Video Interview: Training Program Prepares PwDs For Employment
Aswan And Abu Simbel: Magic In Egypt
Transformative Power of Visualization Conquered Self-Doubt and Ushered in Love

Perceptions of Love and Disabilities

John Ficca
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“Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.”
~Dr. Mae Jemison, first African-American female astronaut
Editor's Note

February, what's not to love?

There's Black History Month, Groundhog Day, Valentine's Day, chocolate, National Heart Month, chocolate, AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month, chocolate, Rare Disease Day, and more chocolate. Here at CAPTIVATING! our goal is to help the world to see that all people—especially people with disabilities—are beautiful. As part of that mission, we are excited to announce that we've launched a global social media campaign in order to find people with disabilities to be on the cover of our March issue! We are calling the campaign #WeRCaptivating and we encourage you to submit your photo. We also encourage you to use the hashtag #WeRCaptivating whenever you are living your best life as a person with a disability on social media to help us spread the word about our magazine!

Rebecca Holland, one of our newest team members and CAPTIVATING!'s Staff Writer, took on the task of leading our first global social media campaign. We have received submissions from all over the world including the UK, Canada, Europe, and even Kenya! What's even more exciting, is seeing the personalized #WeRCaptivating memes circulating on the internet that were created for each entry.
Editor's Note

The #WeRCaptivating campaign will be running through February 28 and the winners will be announced on March 1. It’s not too late to enter. For more details, you can visit www.beckiewrites.com and search “Worldwide Search for Models with Disabilities! Led by R. Holland of CAPTIVATING! Magazine.”

In addition to our regular submissions, this month we’ll be featuring guests: John Ficca, Director of Hands On Education; David Solano of Solano’s No Limit Hoops; Martha Harris, Journalist and Accessibility Specialist; and Holly Tuke of Life of a Blind Girl. All of these people are making huge contributions to improving the lives of others through their humanitarian work.

We are making headway for 2019 becoming a more inclusive environment for all! We hope you enjoy this issue of CAPTIVATING! Magazine. We invite you to submit questions, articles, and ideas to: editor@captivatingmagazine.com.

CAPTIVATING! where the power and possibilities of inclusion are limitless!
HUMAN RIGHTS ARE NOT OPTIONAL
Ask Chelsea & Stephanae

by Chelsea Nguyen & Stephanae McCoy
Q&A | Chelsea

Q: I can't wear eye makeup because of my eye condition - how can I still look put together?

A: In my opinion, makeup isn't the only thing that makes a woman look put together. Clean, fresh, beautiful skin speaks volumes. Many of my blind & visually impaired clients are unable to wear eye makeup however here are some helpful tips:

• Complimenting lipstick or lip gloss
• Skin tone evened out with a foundation or pressed powder that matches your skin tone.
• Blemishes are covered with concealer as needed.
• Blush is added to the cheeks to add color to the face.
• Bronzing and contouring to help highlight and accentuate your best features.
• Eyebrows, eyebrows, and eyebrows! Your eyebrows definitely frame your face and when they’re nice and clean and well shaped, it

• (continued) really makes your face look clean and brings out your eyes.
• Managing overall facial hair also helps present a fresh clean appearance.
• A nice complimenting hairstyle to bring it all together.

Q: Do I have to learn how to use lip liner? I always end up looking like a clown. Any lip liner tips for someone with low vision?

A: No not everybody has to use lip liner. Lip liners that are darker and brighter than your skin tone like deep red ones and brighter colors are usually used to accentuate the lips and make them look bigger if you’re using a darker or brighter color. On the other hand lip liners that are lighter or match your skin tone can make the lips looks smaller and sometimes that is desired too.

For someone who is blind or visually impaired, learning to use a lip liner will take time and patience and practice depending on your level of vision and if you will be using any magnification or have no vision. In that case, Learning to apply lip liner carefully and on the edges around your lips is definitely possible, but it takes practice and using the tip of your finger to feel and guide you as to where to apply the lip liner around the edges of your lips.

Q: How can I find colors that work with my skin tone? I'm Filipina.

A: There are plenty of color charts online as well as in beauty stores that help guide you on what colors go best with a person’s skin tone.
Q: How can I find colors that work with my skin tone? continued

A. It also depends on what kind of statement you’re trying to make with your make up. For example, since you are Filipina, you may have more tanned and warm skin tones. If you wanted to have a more natural look then you would use colors that are more neutral and closer to your tanned skin tone such as browns, golds, mocha and mauve colors. However if you really wanted your make up to make a dramatic statement and stand out against your skin for an evening look, then I would suggest brighter colors like rich vibrant red's, brighter pink and gold or coral cheek colors and Eyeshadows that are deeper and richer in color like darker browns, Rich purple colors and black for accent for the smoky eye effect.

Q: How can I dress to look thinner and taller?

A. To dress to look thinner, it’s best to choose clothes that have vertical lines and patterns in them as well as wearing all one color so that it doesn’t break up your body into visual segments. For example, wearing a white shirt and black pants will accentuate the top of your body and make that look bigger since white is a color that makes things look larger. While the black minimizes your body when you wear it and therefore the black pants will make your waist hips and legs look thinner. By contrast, if you wear all black, then your body would be uniform in color and black would minimize the shape of your whole body and make you look thinner. By adding black shoes to that outfit you will also keep that uniform color and shape and look taller as well.

Q: Are there things I shouldn’t wear now that I'm thirty?

A: In my opinion, it’s not so much about your age but it’s more about what makes you feel comfortable and confident in your own skin. If it makes you happy and it’s appropriate for the environment as well as the message that you’re trying to portray to the world through your fashion choices, I really think that you can wear anything at any age. For example, in my line of work as an image consultant and educator, I speak in front of people all the time and need to look trendy as well as professional. Therefore, I would not wear a short skirt Or sleeveless shirts, because it doesn’t look professional for this type of environment and is not professional looking. However, if I was at a summer backyard barbecue at a friend or family's house, a short skirt, and sleeveless shirt would be totally appropriate, much more comfortable and complementing to wear even though I'm in my early 40s.

When it comes to wearing clothing for a certain age, I think the bigger question is what are you trying to portray and achieve through your fashion choices and does it make you feel beautiful, happy, confident, comfortable and true to yourself? If it does, then wear what you want! We only live once and we’re never going to please everyone. Just keep in mind that what we wear and how we look definitely sends a message to the world about who we are and what’s important to us and it’s human nature to make snap judgments about what they see. It's up to us to choose what they will see about us in those first 7 seconds of making a first impression.
Q&A | Stephanæ

Q: Valentine's Day, love it or leave it? How do you feel about the holiday?

A: I don't feel strongly one way or the other about Valentine's Day. Since I've been single for quite some time now, I really don't give it much thought. When my ex-husband and I were dating he made the holiday extra special because he would go out of his way to surprise me. After we got married we would plan a romantic evening in or out depending on when the day fell either during the week or on the weekend.

Now that I have a 6-year-old grandson it makes the holiday a little more fun because with typical childlike glee he looks forward to special occasions. This year, aside from parties at school his dad surprised him with a special gift that he was unable to find in stores so he had it delivered compliments of Amazon. When my grandson came home from school and he had this box to open his excitement was contagious.

Being able to see life through the eyes of a child is so gratifying. I don't remember it being this way when my kids were young probably because I was mainly focused on raising them as a single parent and working full-time.

I do remember one Valentine's Day when my oldest son asked me to make some cupcakes because "all the other moms do." Looking back now I wish I would have handled the situation better but my typical "all-about work" style came through when I told him baking was not an option and I'd just buy some from the bakery.

Even thought I was very aware of how quickly time was passing us by when my kids were young if I had one regret it would be that I let too many moments like being asked to make cupcakes pass me by. While I'd never go over the top for any holiday doing this one small thing for my son would have been so worthwhile.

Q: In your answer to the first question, you said you were single, is this by choice?

A: The short answer is yes, it's my personal choice. I'm not anti-relationship, however at this stage of my life I'm pretty selfish with my time. I know what I want and I really don't have the energy or patience to handle a relationship at this time.

The other issue that concerns me about relationships is just how cavalier we've
Q: In your answer to the first question, you said you were single, is this by choice? *continued*

become now that we do nearly everything online. Having an online presence means meeting all kinds of people from all walks of life. While I get that everyone has different communication styles, I think we need to put more thoughtfulness into the way we interact with people. When I meet someone on any social media platform, because I don't know them and they don't know me there is no room for assumptions and yet many times the first question I'm asked is about my relationship status. I don't know, maybe I'm old fashioned or something but asking someone I don't know about whether or not they are single seems sort of crude and offensive to me. I try hard not to judge and will give people second chances but if after I've warned them that this particular subject matter is not up for discussion and yet they feel the need to continue this line of questioning then I block them. I don't know what it is about social media that makes many of us feel guilty for not responding to people in ways they might want us to but to some degree, I've used it as an empowerment tool and I demand respect. There is some truth to people treating you the way you allow them to.

In my opinion, social niceties and manners will never go out of style. This is my personal standard and if others can't or won't abide by this then I move one. I wish I would have learned this key lesson earlier in my life because it would have saved me some heartache.

What is it that you like most about being a single woman?

I used to feel that I wasn't complete unless I was in a relationship and now I love calling my own shots and being wholly independent. My space and my time are my own, well, except for when my grandson is around but that's a different type of relationship. I don't have to feel guilty for spending large quantities of time on my advocacy projects. If I were in a relationship it would be challenging trying to manage my time and I don't think it would be fair to myself or to the other person.

The other thing I like about being single is my freedom and the ability to come and go as I please. For years I spent too much time looking for "the one" and now I think "the one" was really personal contentment.

Do you ever feel lonely?

