

Facts about a Woman with a Disability

Here are the Facts:

Woman with disabilities of all ages, racial, ethnic, religious and social economic backgrounds and sexual orientation **will unfortunately** experience barriers to gain her independence at home, school, and work (Disability Awareness in Action, 1994).

A woman with a disability will also face a “double dose of discrimination (sometimes three if she is a minority) and stereotyping that may cause barriers in her achieving life goals” (Fiduccia and Wolfe 1999).

While many women with disabilities will have great strength and perseverance, they will unfortunately face the most discrimination, have lowest rates of employment, have the lowest wages, have the lowest educational levels, have higher rates of sexual and physical violence, and will have limited access to health services (Fiduccia and Wolfe, 1999).

These same women also represent a relatively large minority of women; one of every five women in the United States has a disability; they may be limited in life activities such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. These women will have disabilities that range from cerebral palsy, lupus, diabetes, tuberculosis, alcoholism, mental and emotional illness, etc.

Because women are living longer, there are more women with disabilities than men. Even in 2014, women are still assumed to be “passive and dependent.” Society feels that women adjust in having disabilities more easily than men, thus increasing women with disabilities’ invisibility.

As a reader, you may be thinking; where do women with disabilities learn their resilience to continue moving forward and to accomplish their goals?

My personal suggestion is to educate parents to encourage their daughters with disabilities at an early age to explore their world and have high expectations of them.

The confidence and independence of a woman begins at an early age. Families need to believe that their daughter with a disability can achieve, succeed, and be productive. When girls and young women with disabilities are not encouraged to become independent, they will learn that their only options are to become a wife, mother, and totally dependent on others. She is then denied the opportunity to pursue a career. “Girls with disabilities need to have their bodies, disability and all, accepted, appreciated and loved, especially by significant parenting figures. This will solidify the sense of intactness” (Rousso, 1996).

In my next column, I will expand from my personal experience how I became a productive and independent working woman. I hope that my personal story will encourage parents to provide hope and strength for their daughters with disabilities. I also want to be a role-model for young woman to become a professional in their career.

Love,

Jodi