

People who experience disability for the first time undergo stress; cope with life transitions, value changes, and experience disability issues across their life spans. From a sociological perspective, people who experience disability for the first time also have to deal with the role of family, cross-cultural issues and adjustments, the consequences of negative demeanor's towards people with disabilities as a whole, and the roles of professionals who work to assist them with adjusting. Their system of life and living has changed in many different ways, meaning they must endure a process of adjustment and self-evaluation.

The experience of an injury that leads to a psychological or physical disability is similar to enduring a mourning process and might be equated to the loss of a loved one; for example. The mourning process can involve adjustment to the disability the person experiences and may be divided into a series of four stages or tasks - shock, denial, anger/depression, and adjustment/acceptance. The stages are expected, yet are not orderly or neat. People with new forms of disabilities go through these stages at their own paces and might skip whole stages entirely. A difficulty exists when the person has trouble with resolving one of the stages or becomes, 'stuck.' When this happens, further progress towards adjustment and acceptance is hindered.

New Disability Experience and Psychological Intervention

Psychological intervention can help a person with a new form of disability to progress through the stages of disability and assist them with resolving any difficulties they may experience along the way. The result can be an increase in the person's self-esteem and confidence. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is something that may be used to help with assumptions the person might have concerning their appearance or bodily function.

Cognitive approaches through this form of therapy provide a modality for focusing on core issues in the process of adjustment, helping to reduce the person's tendency to magnify risks related to new activities, as well as helping to change any belief systems the person may have that impede adjustment. The amount of time a person with a new form of disability might spend pursuing CBT depends upon the type of disability they experience and the coping ability of the person.

Stages of Adjusting to a New Form of Disability

The stages of adjusting to a new form of disability include four basic ones. These stages include shock, denial, anger/depression, and adjustment/acceptance. People progress through these stages at their own pace.

- **Shock:**

Shock involves a state of both emotional and physical numbness that can last from a few hours to several days.

- **Denial:**

Denial may last anywhere from three weeks to two months and is a defense mechanism that allows the implications of the new disability the person has experienced to be gradually introduced. Denial only becomes an issue when it interferes with the person's life, forms of treatment, or rehabilitation efforts.

- **Anger/Depression:**

Anger and depression are reactions to loss and the person's change in social treatment and status. The person may experience a number of different emotions during this stage and grieve for the changes in their body image, function, loss of future expectations, or former satisfaction based upon any function that has been lost.

- **Adjustment/Acceptance:**

The stage of adjustment and acceptance does not necessarily mean the person is happy about the disability they now experience, although it does allow for the relinquishment of any false hopes, as well as the successful adaptation of new roles based upon realistic potentials and limitations. The person might benefit from interactions with others who experience forms of disabilities, and becomes comfortable with who they are.

Emotional aspects associated with a new form of disability are many times a major factor in determining the person's outcome and the benefits related to rehabilitative efforts. Effective psychological intervention is beneficial where ensuring recovery from an injury that has caused a form of disability is concerned. Many people experience more than four stages of adjustment to a physical disability; in fact - people

might experience as many as twelve stages that include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shock• Anxiety• Bargaining• Denial | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mourning• Depression• Withdrawal• Internalized anger | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Externalized aggression• Acknowledgment• Acceptance• Adjustment |
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People with Disabilities - You are Still Yourself

In every single way that matters, disability does not change a person. Instead, disability threatens concepts a person has held about who they are. People bring to their disability whatever mix of beliefs, attitudes, talents, charisma, fears, or social skills they have or have the capacity to develop. Who a person is impacts their ability to adjust to disability.

One of the common questions people with disabilities are asked is, 'What can I do to help' Perhaps the first thing someone can do is to understand that a person with a disability is the same person they were before experiencing their form of disability. It is important not to treat them differently simply because they have a form of disability. Do not expect them to be any weaker or stronger, and do not be surprised if they have found new qualities within themselves that have not surfaced before.

The experience of a form of disability forces the issue of, 'finding one's self.' Some people take pride in the things they learn about themselves through the experience of a form of disability. They appreciate the way disability helps to define their values.

A number of psychological adjustments have little to do with the disability a person experiences; they are issues everyone does. As an example, a person might be frustrated because they are having a hard time finding someone to love and believe it is their form of disability that is the cause of the loneliness they feel. The issue; however, is a part of many people's lives, whether they experience a form of disability or not. It is important for people with disabilities to avoid making disability a scapegoat for issues that might very well have appeared in their lives anyway.

For the majority of people with disabilities, disability does not define who they are; it is something they deal with when it becomes necessary to do so. One person with a disability noted that the entire human race is essentially disabled because we are unable to live together in peace, something that has always been so, and will continue to be so in the future. The question then becomes, 'What is normal'

The Experience of a New Disability

The majority of people who are able-bodied imagine the experience of a form of disability to be much more negative, and hard than it actually is. A person may have no concept of how someone functions with a wheelchair; for example, and it might seem to them that life for a person who uses a wheelchair is completely dependent and extremely difficult. The facts; however, are quite different.

When a person suddenly experiences a form of disability due to an injury or a diagnosis of a form of degenerative disease, they bring their prior notions of disabilities to it. It is not surprising that a number of people find themselves experiencing anger, depression, fear, anxiety, and a deep sense of loss during the early stages of their disability experience. Despite how well-adjusted, emotionally strong, or mature a person may be, the experience of a new form of disability is an event that shakes many of a person's basic beliefs about their life. A new form of disability also asks a person to draw upon their coping skills; ones they may have never needed before.

A person's experience with a new form of disability may be marked by fatigue, negative emotions, a sense of powerlessness, or confusion. It is important to remember that there is also the chance to experience confidence and hope as they witness new abilities to cope with what is often a challenging situation. The majority of people who experience a new form of disability adjust in ways they never believed possible. With positive social support from family members, friends, and society at large the vast majority of people who experience a new form of disability do adjust.