I'd be lying if I said I never felt lonely but when those moments come around I'll distract myself with a good book, call a friend, or binge watch a Netflix series. When I delve deeper into why I'm feeling lonely and then imagine the alternative where I'd be in a relationship, just the thought of it is enough to nearly set off a panic attack. It's taken me years to finally be content alone and I'm just not ready to let go of my lifestyle. Could this change in the future? Maybe, but for now, I just want to be mindful of this present moment and enjoy my company.
Featured Guest Video Interview With John Ficca

Recently Chelsea and I sat down with John Ficca the Director of Hands-On Education, for our very first video interview. We talked with John about his amazing state-funded hospitality training program for adults with disabilities. With the mission of preparing individuals with disabilities for employment in the hospitality industry, the program is a unique partnership with Hyatt Hotels, State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies, and local school districts. To date, over 1,800 students have graduated from the program many of whom are then hired permanently with Hyatt Hotels.

Here's an interesting back-story on the two photos included in this article:

The first group shot is at the Hyatt Regency Denver and one of the students is blind. Eric is in the blue apron - after our training, the Hyatt offered him a permanent full-time job. He has been there about 2 years.

Rachel (in the bottom photo with John) is the other Hands-On @ Hyatt Graduate. She graduated our program in 2005 from Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress in Orlando. There wasn't an opening, so Rachel secured a cooking position at another local hotel. A few years later she applied for a position at the Peabody Hotel across the street.

In 2015, we started our training program at the Hyatt Regency Orlando, and I received an
upbeat email from the Executive Chef. He said "I wanted to share something really cool. We have a cook her named Rachel. She walked into my office and said Chef, I am so glad we are starting the Hands-On Training at our hotel - because I graduated from the program at Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress 10 years ago". Rachel showed the Chef a copy of her certificate from 2005, and the Chef took a picture of it and attached it to the email.

To learn more about John's program you can check out the entire video here: https://captivatingmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/2.8.2019-john-ficca-interview.mp4

**About the Author:**
John L. Ficca is a Special Educator with a background that includes the U.S. Coast Guard, Hospitality – Culinary Management, and Public School Teaching. His education and certification are in the area of behavioral disorders and he has taught special education students of all grade levels and exceptionalities.
It’s no secret that February is the month of love. Couples celebrating Valentine’s day with romantic dinners and gifts, and if you are like me you have a traditional Galentine’s day celebration for you and all of your lady friends single or not. When it comes to love, there are so many perceptions of the word. What is love? What does it look like? How is it expressed? Does society dictate the true meanings and characteristics of love, or do we as individuals make these conceptualizations ourselves? These are all questions that have been asked over and over again and researched, with findings varying based on individual differences such as religion, culture, upbringing, etc. An area that has interested me that I feel requires more research, is love among the disabled community; specifically the experiences, thoughts and feelings, and even the non-disabled public’s reactions towards love in the disabled community. To find answers to my questions, I interviewed 5 individuals who were gracious enough to open up about their love lives, as well as their experiences as a disabled individual in the dating scene.

Perceptions of Love and Disabilities

Brittany Culp
Brian, age 37, is currently single. He works as a grade school teacher and is blind.

Q: What challenges if any have you encountered in your dating life, pertaining to your disability and not?

A: I have not encountered any overt challenges. Later in one of my relationships however, there were comments made about the division of labor in regards to raising children. Even though I was clearly more than capable of taking care of myself, living independently, obtaining a college education, and working a full-time job, there was an implication that I would not be capable of doing my fair share when it came to taking care of a family. The longest relationship I have been in was 8 months. That was 2 years ago. It basically ended because of different expectations for moving forward in the relationship.

Q: Would you say you have dated more sighted women than blind women or vice versa?

Honestly, I have dated more sighted women. It is not because that’s my preference or anything. It’s more so because of proximity. I am around sighted people a lot more than blind or other disabled people.

Q: Can you describe your first romantic relationship?

A: My first relationship was whenever I was 14 years old at the school for the blind. I wouldn’t necessarily call it a relationship because we were so young, and honestly, it didn’t last very long. I think a somewhat more serious dating relationship I had was whenever I was 17 years old. She was the first sighted girl I dated. We met our junior year of high school and met in English class. We actually are still friends to this day. We went to prom together. At first, whenever I asked her she said no. She said it wasn’t her thing. At the time I thought she just didn’t want to go with the blind guy and was letting me down gently. Now I know she was telling the truth though because a few years later I asked her about it. Anyway, she ended up changing her mind so we went, after all, that year, as well as the following year. We had a good time.

Q: Why do you think your mind initially went to her not wanting to go with the blind guy?

A: I think my mind initially went there because even though I was raised with lots of support, it’s just a thought you kind of always have in the back of your mind. You feel like society is thinking it first. I actually have read some articles that found the top 3 fears most sighted people have are getting cancer, AIDS, and blindness. In some other research I read up on, they discovered that blindness is second to death on the list of top fears sighted people have. Blindness is something unfamiliar and I think they don’t always understand it. It gives them certain hesitations and expectations, or sometimes lack thereof.
Q: Do you think our upbringing plays a role in the expectations we have for ourselves in relationships?

A: I think the way you were raised has a lot to do with the way we see ourselves in relationships and the expectations we have for ourselves; that self-fulfilling prophecy.

Q: What do you think some common misconceptions of blind people are?

A: I think the most common misconceptions are that blind people are not able to do independent daily living things like shopping, cooking, and cleaning. Furthermore, that we are dependent on other people for everything. Basically, a lack of independence.

Josselyn, age 26, has been married for a year and a half. Both Josselyn and her husband, Jamelle also age 26, are blind, and they have a 2-year-old daughter named Ari. They work in real estate. Currently, Josselyn is in the process of starting a clothing company with another business partner.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: We were actually best friends before we started dating. Our feelings for each other definitely developed slowly over time. In past relationships, it was the opposite for me. Those relationships were fast building, but with Jamelle, it was more organic. I felt like I could truly be myself whenever I was around him, and it just felt effortless at times. From there, it just gradually began to evolve.

Q: Would you say that in the past you have dated more sighted men than blind men, or vice versa?

A: I have dated both sighted and blind guys, but probably more sighted guys. I think in the past I wanted to date sighted guys because it was something different. I didn’t want to be the girl that only dated blind guys because it was easy. Eventually, it ended up that I just found myself connecting easier with blind guys. So here’s a funny observation. Like when I dated blind guys, it was more effortless. With sighted guys, I had to remember to turn on the light when I took a shower; whereas with blind guys, you don’t have to do that! Also, with sighted guys, we had to make sure our dates were something we could both enjoy.
That was probably the biggest thing. I had a boyfriend who was into the club scene. I like parties, but clubs are usually a challenge because they can be disorienting whenever you are blind. The music is super loud, they are crowded, there’s usually lots of intoxicated people, and it all makes it difficult to navigate around the establishment independently. It was just not fun for me. The movies were also a type of date that could be challenging if you are dating a sighted person. It was like, is he going to describe it to me or am I getting a headset for audio description, and then we don’t talk at all? Definitely not an ideal situation for a first date. Plus, some of them sucked at describing or wouldn’t want to describe at all.

**Q: What was your experience with the public whenever you were dating a sighted guy?**

**A:** When I was dating a sighted guy, they wouldn’t even assume we were dating. They thought he was my friend or my helper. It made me feel like they were saying “He would never date her”. If I wasn’t blind, I don’t think it would have even been a question whether or not we were romantically involved. The longest relationship with a sighted person I had was 2 years. I was 17 or 18. It ended because I left for college and long distance wasn’t my thing. His parents loved me, but at times treated me like I was fragile. Don’t get me wrong... it was from a good place, but at times it felt like they were proud of their son for dating someone “like me”. I never really had a real conversation with them. It was pleasant whenever we did interact though.

**Q: What are your experiences with the public whenever you and your husband are out together?**

With my husband, we get the whole “You are so inspiring” thing. One time someone even asked us if we have an attendant to take care of our household. Whenever we are out with our daughter Ari, we get stared at even more so. It’s like when the whole family unit is blind, we have to be on point because we are being judged constantly. I feel super judged as a parent when in public. It’s almost as if we have to prove we are capable of parenting, with every move being under a microscope. For example, we fear that if we ever have to take her to the emergency room for a minor kid accident, it’s going to be blamed on our blindness rather than an innocent accident. Even when I was pregnant, it felt like people were in shock or disbelief like I got taken advantage of. It was like people were implying “how could she possibly know about sex, or who would possibly engage in sex with her?” Even one of my family members asked how I got pregnant. I said “I was trying it out with another blind person to make sure we were doing it right. I guess we were.”

**Q: Do you think our upbringing plays a role in the expectations we have for ourselves in relationships?**

**A:** My mom always thought if I dated a sighted guy, he would take advantage of me like cheat on me and I wouldn’t even know if it was right in front of me. If I told her I liked someone, she would ask “How do you know, if you can’t see him?”
As if there weren’t other ways to distinguish if you liked someone aside from physical appearance or other ways to find out if someone is attractive such as word of mouth.

**Q: How do you think the interactions and comments you experienced from your family and society impacted the way you viewed yourself?**

A: I had more vision when I was younger and tried to hide my disability. Looking back on it I wish I knew how to be okay with it and discuss it. Since I was insecure and uncomfortable, no one else did. I wish someone would have told me it was okay to be confident about my disability. I think it has a lot to do with the media. Blind people are so one dimensional. They are only remembered for being blind, and I think that transcends into real life. There needs to be more positive representations of blind people in the media, just doing ordinary things and living their everyday life successfully and independently like many blind people do.

**Q: Are there any additional thoughts or comments you would like to add about love?**

A: I think me marrying a blind person has made us stronger and a great team. We don’t have to depend on each other, and there is no question of whether or not the relationship is one-sided. We have built a life together and we are comfortable in it. What we have is so authentic and effortless. There’s a lot of challenges, but the reward from it and the way it has strengthened our bond is so much better and different than it would have been with a sighted person. I’m proud of how much we have grown and how different we have become. It is something truly special.

