

Key Concepts related to the psychological aspects of disability:

As if behavior: an attempt to "...hide, forget, or even deny what is viewed as a deficiency." (B. Wright, p. 117, 2nd edit.) Sometimes a person may accept their disability but act as if it did not exist for fear of others' reactions to the disability. May be related to idolizing the norm. The person may hope that if they ignore the problem it will go away. (e.g., person who has had heart by-pass surgery may refuse to adhere to a low cholesterol diet and exercise program -acting as-if there is no problem with the circulatory system.) This may be on the part of another person -for example parents wanting to act as-if their child does not have a disability.

Centrality: A perceptual phenomenon. The tendency to allow one thing to be central to our perception of a situation. (May be visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, or gustatory.)

Compensation -Adaptive: the use of technology, techniques, or behaviors to achieve normalization. Finding another way to do what others do or what one did previously. May be part of the normalization process. (Wright, p.147)

Compensation -Redemptive: Based upon the assumption that one is inadequate or inferior because he or she has a disability. The person believes he or she must excel in one or more areas to "compensate" for having a disability. Often associated with idolizing the norm. "...Because I am not normal in one area of my life, I must excel in another area to compensate for my inadequacy." Generally viewed as an unhealthy attitude. (Wright, p. 148)

Containing the effects of disability: "...the disability does not affect all situations." (Wright, p.33) e.g. I may not be able to walk but that does not mean I must be immobile. Or, my disability may effect my vision but it does not have to impact my emotional well-being.

Contrasts: "I felt sorry for myself that I had no shoes until I met the man who had no feet." May be related to comparative valuing, asset valuing, and enlarging the scope of values.

Enlarging the scope of values: "...i.e., the disability is not the only thing that matters" (Wright,p. 33). Finding new things to value -or placing greater value on things previously minimized or overlooked.

Expectation discrepancy: ..the difference between what is expected of a person and what that person is actually capable of achieving.

Idolizing the norm: "...the normal standards of behavior are rigidly defined and held forth as the single criterion for desirable or even allowable. Those who fall below those standards are devaluated." (Wright, p. 122, 2nd edit.) "...Arbitrarily holding up 'normal' performance as the model of behavior unnecessarily commits many persons with a disability to repeated feelings of failure and inferiority." (Wright, p. 123, 2nd edit.)

Labeling: naming or describing an individual by a dominant characteristic. May be related to expectation discrepancy, centrality, reductionism, spread. May facilitate communication but may

also limit one's perception of the individual being labeled. May encourage stereotyping and prejudice.

Normalization: a term coined by a Swedish proponent Nirje (1969). "This principle affirms that the conditions of every day life for people with disabilities. ..should approximate the norms and patterns of mainstream of society as closely as possible." (Wright, p. 122, 2nd edit.) Related to mainstreaming of today (laws IDEA and ADA). Not being forced to be different.

Physique as prime motivator: Explaining one's actions as a direct product of his/her disability. e.g. a student who uses a wheelchair earns a 4.0 grade point average. One might say the student worked extra hard on grades because he needed to compensate for being in that chair -he knew it would be harder to get a job and therefore tried to excel. Or we might say the only reason Wilma Rudolph became an Olympic athlete was in response to her functional limitations resulting from her polio. Similarly we might attribute a person's depression to the fact that he/she has a disability -when in reality the person is depressed because a family member and pet died in the same week. A person who has a disability might believe that the behavior of non-disabled people interacting with him is motivated by his physique (disability status) e.g., I didn't get the job because I have a disability (when in reality he may not have been offered the job because he has a lousy personality).

Reductionism: Reducing all personality characteristics, behaviors, beliefs, etc. to one aspect of one's personality or physical being. i.e., he is depressed because he has a disability, he is an overachiever because he has a disability, he did not marry because he has a disability, etc. (This may also be a part of prejudice.)

Secondary gain: Gaining something as a result of having a disability. e.g., more attention, preferential parking, free tickets to events (circus, ball games, etc.), cash benefits, early retirement, etc. (not necessarily bad). (Sometimes associated with succumbing to the disability.)

Spread -negative: allowing the perception of one characteristic to dominate the perception of the person, situation, or object. Ascribing negative characteristics to a person, situation or object simply upon the presence of a specific trait. This may be an element of prejudice. (e.g., with disability one might think that because a person is visually impaired he or she is also hearing impaired, immature, depressed, etc.) (In a racial sense, one might see a skin color and then proceed to attribute other characteristics to that person simply on the basis of skin color.) This may also explain why some parents of people with disabilities tend to be overprotective.

Spread -positive: (may be related to expectation discrepancy). Ascribing positive characteristics to a person, situation, or object. For example seeing that a person is blind, an observer may attribute to that person an exceptionally keen sense of hearing, exceptional powers of memory, or other "super powers." (A racially based example might be the tendency to believe that all oriental people have a superior ability in mathematics or computer operations.)

Subordinating the physique: "...i.e., other values are more important than physique." (Wright, p.33) (May be related to enlarging the scope of values.)

Succumbing: The opposite of coping. Giving in to the disabilities' limitations. This may be reinforced by certain social programs or societal attitudes. (e. g., SSDI, Veterans' benefits, insurance benefits, etc.) Dictionary definition. [Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary] "to lie down I: to yield to superior strength or force or overpowering appeal or desire 2: to cease to exist: die."

Value transformation: ("I don't care whether it's a boy or a girl just as long as it has ten toes and ten fingers. What if it doesn't come as ordered?") May be related to asset valuing, enlarging the scope of values.

Valuing- asset: an evaluation arising from the qualities inherent in the object, person, or situation. (a concept developed by Dembo.) (Wright, p.129) Appreciating what one has while not dwelling on what the person does not have.

Valuing -comparative: comparing an event, a person, or other factor to a set standard . May be associated with idolizing the norm. (The problem is that there will always be somebody "better.") Related to contrast and value transformation. May be directional. May also be known as "status valuing."