

# **Vocational Strategies for Persons Who Are Blind & Visually Impaired**

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# 20 Losses of Blindness

## & the Major Barriers to Employment

# Introduction



**Father Thomas Carroll worked with blinded veterans to help them reintegrate into civilian society, developed a new mobility program, & opened the first facility for the newly blinded in the U.S.**

# Loss of Physical Integrity



**'I saw myself as a 2<sup>nd</sup> class sighted person. If I worked really hard & did & said all the right things, I would some day be accepted as 'one of them'.'**

**Paul Shroeder**

# Loss of Confidence in Remaining Senses



**“By using their visual cortex, the blind are better than the sighted at recognizing notes, octaves and the origin of sounds.”**

**Dr. Franco Lepore, University of Montreal (2010)**

## Loss of Reality Contact w/t Environment



**Daniel Kish sees through a process called echolocation; he uses his ears to see, in a process he says is identical to the one bats use.**

# Loss of Visual Background



**‘Newly blinded persons are in a visual vacuum, without a palette of color and movement around them.’**

# Loss of Light Security



**‘Those who are experiencing a progressive loss of vision often fear the final loss of sight as complete darkness.’**



# Loss of Mobility



**‘Newly blinded persons may be afraid to move around their homes on their own. They are without a sense of freedom, security, and control in their environment and feel very dependent on others.’**

# Loss of Techniques of Daily Living



**‘The good news is that if a blind person concentrates on learning the skills of blindness...s/he will in all likelihood become a competent functioning blind person. No, you won't be able to see, but the alternative skills you have learned will reduce that fact to a minor issue in your life.’**

**Mike Bullis, Ph.D.**

## Loss of Ease of Written Communication



**'With the onset of blindness, individuals lose their ease of access to reading and writing. They are no longer able to deal with making lists, keeping track of appointments, taking notes, or maintaining confidentiality in correspondence.'**

# Loss of Ease of Spoken Communication



**‘Gestures and facial expressions are important aspects of spoken communication and are lost with the onset of blindness. It becomes harder to interrupt in a conversation, to know who’s there, or to know when someone may have walked away.’**

# Loss of Informational Progress



**‘Fewer forms of information are readily and naturally available. Individuals may find their world becoming smaller.’**

# Loss: Visual Perception of 'Pleasurable'



**'Loss of vision means losing the ability to access objects you found visually pleasing. This also includes looking in the mirror or seeing how a new outfit looks. Does the food "look good" to eat? Singles bars just aren't the same! You can no longer see the faces of your family.'**

## Loss: Visual Perception of the 'Beautiful'



**'This is a significant loss for those who once enjoyed the visual arts—museums, art galleries or a scenic walk in nature. It can be frustrating to try to imagine while someone else tries to describe something beautiful.'**

# Loss of Recreation



**'The urge to do something for personal pleasure doesn't disappear with the onset of blindness. Adjustments might need to be made but there are very few things one can't continue to enjoy with the right applications of creativity & will.'**



# Loss of Career



**‘The reality is that personal identity is very much tied to work. There is a large void of time, intellectual stimulation, social contact and sense of accomplishment when work is taken away.’**

# Loss of Financial Security



**'If a blind person has to quit work or leave for re-training, this may result in a loss of financial security. Expenses may also increase as a result of medical issues and those associated with living with a disability. Taxi costs may increase, bargain-hunting is much more difficult, and dry-cleaning bills may increase.'**

# Loss of Personal Independence



**'It is not the physical impairment itself but the impact of the vision loss on the person's sense of self and life-plan that creates adjustment problems.'**

**Hayems, Geller, Finkelstein, and Faden (2005)**

# Loss of Social Adequacy



**'I believe our work, in whatever role we find ourselves, is to support & encourage people with disabilities toward achieving their goals & realizing their hopes & dreams. I believe it takes all of us working together to change systems, communities & minds, creating a world of choice & opportunities, where people with disabilities are not feared, pitied, or segregated.'**

**Jeanne Miller**

# Loss of Obscurity



**'People who experience blindness lose their privacy. They are noticed & may become public figures merely because of their blindness. They may not want this attention but don't always have a choice.'**

# Loss of Self-Esteem



**'...whatever happens I know one thing. I may become a different me, but I will still be me.'**

**Dr. Dean Tuttle**

# Loss of Total Personality Organization



**‘Think of a valley between two steep ridges & a deep wide river down the middle. You are on one ridge, called Today, & the other is called The Rest of Your Life. Some of us get flung off of the ridge directly into the river & have to climb out & up to the other side. Others find a gentle winding path to the valley floor & calmly wade into the river. No matter what, we all get wet, & it is still up hill to the other ridge.’**

**Jeff Raefeld**

**‘Adjusting is a lifelong process--you never arrive at a point where you say “I have adjusted,”--because you are always facing new demands, new situations...We need to allow the children and adults we work with to make their own choices and live with the consequences of those choices.’**

**Dr. Dean Tuttle**



# Strategies to overcoming barriers

- $C4 = C1 + C2 + C3 = C4$ 
  - Competence
  - Confidence
  - Collaboration
  - Careers

# Professions in Blindness that aid in successful vocational outcomes

- Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists (COMS)
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRT)
- Employment Assistance Specialists (EAS)
- Low Vision Specialists (LVS)
- Deaf-Blind Specialist
- Diabetes Educators
- Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI)

# Assistive Technology

- High Tech Devices
  - Screen Reader Software (JAWS), (NVDA)
  - Screen Magnification Software (ZoomText), (MAGic)
  - Electronic Magnification Devices (CCTV's)
    - Portable
    - Handheld
  - OCR Devices & Scanners – converts printed materials to speech
  - GPS Navigation Devices
  - Smart Phones - iPhones & iPads – Apps
  - Bar Code Readers

# Assistive Technology

- Low Tech Devices
  - Braille, braille writers, braille watches
  - Slate & Stylus
  - Readers - Bookshare, Learning Ally,
  - Talking Devices – microwaves, watches, calculators, etc.
  - Kitchen Aids – liquid level indicators, timers, kitchen safety devices, etc.

# Low Vision Optical Devices

- High powered prescription glasses
- Prisms
- Head mounted Bioptics
- Monoculars
- Solar Shields
- Lighting
- Hand Held Magnifiers
- Stand Magnifiers

# Signification Resources

- American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)
  - Career Connect
  - VisionAware
- Hadley School for the Blind
- Consumer Organizations
  - National Federation of the Blind (NFB)
  - American Council of the Blind (ACB)
  - National Association of Parents of Visually Impaired Children (NAPVI)
- Lighthouses for the Blind

# Signification Resources

- State Agencies for the Blind
  - Rehabilitation Centers for the Blind
  - Business Enterprises
- Library of Congress Talking Book Program
- Association for Education & Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)
- Assistive Technology Evaluation Centers
- Technology Vendors