Anonymous, age 33, has been married to his wife going on seven years. His wife is also 33 years old. Anonymous is blind, and his wife is sighted.

**Q: How did you meet your wife?**

A: We met on MySpace after I just got out of a bad relationship. I told her about my visual impairment before we started “talking”. That was when she told me that her grandmother was visually impaired. I have always been open about my vision. At a certain point, you kind of don’t have a choice. Since her family had previous experiences with blindness, we had no issues when it came to my disability. Her mother loves me, and that made our relationship a lot easier.

**Q: What are your experiences with the public whenever you and your wife are out together?**

A: Mostly I have just noticed that if we are out to eat sometimes people try talking to her instead of me. Before my wife, dating was fine. The only awkward thing was having to get rides on dates, but I was forthcoming about it. I tried to go on group dates more, that way it wasn’t as awkward.

Katelyn, age 26, is currently single but is in the process of exclusively dating someone. He is not hearing impaired. Katelyn is deaf and wears hearing aids.
Q: What was your first romantic relationship?

A: My first serious relationship was in high school. It was hard; I was in public school and received my first pair of hearing aids. I was hesitant to use them. My first boyfriend was hearing and really into music. He wanted me to be around whenever he would play music and it was hard for me because I couldn’t hear the music. He did not seem to understand he had to face me when speaking to me. There was a lot of miscommunication. It was very confusing because I was trying to accept that I couldn’t hear, but at the same time I wanted to be “normal”. I noticed I wasn’t hearing him talk and was having a hard time with his family. They would mumble and I just couldn’t talk to them like I would with my family. We never really explained to his friends I couldn’t hear, so a lot of group conversations and settings I would have to sit there silently. I would laugh when they did because it seemed appropriate. We were together on and off for five years. We came to college together and would see one another for a while but it faded out. It took a while for following relationships to progress into the understanding place I desired.

Q: Have you dated more hearing men or deaf men?

A: I have never dated another hearing impaired person. I have only met one other hearing impaired guy. He had a cochlear implant. He was nice, but honestly, it’s hard for me to adapt to the deaf community because I was raised in the hearing community. The different types of body language between the two communities make it hard to understand deaf people when they communicate. Their body language is very exaggerated at times. Sometimes it is hard to tell when they are joking or serious. Their posture sometimes is so serious, but yet they may be joking at times. I think that if I were around the deaf community more when I was growing up that I might be better at picking up on cues.

Q: How did you meet your current romantic interest?

We were both working at the same grocery store and that is how we met. We talked for a year before we started dating. We officially started dating when I left that store. We have been casually dating for six months. The biggest thing we argue about is him being more adamant about me wearing my hearing
aids more places. I’m the stubborn one not wanting to at times. He actually has a hearing impaired cousin, so he understands little things like I need subtitles and does not mind repeating himself. It definitely makes things a lot easier.

Q: Do you think our upbringing plays a role in the expectations we have for ourselves in relationships?

A: My mom puts her 2 cents in about my dating life. She used to poke harder in the past but now she lets me make my own decisions. She used to be more insistent on meeting who I was dating. My mom just wants what is best for me, and she has always made me feel as confident as she could. She really wanted me to be included and do things that my hearing peers were doing. Her support has definitely helped me become the person I am today.

Q: What challenges if any have you encountered with dating and your hearing impairment?

A: Aside from the stuff I mentioned was problematic in my first relationship, there are a few more things. Whenever guys have facial hair it's harder for me to read their lips. I used to not go out and search for dates because I was scared I could not hear them. I found myself thinking about a lot of “what ifs”. Honestly, my hearing impairment kind of held me back in the past. A lot of guys I previously dated I already knew before dating. I guess you could say that I am scared of uncertainty.

Q: What experiences have you encountered with the public and your disability?

A: When I would meet my past boyfriend's families. They would be in disbelief that I was deaf. They would just say “No you're not”. Then they would not take it seriously whenever I needed them to not mumble, or when I would remind them to look at me when speaking. It would really give me a sour taste, and I would not want to come around as much. A lot of my friends forget I have a hearing impairment because I'm so "put together". It can be frustrating at times, but I know it is not intentional. I guess it kind of tells me that when they think of me as a person, my disability isn't the first thing on their mind.

Deja, age 35, has been married to her husband for Eight years. Her husband is 37 years old and is sighted, and works as a counselor. Deja is blind and is an O&M instructor.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: We met in grad school at Louisiana Tech. At that time we were both recently divorced. He pursued me in class, and I rejected him a lot. He wore me down though! We had a lot going on, and our first date was to church. I was attracted to him because of who he was as a person inside and out, and we also had a lot in common. We dated for 4 years prior to getting married. He was deployed for one year and we did long distance for a majority of it.
Q: What challenges did you encounter with dating and your blindness?

A: Dating was tough in high school. I was shy and did not have blindness skills at that time. Basically, I did not date. I kind of went on small dates like dances here and there, but that’s about it. A lot of people did not know I was visually impaired because I hid it. People were shocked later in life when I was more open and it was more apparent. The lack of confidence was hard, especially not having other people to communicate about it with. I met my first husband later in high school, and got married quickly after. I guess you could say we were high school sweethearts. We were married for 3 years. After my divorce is when I actually started dating and was more confident in my blindness and using my cane. I think it’s hard to date when you don’t know yourself and are not confident. Trying to hide and be someone different makes it even more difficult. I did date blind people but not seriously. I was never around other blind people growing up and I was against marrying a blind person in the beginning. That changed though and wasn’t a determining factor.

Q: What has been your experience with interactions and comments from the public whenever you are out with your husband?

A: People act surprised when they find out my husband is sighted. I think the most frustrating comment I have heard is from a family member. They basically said, “I’m so glad you married a sighted person so he can drive you around and help you around the house.” Similar comments have been made by the public as well. The implication is that my husband is my caretaker. You definitely have to pick your battles at times. Sometimes I don’t feel like defending myself, so my husband may say “Trust me, it is a lot more work for her” or “We take care of each other”. Another thing that happens sometimes, is people talk to him instead of me about me. Luckily our early stages of dating were smooth, but I think the biggest challenge was my husband’s southern gentlemen mentality versus my independence.

Q: How have you two been able to maintain the balance between your husband being a gentleman and you maintaining your independence?

A: I think that as disabled individuals, we have to exude more independence because people try to strip us of it so often. He gets a lot of looks when I bump into something and lets me be independent. Overall it has been a smooth process. My husband and his family are used to seeing independent blind people because they lived near the Louisianna Center for the Blind. My husband also frequently attends the National Federation of the Blind events with me and is supportive of me being involved in the blindness community.

Q: What advice do you have for other blind and disabled individuals in the dating scene or looking for love?

A: Never settle for someone who is not going to be supportive of your disability and
independence. Whether it be taking the bus, getting training that is going to enhance your level of independence, spending time around other blind and disabled people, or doing whatever it is you need to do to cope… they should let you do all of these things and be encouraging about it.

Final Thoughts
I think there are many things we can learn from hearing the experiences that these interviewees have shared with us. First is the need for public awareness. Josselyn made an excellent point about how disabled individuals are poorly represented in the media. There is an apparent need for more television shows, movies, ad campaigns, and magazines portraying the disabled community in a more positive light. Our abilities need to be recognized and highlighted, rather than our disabilities. Second, is our words and actions. I don’t think many of us truly understand the effects that our words can have on other people. The things we say can stick with someone for a lifetime. I encourage everyone to spread love and acceptance. Let’s start today. Tell your loved ones how much they mean to you; even compliment a stranger. You never know who needs to hear something nice on any given day. The last theme I have taken from these interviews is confidence. We hear it all the time, “Confidence is key.” Where does that confidence come from though? How do we maintain that level of confidence? How do we build upon it? I think confidence comes from accepting ourselves and loving ourselves. Personally, as a blind woman myself, I have learned through my experiences that if we grow to accept ourselves, others will be more inclined to accept us too. Through this, confidence grows. From this acceptance and confidence, comes love. We cannot truly love another person until we love ourselves. So to conclude this article with a final message for this month of love, I encourage you to be kind to yourself and do something that expresses love for yourself.

About the Author:
Brittany Culp is a personal trainer, bodybuilder, and model. She runs her own personal training business, Blind Fury Fitness. Blind Fury Fitness provides one on one personal training, as well as online training plans and meal plans. Brittany also has a masters degree in counseling psychology, in addition to a bachelors degree in psychology and sociology. She believes that mental health and physical fitness go hand-in-hand, and contribute to the overall wellness of an individual. As a child, Brittany was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, which has caused her to lose her sight with age. Brittany has not let her blindness hold her back from becoming the best version of herself, and she encourages her clients to do the same no matter the circumstance.

Brittany’s photo by Alyssa Kaye Photography
7 Relationships Tips for Inter-abled Couples and Couples with Disabilities

REV. REBECCA L. (TORRES) HOLLAND

It’s no secret that dating is hard or that relationships can be both incredibly challenging and rewarding. This can be especially true if one or both members of the relationship has a disability. Trust me- I know.

My name is Rebecca and although I’m now happily married, I remember all too vividly what it was like to navigate the dating world as a young woman with a visual impairment, chronic ocular migraines, and C-PTSD.

Dating is confusing enough without adding all the extra concerns that a disability often brings with it.

Now, as my spouse and I prepare to celebrate our second Valentine’s Day together as a married couple, I can’t help but be reminded how far we have come together and how far we still have left to go. Some days we work really well together and other days our relationship is more strained.
One thing that I have learned is that no one can tell you what is right for you and your relationship. Other people can offer advice but no one knows what it is like to be the person you are in this exact moment in your exact relationship. Every relationship is special.

