ball exercises on his own. He could now also see the food on his plate and pour juice by himself. He could also read one liner text messages on his cell phone. We then continued to do week 4 of BabyGym:

- We started with the BabyGym weekly pep up to get all the senses awake
- Ball exercises: sit on gym ball rock left ↔ right, forward ↔ back, bounce up & down
- While sitting on the gym ball, Jean had to throw a smaller ball into a bucket and then bean bags into a larger container and then into a smaller one
- I asked Jean to sort disks according to their colours: Jean needed to take out the blue and green disks

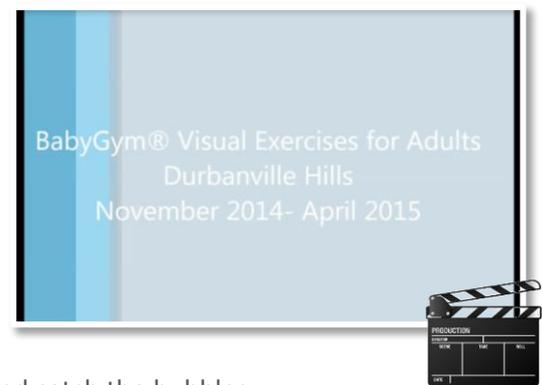
- Arrange pegs: Jean had to take coloured pegs and re-peg them on another container in the correct colour sequence.

06 February 2015: Jean was a little despondent due to his arm operation not taking place. He preferred to keep his glasses on during these sessions which helped with the glare of the lights. Our focus was again Week 4 of BabyGym, the Eyes:

- We started with the BabyGym weekly pep up to get all the senses awake
- Ball exercises: Sit on gym ball rock left ↔ right, forward ↔ back, bounce up & down
- Hit hanging ball: While standing in front of a hanging ball, Jean had to softly hit the ball and follow the ball with his eyes from left ↔ right
- Kick ball into goal: Jean then dribbled a soccer ball into a goal (box)
- Peg & Play: Jean needed to match the colours at first and then the shapes
- Sort balls according to size into a muffin pan: Jean needed to take the different size and textured balls and place each one in the muffin pan.

18 February 2015: Jean was very excited as he was due to have his second eye test the following day. Although he still had some double vision and difficulty seeing below his chin, he was very positive. Our focus was Week 3 of BabyGym, the Nose and Mouth:

- We started with the BabyGym weekly pep up to get all the senses awake
- We did mouth exercises, stretching the mouth open: left ↔ right; up and down, tongue stretch and curl
- Straw exercises:
 - Blow ping pong ball into a box
 - Blow a feather into a box
 - Suck-up polystyrene pieces and drop into a bowl
- Blow-up balloons
- Blow soap bubbles and follow with eyes. Then follow with entire body and catch the bubbles.



26 February 2015: Jean is over the moon with excitement, he passed the driver's license eye test! He was just not able to see the last 2 lines of the test. His peripheral view is much better and the double vision has improved slightly. Our focus was Week 4 of BabyGym, the Eyes.

- We started with the BabyGym weekly pep up to get all the senses awake
- Coloured Peg & Play: Jean needed to match the coloured shapes to the matching one on the board
- Cotton bud into cylinder: He needed to place each cotton bud into the hole of the cylinders lid.
- Nuts and bolts: Jean fastened nuts and bolts for fine motor skill development
- Attach x 2 semi circles: He needed to attach 2 x semi circles with cello tape to form a circle
- Attach x2 squares: He needed to attach 2 x semi squares with cello tape to form a square
- Attach x4 smaller squares: He needed to attach 4 x semi squares with cello tape to form a square

8 April 2015: Jean has been out of Cape Town, visiting his Mom in George. Jean phones me with great excitement, his double vision has disappeared completely! While he was away, he was doing all the above exercises and it goes to show **perseverance pays off!** From no vision to being able to see again, Jean and his family have worked extremely hard!