

Monthly newsletter  
for people caring for  
those affected by  
Alzheimer's disease  
or another form of  
dementia.

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## Focus on Capabilities instead of Disabilities

By Carol Leish, M.A.

It's human nature, unfortunately, to focus on what people can't do instead of what they can do. This also includes making assumptions of what others are or aren't capable of doing. The harm of making assumptions of others capabilities, because of their disabilities is sad. Stereotyping people because of their challenges, along with making assumptions, is wrong. And, seniors need to be revered and appreciated for who they are/have become, instead of making assumptions of what they can/can't do.



Carol Leish. Photo by Softtouch Photography

By focusing on what people can't do, people tend to think that they are superior to others who can't do something. This leads to people viewing their opinions and actions, along with their behavior, as being superior to others.

It is unfortunate that others make assumptions of people with challenges by thinking that they can't accomplish various things. They may also assume that someone else is inferior to them, not intelligent, or lazy if they can't accomplish the same things that they are able to accomplish.

Stereotyping of individuals with disabilities is wrong because labeling is not the right thing to do. People may

assume that my intellect is affected since I have a slight speech impediment. Or, they may think that I'm not paying attention to them because of my left eye wandering as a lazy eye. Or, they may think that I'm lazy because of doing part time work instead of full-time work, even though I'm just pacing myself due to eye fatigue. Or, with coordination challenges, they may think that I have Cerebral Palsy. I tell them that it's similar to having Cerebral Palsy, but dealing with the after effects of a head injury as an infant, is not having Cerebral Palsy, or even Epilepsy, which they may also assume that I have, after hearing about the head injury that occurred to me.

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Seniors have many passions and desires, just like everyone else. However, if a senior has a slight memory or mobility problem, others should not assume that they must have dementia. That’s stereotyping, too!

Awareness of various challenges is important to have in order to realize that, yes, their may be limitations. However, all people definitely have more capabilities than disabilities. By focusing on capabilities, attitudes will change. Others will realize that it is better to focus on others abilities and what they can do instead of what they have trouble with or can’t do.

Personally, I can relate to, Helen Keller. Like her, I am thankful for my challenges, for through them I have found my work (Motivational Speaking & Journalism), my God and myself.” We all need to view what we can do instead of what we can’t do. Thus, reflect upon the words of, Emily Dickenson, who said, “I dwell on possibilities.”

*Carol Leish, MA, is a public speaker on the topic of understanding disability by sharing her personal journey with visual and speech challenges. You can find more information about her and her work at [callmecapable.net](http://callmecapable.net).*



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