I think about relationships a great deal for my job. As a minister in the United Methodist Church, an important part of my job is pastoral care and counseling. Furthermore, before I sign any marriage license, I always require that the couple meet with me in order to undergo premarital counseling. In my five years of full-time ministry, I have had the opportunity to work with many different couples. I have worked with multiple couples in which one person developed a disability later in life. I have also worked with couples in which one person became suddenly and unexpectedly disabled and couples in which both partners were disabled.

I have also read and extensively researched this topic for my job (I am the chair of Disability Ministries for the Susquehanna Conference) and have many friends who have disabilities. In honor of Valentine’s Day, I would like to share seven tips that I wish I would have known sooner as a person with a disability.

I hope these tips and ideas will inspire and encourage you. If you find something useful in my words, please take them and use them in your own life; however, as I said previously, each person and each relationship is unique. I know that not every piece of advice will apply to everyone because each person is unique just like each relationship is special; nevertheless, I hope that you will find something useful here that will help to inspire you to live life to the fullest.

**Tip #1: Banish Shame**

When I first started dating my spouse, I hid the fact that I had a disability. I was ashamed of my poor vision. I did everything that I could to hide my sight loss from him.

Like many people, I have developed a plethora of ways to hide the full extent of my disability from the world. I was afraid and ashamed. I worried that he would not be interested in forming a relationship with me if he knew all of my health problems. In the past, prospective mates had told me, “I'm sorry. I don't want to date a blind woman.”

Even as a newly married couple, I see the looks that people sometimes give to my spouse when they see us together and I have my white cane. They assume that he must be a saint simply because he is in a relationship with a person who is visually impaired. This is hurtful because the assumption is that being with me is an act of charity.

In my line of work, I have seen couples where both people have disabilities. I have also worked with couples where one person developed a disability later in life. Whatever the individual couple’s personal relationship with disability, one thing remains the same: For true love to flourish, we must not make one another feel ashamed.
A sense of shame can poison a relationship. It can drive a wedge between couples. Often, as people age, we become dependent on friends or family for care and for assistance. Disability can happen at any time for many different reasons. For a couple to flourish, each person must feel loved and valued. They must know that they have a safe place to express their individual needs without fear of judgment. They must feel comfortable asking for help and for support. We should be able to depend on our partner in life.

I knew my beloved was meant for me when he looked at me and said, in regard to my visual disability, “You don’t have to be ashamed. Let us banish shame. Forget all about it. You have nothing to be ashamed of with me.”

He was right. No one should feel ashamed for having a disability.

**Tip #2: Trust is Key**

As much as I love my spouse, it took me a long time to start to trust him. Learning to trust one another is a key step in any healthy relationship.

As a young person, I had a very challenging time making friends. When I was seventeen, a teacher who was blind and that I deeply respected gave me the following advice, “Rebecca,” he said kindly, “I need to tell you something. You need to be aware of how the other students perceive you. They will feel as if they need to take care of you because you are blind.”

“I can take care of myself!” I replied. “I know you can,” he said, “But you must always remember that many people will feel stressed when they are with you because they will feel as if they need to look out for you. You must be certain to let them know that you are independent and never rely too heavily upon them, or you will drive them away.”

That well-meaning teacher was the first adult I had ever known with a disability. His words left a mark on me as a teenager. Although he was speaking about a visual impairment, I know that many people with disabilities feel this way.

In my life, I strive to make sure that people know that I can live independently; however, when we enter into a relationship, we are no longer completely independent by virtue of the fact that we now have a partner who loves and relies upon us for emotional support.

Sometimes, our partners will need us for physical support. Other times, we might need to lean upon them. Sometimes, we might need help with the tasks of daily living. Other times, we might be able to provide help to our loved one. Whatever the case, a healthy relationship requires that we trust one another to be there for each other during both the good and the bad times.

**Tip #3: Communication**

Communication is key for all couples. When I offer premarital counseling, I always encourage couples to figure out the other person’s “love language.”
drained to help me. It doesn’t mean that he doesn’t love me or that he doesn’t care. It simply means that he is not available to help me in that moment. This is why communication is particularly important for couples dealing with a disability.

I encourage my spouse to communicate with me when he is feeling overwhelmed by my needs and we form a plan together. For example, if he is unavailable to provide a ride for me, I will plan to call an Uber or carpool with someone who is going to the same place.

Conversely, when I tell my spouse that I can handle something, he trusts me to manage it on my own. He knows that I am the best person to judge my physical ability and pain levels on any given day.

All of us have different physical and emotional needs. Often, our needs change as we age. Sometimes, our needs change very suddenly. Whatever the case, each partner should be comfortable communicating what his or her needs are in the relationship. Then, both partners can work together to make sure that everyone’s needs are met.

**Tip #4: Division of Labor**

Division of labor is important for all couples but it is especially important for couples dealing with disabilities. I encourage all couples to consider creative ways to divide household chores and commitments. Labor does not need to be divided along gender lines. Sometimes my spouse cooks and sometimes I do the dishes. Sometimes I help outside and sometimes he folds the laundry.

We all communicate our love and affection in different ways. I have a passion for language and I prefer to use **words** to tell my spouse how much I love and care about him; in contrast, my spouse often feels uncomfortable putting his feelings into words. He shows me he loves me by **doing kind deeds**. In this way, we work very well together because he likes to show that he loves me by helping with tasks such as driving me places or acting as my sighted guide.

Sometimes, my spouse is too tired or too
Be creative and take time to consider what works for you and your partner.

I am particularly cognizant of the division of labor in my relationship because of my disability. I often feel sad because I am not able to drive or lift anything over 40 lbs. I make up for this deficit by contributing in other ways. I provide emotional support for my spouse. I am always quick with a kind word or a listening ear. He tells me that he deeply appreciates this constant loving emotional support more than words can say.

I have worked with other inter-abled and disabled couples who have divided the responsibilities of household living in all types of ways.

Although there are many things I cannot do, with some creative thinking and problem solving, I have found many things that I can contribute. I have found that I have been able to contribute to our relationship with my heart and my mind.

Tip #5: Form a Support Network
All couples, whether or not they are dealing with disabilities, need a support network. In the modern world, many people have this romantic idea that their partner should be their entire world; however, this is simply not the case. When I work with couples, I encourage them to realize that it is unrealistic to expect one person to fulfill all of our needs.

As human beings, we are made to live in a society and to be part of a larger group. We need friends, family, and loved ones.

Being in a relationship with other humans helps us to learn more about ourselves and gives our lives deeper meaning.

It’s perfectly acceptable to feel that your partner is your best friend; however, your partner should not be your only friend. Partners should provide love and support for one another; however, they should not be one another’s only support.

This is especially true for couples dealing with disabilities and for inter-abled couples. Many people with disabilities have special needs. Some of us require more assistance with the tasks of daily living than others. Some people require more emotional care and nurture.

I encourage you and your partner to depend on one another but to also form a loving and supportive network of people that you trust. Your support network might include friends, family, skilled medical staff, or trained assistants.

Tip #6: Take Time for Self-Care
All people, whether or not they have a disability, must make time for self-care. Take time to love and nurture yourself. If you don’t take care of yourself, you won’t be able to provide your partner with the love and emotional support that is necessary for a relationship to thrive.

I would like to take this moment to extend a special, “Thank you,” to the caregivers of the world.

If you ever find yourself in a caregiving
position, please know that you do not have to do it alone. I encourage you to ask for help from your support network, your worshipping community, or friends and family. As human beings, we are better together.

When I counsel people who are in a caregiving position, whether they are parents with small children, couples dealing with disabilities, or children taking care of elderly family members, I always use the metaphor of the oxygen mask on an airplane: When flying on an airplane, in the event of an emergency, it is imperative that you put on your own mask first. Otherwise, you might lose consciousness while trying to assist the person sitting next to you.

Even if you do not currently find yourself in a caregiving position, it is important to remember to put on your own oxygen mask! Whatever you are going through in life, make sure to take time for self-care. Always put on your own oxygen mask first- otherwise, you might not be able to help the people you love the most.

**Tip #7: The Last & Most Important Tip: Love one another**

One of my favorite services to officiate is a vow renewal. Every time I am asked to officiate at a service in which the couple renews their wedding vows, I like to take time to ask the couple one simple question, “What does it take to stay in love?”

Whether the couple has been married for five, twenty-five, or fifty years, I almost always get the same answer.

Usually, they share a knowing glance with one another. Then, one will smile and say, “I don’t know. Really- we just love each other.”

In the end, it is important to remember that every person, just like every relationship, is unique and special. The best advice I can give to you is simply this: love one another. If we always treat our partner with love and kindness, then all the rest will fall into place.

If we always treated the world with love, then the world itself would be a much more beautiful place.

Happy Valentine’s Day!
"I knew my beloved was meant for me when he looked at me and said, in regard to my visual disability, “You don’t have to be ashamed. Let us banish shame. Forget all about it. You have nothing to be ashamed of with me.”

He was right. No one should feel ashamed for having a disability." ~Rebecca Holland

About the Author:


Author’s Note:

I would like to extend a special thank you to the members of Rev. Gal Blog Pals and the Disability Wisdom Discussion Group on Facebook for workshopping some of these ideas with me. Your feedback was deeply appreciated. If you’re interested in learning more about this topic, I recommend the book In Sickness and in Health: Love, Disability, and a Quest to Understand the Perils and Pleasure of Interabled Romance by Ben Mattlin. I also encourage all couples that I work with to read The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman.
Making Our Wedding Accessible

MARThA HARRIS

Introduction
I was never the woman who had her wedding planned since I was a little girl, but since I’m getting married in seven months, it’s been on my mind. What kind of dress do I want? I’m looking at dresses made with organic materials from Etsy, eco-friendly and supporting small business at the same time. How many people do we want to invite, and who should be in the wedding party? These typical questions and many more came to mind in the early stages of planning, but one of the major ones on my mind from the beginning is how do we make it accessible for everyone?

