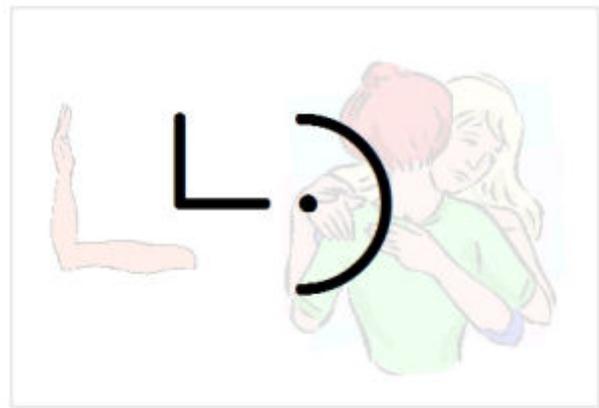
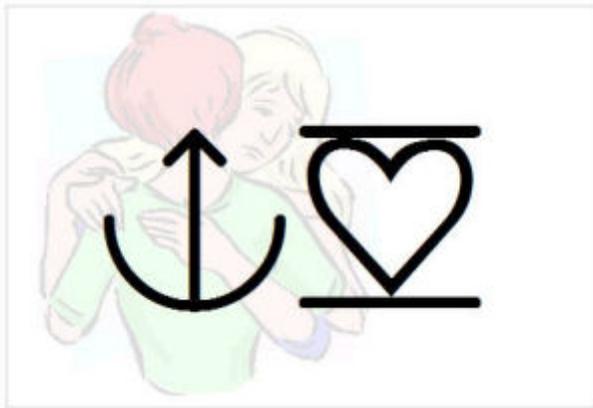


Why not communicate with Pictures alone?

The units of language (words or glyphs) need to be abstracted to some degree from the natural objects they represent to free them to interact in novel ways in the minds of thinking persons. If the units of language were just natural pictures, they would likely only be effective for representing what is, but not what could be.

Also, pictures usually include so much information that they cannot represent specific objects, parts of objects or ideas. Ironically, too much information can mean no specific information. Of course sometimes pictures convey too little information or the wrong information. And all this gets more confusing when images are interpreted differently depending on a person's culture.

A well integrated system of visual glyphs like blissymbolics can provide the small amount of abstraction needed for creative thought without becoming completely unrelated to the natural world as "natural" languages are. And the glyph system can pinpoint precise meanings unambiguously. Of course the system of glyphs must be learned and remembered, which is where the natural looking images come in.



One of my reasons for producing these images, aside from the hope they will be useful right now for learning and teaching visual language, is to provide some materials for use in human factors testing. That's a fancy term for interviewing people, asking what they believe each image means, then recording and studying the results.

Then after compiling the data, we could discover which images convey the desired meaning most reliably, and specifically how some images fail to do so. What do people think they mean instead? How do the same groups do a second time through the images? What about cultural differences? Do they ask interesting questions about the glyphs accompanying the natural images? Do they spontaneously begin to identify glyph elements and even begin to understand how the glyph elements interact with each other to express more complex meanings?

How do you interpret the images at the top of this page? The answer is on the next page. I'm guessing someone with zero experience with blissymbolics will not quite decipher the meanings correctly, but will at least come up with answers which are in the ballpark.

An interesting study would involve showing these images for the first time to people who have already been interviewed using images for other ideas in this system visual language, to see if experience leads them to use the glyphs to extract the correct meaning. The natural image augmentation can elicit the correct response reliably when communicating concrete objects, but generalized, derived or abstract meanings are more difficult.

For the more difficult concepts, natural images provide clues, but cannot always elicit the right answer the first time. But they can serve as an excellent and reliable memory aid after initially learning a visual language glyph.

Most people perceive bliss and other visual language forms to be very cryptic, not remembering that as a child their native written language was far more cryptic. They no longer realize they have mastered a difficult code and that they are decrypting whenever they read.

Answer to the question on the previous page:

The image on the left means "to comfort".
(bowl + up arrow + ground + feeling + sky)
(to give peace)

The image on the right means "hug".
(arm + around)