

# Physical and Mental Challenges

Chapter 31 Lesson 4



# Disabilities

- **Disability-** *any physical or mental impairment that limits normal activities, including seeing, hearing, walking, or speaking.*
- It's estimated that between 9 and 10 percent of the population in this country has a disability.
- People with a disability sometimes have difficulty doing things other people take for granted. However the greatest challenge facing people with a disability is the misguided view society has long had.
- Historically people with disabilities have been pitied, ignored, and placed in institutions offering mere custodial care.



# Physical Challenges

- The most common types of physical challenges affect a primary sense or ability to move and get around easily.
- These include sight impairment, hearing impairment, and motor impairment.



# Sight Impairment

- As with other disabilities, sight impairment can be moderate, as is the case with more than 5 million Americans who are vision impaired, or it can be severe, as with the more than 1 million who are blind. About 10% of people fitting this description are under 20 years old.
- The leading cause of blindness today is from complications due to diabetes. Whereas everyone must take care of their vision and have regular eye examinations, those with diabetes must take special care to have frequent exams in addition to maintaining a special diet.
- Other causes of blindness are macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts. Early diagnosis means that treatment can begin sooner or prevent blindness.



# Hearing Impairment

- Hearing impairment affects 20 million Americans. Like blindness, hearing impairment can range from minor to severe.
- **Profound deafness-** *hearing loss so severe that a person affected cannot benefit from mechanical amplification such as a hearing aid.*
- Deafness can be inherited or caused by injury or disease. Most hearing impairments are caused by infections, obstructions, or nerve damage. Obstructions may block sound waves traveling to the inner ear. If obstruction is the cause of hearing impairment, the hearing loss may involve only one ear. Obstructions may be due to a build-up of ear wax, bone blockage, or something stuck in the ear.



# Hearing Impairment cont.

- A person born with abnormal bone growth in the inner ear may have inherited an obstruction that results in impaired hearing or deafness. Surgery can cure many of these cases.
- Nerve damage usually distorts hearing in both ears. Exposure to loud noise can cause nerve damage. It may occur with aging. Hearing impairments from nerve damage and obstruction may be gradual. If your hearing has changed, it may be time for a visit to your doctor or to an audiologist, a specialist in hearing problems.



# Motor Impairment

- An injury to the brain or a disorder of the nervous system can affect the body's range of movement and coordination, including that of the hand and eye. Sometimes, especially when there is trauma to the brain, motor impairment of this sort may be accompanied by mental impairment.
- Advances have been made to assist people with motor impairment. For example, people with limb amputations are fitted with prosthetic, or artificial limbs. Motorized wheelchairs also allow many people with motor impairment to get around without assistance.



# Mental Challenges

- Some challenges affect a person's ability to live independently in society. This is true of the mental challenge called **Mental Retardation**- *below average intellectual ability from birth to early childhood associated with difficulties in learning and social adaptation.*
- Mental retardation affects about 3% of the population.
- The four levels of mental retardation are mild, moderate, severe, and profound. Mildly affected individuals make up about 75% of the mentally retarded population and cannot be outwardly distinguished from non-retarded people.





# Mental Challenges cont.

- Several factors have been isolated as causes of mental retardation. One is heredity. Symptoms of genetic disorders such as Down syndrome, PKU, or Tay-sachs disease include mental retardation.
- Lifestyle of the mother to be during pregnancy is another factor. Women who use alcohol or other addictive drugs greatly increase the risk that their babies will be born with retardation.
- Yet another preventable risk factor is infection with rubella, or German measles, during pregnancy. Immunization against this disease during childhood or within 3 months of becoming pregnant reduces this risk.



# Eliminating Barriers

- People with physical and mental challenges have the same needs and interests as the rest of the population. They also have the same abilities. In recent decades, strides have been made toward eliminating barriers, stereotyping, and prejudices. These trends have been the result of lobbying efforts by the people with physical and mental challenges themselves. In securing their rights, these individuals have worked to establish several important principles:
  - **That society make certain changes- such as wheelchair access to public transportation and building entrances.**
  - **That people be evaluated on the basis of individual merit, not on stereotyping assumptions about disabilities.**
  - **That to the extent each is able, these people be integrated among persons who do not have physical or mental challenges.**



# Eliminating Barriers cont.

- A major action toward achieving these goals was the passage by congress in 1990 of the **Americans with Disabilities Act**.
- This is *a law prohibiting discrimination against people with physical or mental disabilities in the workplace, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications.*