Why is Accessibility Important to Me?
I work at a software company helping businesses, schools, retailers, and others ensure their websites are accessible for all disabled people. Even before that, I cared about accessibility; I’ve attended events where I had trouble accessing information or was entirely excluded, because of my blindness, auditory processing disorder, or food intolerances. I want to ensure our
friends and family are included and accommodated in the ways that work for them.

The Venue and Food
The most important piece for this is where are we going to get married. We needed somewhere inexpensive that we could prepare and bring in our own food instead of using a catering service. I have a gluten intolerance, and we have guests who have Celiac disease, are lactose intolerant, vegetarian, and can’t eat pork for religious reasons. My fiancé Quinn and I aren’t fancy food people, so we are having a build your own burrito bowl bar. People can choose chips, chicken or vegetables, cheese and sour cream or salsa, guacamole, ETC. We’ll also have gluten-free cookies, fruit salad, and other allergy-friendly sides and desserts.

Is the venue physically accessible? There is a ramp leading inside, an elevator, and a restroom with a wheelchair accessible stall. This is always an important check because sometimes places say it is accessible, but it is located behind a step to enter the main restroom space or locked until someone requests a key.

Can people’s voices and music be heard? Luckily, a microphone and sound system are included in the venue price. This will be helpful for anyone who is hard-of-hearing or has an auditory processing disorder, so they won’t have to strain to hear and understand what is happening.

Are there multiple spaces to be? I and some of our friends have anxiety and get overwhelmed after a while by all the people and noise. There is a dressing room area as well as a patio near a fountain for people who need a quieter space or somewhere to take upset children for a break from the festivities.

Can people easily get to the venue? It is across the street from a bus stop, so it will be inexpensive for people who don’t drive to attend. If they want a car, there is Uber and Lyft, which will only be a few dollars per person, especially if they share the ride. The wedding and reception are in the same building, so there is no additional travel cost.
Can people access our information? We made a Facebook group, and we’ll send out print and braille paper invitations for those who need or want them.

Other Things to Consider
I will braille out my vows, so I can read them and won’t forget what to say.
We might buy braille wedding rings.
We’ll request people to be fragrance-free to not trigger people who get migraines, have chemical sensitivity, or just don’t like strong scents.

We’ll hopefully keep the music at a comfortable volume, enough to enjoy and understand the songs but not so loud we have to shout at the person sitting next to us.

We posted asking people to privately send any accommodations they need that aren’t already listed.

About the Author:
I was born in Paraguay, lived in Baltimore, grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania went to grad school in Louisiana and now live in Minneapolis. My undergrad degrees are journalism and sociology. I studied for a Masters in teaching blind students, worked on an adult literacy certificate, and took online courses to learn about web and app accessibility. I also read constantly, especially realistic fiction books that make me think and anything to do with social justice and intersectionality. My previous job was teaching braille and assistive technology to blind children and adults, and I am currently a web accessibility tester.

Finally, I love trying new foods, blogging occasionally, learning any new software or hardware, making bead and charm bracelets, shopping, listening to musicals, especially Hamilton, going to plays and concerts, spending time with my fiancé and friends, and playing with my dog and cat.
How the Transformative Power of Visualization Conquered Self-Doubt and Ushered in Love

DAVID SOLANO

David is one of the most remarkable people we’ve had the pleasure of meeting. He was hired right out of college and has been a teacher for twenty years. David has also earned multiple degrees in higher education, runs a non-profit, and is a dedicated family man.

What makes David so remarkable isn’t the fact that he’s accomplished so much while living with a disability. What makes David remarkable is his passion for his family and the kids in his Solano’s No Limit Hoops program. David always strived to do his best and perform at the top his game; however, he never thought he would have a relationship because of his disability. Now in his mid-forties, David took some time to chat with CAPTIVATING! about overcoming personal insecurities, empowering young people, and chasing our dreams.

In my life I always pictured myself going to college, getting a good job, buying a house, and driving a car but I never saw myself getting married. The reason why? I was too scared to talk to girls when I was a kid.
My name is David Solano and I was born with arthrogryposis in my arms which made me look a lot different than other babies. “Arthrogryposis is a condition that impacts some babies at birth. The joints don’t move very much or might not move at all. This frequently impacts the arms and legs. Often the muscles responsible for moving the joints are thin, weak, or missing. This results in joint contractures (i.e., tight joints).” My arthrogryposis was the result of my father’s exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

When I was young, I knew I looked different but it didn’t bother me. It just made me apprehensive to approach and talk to girls. While I would talk to them in my classes, I was too shy to ask them out on a date. Even though girls would talk to me I always thought, “Oh—they’re just talking to me because they felt sorry for me.”

If I thought a girl might actually like me, I never really truly believed it. In my head, I was like—“Why me?” So, I probably blew a lot of great friendships and possible relationships because I never thought of myself as boyfriend material. In my mind, I never tried to be equal to everybody.

Later, when I started working—since I was single and making good money—I really wanted to meet someone. In my late 20’s I went all in with a woman and now here we are 15 years into an awesome marriage.

It wasn’t until I met my wife, Angel, that I began to take a chance on myself and visualize myself as a viable boyfriend. I kept calling her and asking her out on dates, I pursued her and just hoped she liked me and in time I realized we were a couple.

Our relationship wasn’t about looks. It was about my heart and my caring attitude, sense of humor, and ability to make her laugh. I learned I just had to be myself around her and everything else would fall into place. To me, that was one of my greatest accomplishments, finding a wife to marry me based on my character and not on my looks.

The only time I ever feared my disability is when my daughters were born because I didn’t want them to have small hands like me. I thought, “What am I going to do if they have small hands like me? How am I going to help them overcome it?” That was my biggest fear.

For me, knowing they didn’t have arthrogryposis was a relief. Loving and watching Julia (12) and 4-year-old Amelia (AJ) grow is miraculous. When they were young, I refused to put them in daycare because I wanted to teach them at home.

My daughters are not embarrassed by me. Julia likes to go everywhere with me and at school, she’s like the most popular kid because all the kids want to know what I’m doing all the time.

We do everything as a family. Every summer we pile up in the car and take a long drive somewhere for a big family vacation. We’ve
driven to Seattle from Phoenix and all the way to Nashville. Both of our daughters attend dance classes so we love participating in these fun extracurricular activities. Julia is also a cheerleader at her Junior High School.

Me, my wife, and daughters also run our non-profit, Solano’s No Limit Hoops program as a family. My older daughter goes with me to all the events. Someday, I hope she can take over the program and make enough money from it to make a living.

At Solano’s No Limit Hoops, we work with underprivileged kids from nine different high schools. These young people attend our basketball program to bond at a community event. Unlike the YMCA or recreational centers who charge for their services, our program is free and has been getting local media attention (The Power of an Orange Ball).

The problem in some community sports programs is that you don’t know who the real volunteer coaches are. Some of them put winning before raising your child up. If youth sports programs are flourishing around the nation, then why is the high school dropout rate so high? Because they don’t have quality coaches teaching kids to be respectful young adults.

My young beautiful family is my greatest achievement. There is nothing better in life than being a husband and dad.

At CAPTIVATING! we recognize that there is no “right way,” to live a life with a disability-just like there is no “right way,” for people to live their best life. We support David and his amazing achievements. We also realize that everyone has different goals in life and it is part of our mission to help empower people with disabilities to achieve those goals. A future motivational speaker, who recently cut four promotional videos, keep and eye out for David Solano. We hope that you enjoyed David’s story as much as we did!

If you would like to know more about David’s non-profit organization, Solano’s No Limit Hoops program, you can find them on Facebook by searching “Solano’s No Limit Hoops.”

Do you have a story that you would like to share with our magazine? We’d love to hear from you! Send queries, story ideas, and articles to: Editor@CapitvatingMagazine.com

About the Author:
Dad, husband, teacher, basketball coach, future motivational speaker. "It’s important to believe that anything is possible in life." ~David Solano
"A COMMUNITY THAT EXCLUDES EVEN ONE MEMBER IS NO COMMUNITY AT ALL."

~POPE FRANCIS
As this is the month of LOVE, I thought it would be appropriate to share one of my sculptures, Devotion, this is a piece of work with a story. I created it back in 2013 for my debut exhibition Through The Eyes Of Time, Devotion was part of a large 16 piece collection that also had 10 paintings.

It represents its title and depicts 2 figures in an embrace, the piece is created from an old piece of mahogany wood, this piece of wood was given to me by my brother, he had removed it from his house where it was creating a step into his workshop. It was full of old rusty nails. Mahogany is a rare wood to find these days, so I was only too pleased to take this piece off of his hands and give it a new lease life.

Devotion was inspired by my favourite photograph of my wedding day. My husband Adam and I got married in Tobago on Turtle beach, it was completely fitting to our relationship. We were married on the beach as the sun began to get low in the sky, in June 2007, by a
I experienced a very heartbreaking time just a few days before Adam and I were due to fly out to Tobago. I lost my dearest Grandmother, she was such a special person in my life, her name was Joy, I would like to think I have some of her qualities, she was a little lady, I too am only a little lady. She had a lot of determination, courage and a sense of never giving up. I miss her every day but I know she is always with me. I believe she was with Adam and I on our wedding day, the photograph shows the sky full of colour, and on the left side of the picture the clouds form an incandescent light in the shape of an angel, I believe that was my nan.

The photograph inspired me to paint this scene, this was back in the day when I was still able to use that medium. My style of painting was very much symbolic like my sculpture, I painted Adam and me with an additional guest at Adam’s feet, that represents our lovely little White Westie, Ralf. I also painted my Nan, up amongst the sky with her wings spread out giving us her blessing. I entitled the painting Angels Blessing. This is displayed proudly in our front room.

