**Physical Disabilities**

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**INTRODUCTORY NOTES**

Refer to the presentation by Elisabeth Holsten on Physical Disabilities and Creative Ability presented the previous day. Also notes from the small group discussion on Physical Disabilities.

**Further points to bear in mind when dealing with the physically disabled**

The reasoning ability of the person with physical disability is still intact. He can communicate and think for himself, unlike with the person who is suffering from a psychiatric illness where cognition is affected.

The physically disabled person can, to some extent, compensate for the loss of physical function by being able to participate in discussion, decision making and reasoning about his problems and verbalising them. His intellectual ability can thus be challenged in a creative way.

Furthermore, it is important to know the **abilities** of a person and use these in the process of motivation and action. Abilities can be physical or cognitive.

Find out what the person’s pre-morbid history was; where does he come from, what were his ambitions in life, what was he striving for, what are his values? Enquire about the patient’s environment; where he came from, and where he is going back to.

Take care not to be “fooled” by the disabled person. Because of his intellectual ability you may miss the actual problem underlying his emotions and his pretence of coping. He usually keeps himself very busy while in bed in the early stages with reading, writing letters, etc., and avoiding personal contact and confrontation with the therapist.

The other very important aspect to pay attention to is the family counselling, particularly so in the case of the spinal cord injured person. The family needs as much help and assistance to accept the disabled back into the family. The disabled person can be disadvantaged and, in fact, regress if the family is not understanding of the disability, able to accept him as a family member and allow him his rightful place and position he had before his accident.

Quote two case histories. One of a person with spinal cord injury and one adult blind person who could have benefitted in their rehabilitation had the OT known about the theory of creative ability and applied it. – THESE CASE STUDIES WERE NOT ATTACHED TO THE PAPER