So as you can see, the sculpture of Devotion started from my wedding, transpired into a painting and then finally inspired a sculpture. Devotion is a very special piece of work to me, I never thought that I would be able to sell that piece, however in 2015 I exhibited a solo show in The House Of Commons in Central London, there was much publicity around this exhibition, I was contacted by a lady who had just seen my work on the

female priest, had 2 friends that we had made whilst in Tobago as our witnesses and a lone steel drum player beating out a Caribbean tune. We were celebrating with the rest of our family at a reception when we returned home. It really was a beautiful day. The particular photograph I mentioned is of Adam and I in an embrace heads together kissing on the beach as the sun was setting and the sky displayed an amazing array of colour. I truly love this photograph. Although I can now no longer see that photo, the memory is etched upon my mind forever.
news on TV, she fell in love with Devotion and also another piece entitled The Wave, she bought both of these pieces, on delivering the work I could tell that Devotion was going to a good home and would be loved as much as I loved creating it.

I guess I share this with you as it is a story of how LOVE is the creator of all things. As a sculptor I have the greatest honour of expressing my experiences through my work, this is such a blessing for me.

Adam is my soulmate, he is my greatest support, I trust and share everything with him, he is always by my side, through the good times and the bad, even when the temperamental artist is out in full swing! He has been such a rock through my journey of accepting and finding the beauty in my blindness, he is always advocating adaptivity and solutions to the way in which blind people can do things. I am so lucky to have found my soulmate and to be able to travel through this journey with him is the greatest honour of all.

**About the Author:**
Victoria Claire is a registered blind Professional Artist in Contemporary Sculpture, Public Speaker, Retina UK Ambassador, Writer, Musician, Sight loss Mentor, and Advocate. Based in the UK her artistic career spans 25 years, her work is owned all over the world and she has had many solo exhibitions in the UK including Central London. Speaking as an inspirational speaker all around the world, she shares her journey of sight loss and the beauty within blindness, proving that with a positive mindset, an openness to adaptivity and accessibility a wonderful life is there for the taking, full of success, achievement, and joy.

**To find out more about Victoria please visit:**
www.victoriaclaire-beyondvision.com or www.victoriaclairesculpture.com
New Disability Emojis Are Rolling Out This Year

Catherine Boldt

Unicode Consortium, the non-profit organization that oversees emojis, recently announced a new collection of emojis that will roll out in the fall. This new set of 230 messaging icons includes images of people with disabilities and some of the devices that we use. The disability community has long needed images beyond the classic wheelchair symbol to express our diversity. The fact that some of the emojis can be customized to display various skin tones further acknowledges our expanding diversity.

The new disability emojis include a white cane and a white cane user; prosthetic limbs; a motorized wheelchair and a motorized wheelchair user. These are all very exciting and welcome additions and demonstrate that people with disabilities are having an impact on the participatory social media revolution. However, they do not go far enough. We need to have emojis that depict people with ambulatory disabilities such as users of canes, crutches and rollators and so many other identities.
I am so thrilled to observe that people with disabilities are using the blogosphere, Instagram, and Twitter to share our images with the rest of the world. This is evidence that we are out there searching to connect with one another. We are out there promoting pride for our community. We are out there pushing for representation and control over our own images through publications like CAPTIVATING! Magazine which you are reading right now.

I can hardly wait to see how our community will use these messaging icons to raise awareness even more. I am very optimistic that these emojis will be a useful tool to express pride in our community and serve as a catalyst for even more inclusive and diverse emojis in the future.

About the Author: Catherine Boldt has spent her adult life being a disability advocate. She is a designer and works in the Education Outreach Department and provides accessible tours at Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's Estate. She is a past President of The Canadian Research Institute For The Advancement of Women, where she presided over an International Conference on Women with Disabilities and initiated a national essay contest and book called "That Body Image Thing".
Heart health is important for all people. This is especially true for people with disabilities. For a long time, I used my visual impairment as an excuse for why I could not live a healthy lifestyle.

By the age of twenty-two, I had reached the weight of 200.9lbs. This meant that, with my height of five foot four inches, my BMI was classified as “obese.”

My family physician was very kind to me during my yearly visit. “Rebecca,” he said gently, “You know that I am the doctor for your mother, your grandmother, and your entire family. High blood pressure runs in your family. You are very young to have a BMI this high. For your own health, and the health of your heart, I have to recommend that you lose some weight.”
“If I lose some weight, will I be healthy?” I asked.

“No,” he replied. “Good health is holistic. It takes more than weight loss. Good health is a lifetime commitment; however, losing weight, eating a balanced diet, and living a healthy lifestyle are all good ways to do our best to ensure a long and healthy life.”

Happy Heart Health Awareness Month!
February is Heart Health Awareness Month! According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, ”heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year, one in four deaths are caused by heart disease. (ODPHP, n.d.).”

Although according to the Center for Disease Control, some traits that can cause heart disease are likely genetic, there are still some key things that all people can do to lower their risk of heart disease (CDC, n.d.). I turned thirty in July and I am happy to say that I am the healthiest I have ever been in my entire life. I have lost over 75lbs. I also ran my first half marathon in 2018.

Here are some small but significant steps that I took in my life that added up to a big difference in my overall health- and the health of my heart!

Step 1: Stop Smoking- Or Don’t Start!
True confession time: My first job was in food service. It can often be challenging for people with disabilities to find employment. That is why I was thrilled with my first job, even though it was exhausting work that was often less than glamorous.

At this particular job, I quickly learned that people who were smokers got more frequent breaks. My allergies were too bad to allow me to pick up the habit (I’m highly sensitive to cigarette smoke) but I can understand the temptation. I understand that smoking is an addiction and that tobacco use is highly habit-forming.

According to the NHS, smoking can greatly increase your risk of heart attack, stroke, COPD, and lung cancer (NHS, 2018). If you are a smoker, I encourage you to consider taking strides to quit this February.

Step Two: Find Ways to Be Active That You Enjoy
I love to run—but that wasn’t always the case. I used to loathe exercising when I was a young child. I was terrified of gym class because I couldn’t see what was happening. Kids can be cruel and I was constantly being hit in the face with basketballs, volleyballs, and kick balls.

I carried my hatred of sports into my adult years. I became anxious whenever I set foot in my college’s fitness center. I was uncertain of how to work any of the machines and I couldn’t even see the buttons on the treadmill.

It wasn’t until years later that I learned that the key to health is finding an exercise that you enjoy and that fits with your unique abilities. Eventually, I discovered that I enjoyed walking.
I walked for miles and miles on the treadmill and around the track at my graduate school. Many years later, walking turned into running.

**Step Three: Reduce Stress- Try Yoga!**
I know that not everyone has the ability to walk—but I am certain everyone who is reading this article is breathing!

If you can breathe, then you can do yoga! Yoga is a great way to relieve stress and improve your sleep cycle. The American Heart Association recommends reducing stress and getting sufficient sleep as two ways that you can reduce your risk of heart disease (AHA, 2017).

I led yoga for over a year at my church and I taught people of all ages and ability levels. Many yoga asanas (poses) and vinyasas (flows) can be adapted for people to do while seated. I am a huge fan of **chair yoga** and **adapted yoga**.

Often, when we think about yoga, we tend to place an emphasis on the physical poses or asanas; however, the heart of any holistic yoga practice is connecting to one’s **breathing**. Not everyone can shape their bodies into a downward facing dog position, but everyone can learn to calm their minds and control their breathing.

By combining both yoga and meditation, we can create a holistic practice in our own lives that is both relaxing and refreshing. It can even help to improve your sleep cycle, reduce back pain, and improve concentration.

**Step Four: Make Small Changes to Your Diet to See A Big Difference!**
It’s no secret that I love food. My friends and family constantly joke that I am always hungry. I also have a serious sweet tooth.

When I first started attempting to live a healthy lifestyle, I slashed my calorie intake to 1200 calories a day and exercised for at least an hour every day.

It didn’t take me long to learn that for me, this type of dramatic lifestyle change just wasn’t going to work all at once. I was so hungry that I couldn’t concentrate during my graduate classes. One day, I almost fainted while walking home from the bus stop. As a person with low vision, it’s incredibly important for me to do my best to not become disoriented while traveling. For my own safety and peace of mind, I decided that I would make **small but significant** changes to my diet.

I started by reducing my sweets and allowed myself to eat only one dessert a week. I joined Weight Watchers, and as part of the program, I was allowed to eat as many fruits and vegetables as I wanted. This taught me to fill my plate with mostly salad and other green foods. Eventually, I learned that being healthy didn’t have to mean that I constantly felt famished.

Now, eight years later, these small changes have made a huge difference in my life. It feels natural for me to eat a healthy diet and I have even developed a taste for salad! Years ago, if you would have told me that I would crave romaine lettuce, I would have
never believed you.

**Striding Toward Heart Health**
My New Year’s resolution is to run my very first marathon in 2019. Running is a great way for me to relieve stress and is an important part of my attempt to live a healthy lifestyle. Even if you don’t enjoy running, try asking yourself: What other activities do I enjoy? What small changes can I make to my diet? Do I take time to relax?

My marathon training has taught me that the most important part of reaching any goal is taking it one step at a time. We just need to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

Even if your mobility is limited, we can all take small but significant metaphorical steps to improving our own heart health.

Remember- it’s not about winning. It’s how you run the race!

**Sources:**
"Even if your mobility is limited, we can all take small but significant metaphorical steps to improving our own heart health. Remember- it’s not about winning. It’s how you run the race!" ~Rebecca Holland

Sources Contd.


About the Author:
Over the past 3 and a half years I have been walking a very spiritual pathway, with the guidance of my holistic therapist I have found the source of unconditional love. This has been an awakening for me on so many levels. For so many years I have lived with low self worth and self love. I had never felt good enough and then when I was diagnosed with the progressive eye condition of Retinitis Pigmentosa this feeling just strengthened even more. I had lived a very limited, restrictive life because I believed that I was not good enough.

My spiritual awakening has been the most important journey I have ever travelled. It has given me the insight into my inner being. My greatest lesson has been to understand LOVE cannot be truly gained from "out there", it needs to come from within, to find a sense of loving kindness and compassion for yourself is the most healing experience you can ever have. Self love will unlock all the restrictions we as people with disabilities put upon ourselves with our negative thoughts and beliefs, those beliefs can come from living in an uneducated society.

Finding Self Love

VICTORIA CLAIRE
With self-love and acceptance, we can find our best life and truly enjoy the life we are living.

When I found love for myself came from my inner being and not from any outward source I was able to accept and love myself with a whole heart. It helped me embrace all of my imperfections and see my blindness as my profound gift. With self-love, we can be the best version of ourselves which in turn will create better relationships with the people around us and indeed attract like-minded people into our lives.

The best relationship we will ever have is the one we have with ourselves. I share a piece of work that I created recently for a commission, it is entitled An Open Heart, the heart holds a suspension of a rose quartz, this is the crystal for love.

May you all enjoy the gift of self-love and all the gifts it brings and Happy Valentine's Day to all xx by Victoria Claire.

About the Author:
Victoria Claire is a registered blind Professional Artist in Contemporary Sculpture, Public Speaker, Retina UK Ambassador, Writer, Musician, Sight loss Mentor, and Advocate. Based in the UK her artistic career spans 25 years, her work is owned all over the world and she has had many solo exhibitions in the UK including Central London. Speaking as an inspirational speaker all around the world, she shares her journey of sight loss and the beauty within blindness, proving that with a positive mindset, an openness to adaptivity and accessibility a wonderful life is there for the taking, full of success, achievement, and joy.

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“INCLUSION IS A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE FOR A SELECT FEW”
Aswan And Abu Simbel: Magic In Egypt

BEATRIZ GARCÍA MARTÍN Originally Published on 12 December 2018 on blindcanegirl.com

February is Heart Health Awareness Month! The ancient Egyptians held the heart in high regard. They believed that after a person passed away, his or her heart was weighed on the scales of Anubis. In order to gain entrance to the afterlife, a person's heart had to be lighter than a feather. We can't promise that this wonderful article by Beatriz, our travel writer, will gain you entrance to the afterlife- but we can guarantee that her words and images will make your heart soar!

Aswan was our first stop in our route from the South to the North of Egypt through the Nile. Having breakfast at the hotel, we met Hager, a woman from Cairo who was spending some weeks in Aswan. We invited her to join us and she did. We spent a very nice time together sailing on a felucca to the Aswan Botanic Island. Views there were fantastic. The entrance fee is 20 L.E.

Later we sailed to Elephantine Island where we visited the Aswan Museum and
ruins from some temples. Entrance is 70 L.E. After visiting many places in Egypt I would say this museum is not worthy. However, we visited the **Nubian Museum** where we could learn about the Nubians and see the firsts sarcophagus of our trip. The Museum was quite dark so Hager and Mat guided me.

Next day was a big day! We departed around 4 a.m. to **Abu Simbel** for 250 L.E. The temples in Abu Simbel are breathtaking. This is one of the most amazing places I have been in Egypt. Built more than 3.000 years ago, **Ramses II temple** is one of the treasuries of Egypt. It has been moved by UNESCO stone by stone to preserve it. Inside you can see the frescoes and, every year, for the birthday of Ramses II and the day he became king, the sunlight enters until the last wall of the temple to light the face of the figure of Ramses II and his favourite wife Nefertari. We paid the entrance, a local fee and a guide fee and if you want to make pictures inside the temples, there is another fee... tourists are business.

Before starting our cruise in Aswan, we sailed to Agilika Island to visit the **Philae Temple Complex**. There we entered into the Temple of Isis, wife of Osiris and goddess of fertility, motherhood and magic.
About the Author: Beatriz is a visually impaired woman and a travel blogger who loves to explore new places. She holds a master's degree in Communication and works on an entrepreneurial project selling dolls online. Losing her sight due to Retinitis Pigmentosa, she chooses to enjoy and share her passion for traveling now. You can follow her adventures in theblindcanegirl.com.
Why the Media Needs to Portray Disability More Accurately

JUAN ALCAZAR

“Are you like Daredevil?” Now while I haven’t gotten asked that question (even though it’d be pretty cool if I did) I’ve noticed that that question or a similar one tends to come up here and there when a blind or visually impaired person is asked if they have heightened senses due to their sight. As funny as that question may sound it does make me sometimes stop and think about how disability is portrayed in the media.

In my opinion, I believe that the general public’s education about disability comes from what is seen in movies, TV shows, stage productions, read in books or even shown on the news. In these instances, a good amount of the time the disabled person or character is either shown as someone who should be pitied and is incapable and helpless, or they’re seen as a super achiever, put on a pedestal and called “inspirational”. There seems to be no middle ground to show disabled people as, well...people.

This can, unfortunately, create or continue stereotypes and misconceptions about
disability and what a disabled person should act, look and be like. As a result, all of this can manifest itself in the real world in some nasty and negative ways. An example would be a person confronting a disabled person who parked in a disabled spot and accusing them of faking it because they don’t “look disabled”.

Recently a picture of a woman using her cell phone while using her white cane was posted and went viral. The woman was ridiculed and accused of faking her disability because she didn’t fit the stereotypical image of what a lot of society believes a blind person is supposed to be like.

I’m not going to say that media portrayals of disabled people are the only factor in how disability is judged and looked at but because entertainment can be such an influence on mindset and opinions it’s quite a large factor that can’t be ignored.

What needs to be shown more is the fact that disability whether physical or mental is a spectrum and within those disabilities are many more spectrums. There are blind people who use smartphones because they have some remaining vision. There are deaf people who aren’t fluent in sign language or don’t use hearing aids. There are wheelchair users who are able to stand and walk for a few minutes or for a few steps at a time. There are people who have chronic pain but do their best to not show it and try to smile through it. None of these people are faking their disability.

It would be nice if there were more fictional characters like this or even people who are being documented in a news story shown like this. Seeing them living out their lives as regular people who have adapted to their limitations rather than someone trying to overcome them. It would be nice to see a piece where a character’s disability isn’t a central focus of the plot or of who the character is but rather a part of what makes the person who they are.

As far as actors who play disabled characters go. Well, that can be its own article right there. If you ask me disabled actors should be considered for disabled roles but I think the individual who can play the character the best and most accurate should eventually get the role whether they’re disabled or not. It’s a tricky thing but either way, I do think a disabled actor who may be right for a role should get a fair shot for consideration like an able-bodied actor who may be right for the role. This wouldn’t just be for disabled roles but also for abled roles as well.

As much as it’s important to portray disability accurately it doesn’t start with the talent we see onscreen. Instead, it starts with the talent we don’t see offscreen. If we're wanting to see better disability representation in the media then there needs to be disabled writers, producers, directors etc.

I’m not saying that an able-bodied writer can’t write a good disabled character.
the writers before them and draw from that and little will likely change as a result.

I’m also not saying that every single disabled character needs to be ultra-realistic in everything. At the end of the day this is entertainment, so we want to see superheroes or action stars etc. We still want to have a temporary escape from our everyday lives just like everyone else who goes to a movie or starts a binge-watching session.

All I’m saying is I’m hoping for a bit of authenticity and accuracy in what we watch, read, or listen. I know that things won’t change overnight or anything like that but a little education amongst the entertainment and news stories can go a very long way.

I’m just saying it could be a much simpler job in the hands of a writer who happens to have the same or a similar disability.

A writer is going to write what they know and if all they know happens to fall into the stereotypes category then you’ll end up getting a stereotypical character. It’s not really their fault though because like I said it could be all they know. This can end up pretty badly however because without proper or accurate representation the writers of the future will just be falling back on the work of

About the Author:

Juan Alcazar is a legally blind filmmaker/YouTuber. He attended film school at San Francisco State University. His YouTube channel JC5 Productions focuses on telling stories through films or personal videos. His channel also focuses on visual impairment and disability with the goal of showing that everyone has stories to tell no matter what their limitations are.
How Do Blind and Visually Impaired People Use a Mobile Phone

HOLLY TUKE

People often wonder how I use my iPhone because I’m registered as blind and have no useful vision, they are usually genuinely interested and have no idea about what features that enable blind and visually impaired people to use mobile phones, computers, tablets and other devices.

Recently, a photo of a blind lady looking at her phone whilst using a white cane was shared on Facebook with the caption ‘if you see what’s wrong with this photo say I see it.’ With many people commenting that the person was faking her blindness, just because she was looking at her phone whilst using her long cane. As you can imagine, blind and visually impaired people like myself have been outraged by such comments, it baffles me why people think that a person would want to fake being blind. Why do people think that you can’t be blind and use a phone?
Having a visual impairment doesn’t mean that we can’t use a phone, it’s a lifeline for many blind and visually impaired people. We can use mobile phones just like sighted people, we just use accessibility features to enable us to do so.

For those of you that have read my blog for a while then you will know that I try to tackle the common misconceptions and stigmas surrounding visual impairment and disability in the hope to educate people and change their wrongly perceived ideas surrounding sight loss and disability. I thought I would tell you exactly how blind and visually impaired people use mobile phones, explaining some of the accessibility features in the hope to stop people making assumptions such as the recent Facebook photo.

I’m going to be discussing accessibility features that are available on iPhones (and any other Apple products) and Android devices as these are currently the most popular amongst the blind and visual impairment community, but other makes and models of phones have accessibility features as well.

Let’s get to business, shall we?

Accessibility features are built-in to Apple and Android devices, meaning that they are accessible to blind and visually impaired people straight out of the box. This is great as it means that we can use these devices straight away, just like sighted people.

So how do blind and visually impaired people use mobile phones?

As I have previously said, there is a range of features that mean that we can use phones just like sighted people, these features enable us to complete a range of tasks on our phones – keeping in contact with friends and family, reading and responding to emails, reading a good book, browsing the internet, online shopping, booking train tickets and checking bus and train times, online banking, using social media, getting to where we need to be, playing games, listening to music and so much more, the list goes on!

So, here’s a run-down of some of the accessibility features that blind and visually impaired people use.

**Screen-reader**

VoiceOver on Apple products such as the iPhone and TalkBack on Android devices are screen-readers that are built-in to these devices. The screen-reader reads out loud everything that’s on the screen. VoiceOver and TalkBack work with thousands of apps meaning that we can enjoy using iPhones or Android devices, just like sighted people. From texting to calling, scrolling through social media, managing money, online shopping and responding to important work emails, blind and visually impaired people can use a mobile phone, even if they have no useful vision.

The screen-readers also read out images (when they have descriptions) so this is why it’s vital for people to add alt text to images.
on their blog or website and descriptions to images they upload on social media.

I personally use VoiceOver on my iPhone as I am a screen-reader user as I have no useful vision. I couldn’t imagine my life without my iPhone, I use it every single day for all sorts of things both for work and in my personal life.

**Zoom**
Zoom is a magnifier that enables people with low vision to zoom or magnify the screen. It works with built-in apps and third-party apps, making phones fully accessible.

You can also make the text larger and bolder, making it easier to see across all applications.

**Magnifier**
The camera on your phone can be used like a digital magnifying glass, to increase the size so you can see things more clearly. The flash can be used to light the object, filters can be used to differentiate between colours and photos can be taken and saved to get a close-up.

**Speak screen**
Some blind and visually impaired people may use zoom or other features but may need speech from time to time, this is where speak screen comes in. Speak screen does exactly what it says, it reads the screen out loud. This can be great for reading emails, reading a book or if you are struggling to read text. This is ideal for people who don’t need to use a screen-reader but could sometimes benefit from a speech functionality.

**Display accommodations**
For people with some useful vision, there is the option to invert colours, reduce white point, enable greyscale or select a range of filters to support a range of colours for various levels of vision.

**Dictation**
Dictation is a speech-to-text functionality, it means that you don’t have to type, you can talk to your phone instead, this means that you can dictate messages, tweets, Facebook posts, emails and much more.

Just like using a Google Home or Amazon Echo, phones also have similar features as well. You can use Siri or Google Assistant to complete a variety of tasks – making calls, checking the weather, listen to music, open an app and much more.

These accessibility features enable blind and visually impaired people like myself to use mobile phones just like sighted people. Just because a person has a visual impairment, this doesn’t stop us from using it. These features have been designed to give disabled people full access to technology at our fingertips, give us greater independence and it means that we can use it like everyone else.

I got my first phone when I was younger, I’ve gone from using a small phone with no accessibility features and having family and friends on speed dial, to using phones with a
keyboard with a screen-reader and then the iPhone which revolutionised the experience for me. It’s given me independence and means I can use a phone just like my sighted friends and family. Thousands of apps are available at my fingertips. I use my iPhone for navigating unfamiliar areas or getting to where I need to be, do a bit of blogging, check social media, browse the internet, respond to emails, read, listen to music, keep in contact with my friends, recognise products the list goes on. One thing I love is the fact that people with a visual impairment can use mobile phones straight out the box with their accessibility features. Mainstream devices are fully accessible with no extra costs added for blind and visually impaired people and that’s the way it should be.

So, the next time you see a blind or visually impaired person using a phone whilst using their long cane, they are not faking their visual impairment, we can use phones just like you can. The possibility of a person using a mobile phone whilst using a long cane is not an alien concept. As a long cane user myself, I regularly use my phone when out and about, it helps me in more ways than I can describe.

There is a wrongly perceived idea that if you are blind then you see nothing at all, but there is a spectrum of sight and 93% of blind people have some useful vision. It may not be much, but it helps them navigate this predominantly sighted world. Simple adaptations such as a screen-reader, zoom and easy access to a magnifier are a lifeline for many of us and we couldn’t complete some daily tasks without the use of our mobile phone.

Many blind and visually impaired people now feel embarrassed to use their phone whilst out in public, it’s people’s wrongly perceived ideas and assumptions that make them feel this way. I personally use my phone a lot when I’m out for navigation, contacting my friends and family and checking train times, why should I stop doing all of these things because people think I’m faking my blindness? I shouldn’t, it’s not fair. Just because I can’t see my phone, it doesn’t mean that I can’t use it! You don’t have to be sighted to use a mobile phone.
I wanted to share some of the ways how blind and visually impaired people use phones and explain some of the accessibility features that are available on such devices to tackle these wrongly perceived ideas. I hope this post has challenged some of the myths surrounding sight loss and educated some of you on how accessible these devices can be and how important they are for many of us.

I know that not everyone has these outdated, wrongly perceived assumptions, many people are genuinely interested in how we use technology, so I hope this post has given you a bit of an insight.

The next time you meet a blind or visually impaired person, don’t make assumptions about them and their visual impairment, treat them like human beings and don’t think that they are faking their blindness, why on earth would someone want to do that anyway?

If you see a blind or visually impaired person using a mobile phone, remember that they could be using it to complete an important task or it could be assisting them getting to their destination, in the same way yours does.

Accessibility features enable us to use phones, tablets, computers, kindles and other devices just like sighted people. We use them for work, education and for fun, and so do sighted people, our sight loss doesn’t mean that we can’t do all of these things.

See us for who we are, don’t define us by our sight loss.

If you would like to learn more about assistive technology that blind and visually impaired people use then check out some of my other blog posts and videos over on my YouTube channel.

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**About the Author:**

Holly is a 23-year-old disability and lifestyle blogger from the UK. She has a love for beauty, fashion, pop music, and all the usual girly stuff.

You can usually find Holly at a concert, seeing her friends, spending too much time on the internet or reading a good book.

She is blind due to a condition called Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) due to being born at 24 weeks, therefore, she only has light perception in her right eye and has a detached retina in her left eye. She started her blog ‘Life of a Blind Girl’ to share her experiences of living with a visual impairment, tackle the common misconceptions surrounding sight loss and disability and to educate others on these topics.

Head over to lifeofablindgirl.com to find out more!
FOR PEOPLE WITHOUT DISABILITY, TECHNOLOGY MAKES THINGS EASIER. FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, IT MAKES THINGS POSSIBLE
While February is a time for celebrating the achievements of African Americans, the lighthearted anticipation of Groundhog Day and the holiday for sweethearts, there are also critical health awareness events.

- **National Heart Month:** Raises awareness about heart health and urges Americans to lower their risk for developing heart disease.
- **AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month:** Raises awareness about AMD (Age-Related Macular Degeneration) and Low Vision. These disorders have an impact on people of all ages. National Eye Institute and the National Eye Health Education Program (NEHEP).
- **Rare Disease Day February 28:** The main objective of Rare Disease Day is to raise awareness amongst the general public and decision-makers about rare diseases and their impact on patients' lives. The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) is the official Sponsor of Rare Disease Day in the United States.

Here at CAPTIVATING! we understand the importance of acknowledging special awareness days and months. After all, the disability community is the only minority group where anyone can become a member at any time during their life.
Image Descriptions

1. Front cover: on the top quarter of the cover page is the logo and name of the magazine, captivating, written in bold white capital letters except for the V in the magazine name is drawn with an artistic style font in bold red and looks like a big check mark. And at the end of the word, captivating is also a red bold exclamation mark.

On the cover, our featured guest, John Ficca is smiling while looking straight into the camera. He has brown hair and is wearing a blue & white dress shirt and tie the color matches his blue eyes.

2. Page 4: In recognition of Black History Month, is 1963 black & white photo of the Civil Rights March On Washington DC. Photograph shows a diverse crowd of people surrounding the Reflecting Pool and continuing to the Washington Monument.


4. Page 6: Photo of a groundhog emerging from its burrow.

5. Page 7: Three heart-shaped wreaths made out of red bells hanging one directly under the other.

6. Pages 8: On the header of page 8 is an image of a hollow heart carved into a wooden box. Immediately under this photo is the title for the next segment of the magazine which reads - Ask Chelsea & Stephanae.

7. Page 9: Bottom left corner: is a professional profile photo of Chelsea smiling and looking forward with her makeup on, long black hair with copper and Caramel highlights and wearing a black silk top with slits on the sleeves and a silver necklace with a circle pendant in the center.
8. Page 11: Upper right-hand corner of page 11 is a side angled profile photo of Stephanae McCoy smiling and looking straight at the reader of the magazine. She is wearing a rich red lipstick, black eyeliner and very soft natural make up on. Her rich brown hair is short and stylish and accented with golden copper highlights. She is also wearing a professional black jacket and accessorizing it with a silver chained necklace adorned with white diamonds in the shape of a flower with a blue sapphire center stone in the center of each flower. On that same necklace, there are also round peach colored stones throughout the necklace as well.

9. Page 13: Featured guest, John Ficca describes the two photos on the left side of the margin.

10. Page 14: A screen capture from the video interview shows Chelsea Nguyen, John Ficca and Stephanae McCoy.

11. Page 15: Photo of a man and woman sitting on a boulder overlooking a body of water with their backs facing the camera. The man has his right arm around the woman's shoulder.

12. Page 17: Black & white photo of a man and woman athletes on a track. The man is pushing the woman's wheelchair.

13. Page 20: Photo of an older couple walking down a tree-lined path. The person on the right is using a support cane.

14. Page 23: A small circular bio photo of Author Brittany Culp. Her long blond hair is draped over her left shoulder. She has on a black sleeveless top which exposes her tattoo on her right shoulder. Photo credit Alyssa Kaye Photography.

16. **Page 27**: Jeff and Beckie stand in front of a 1959 Cadillac Sedan DeVille and smile. Jeff's arms are wrapped around Beckie. Jeff wears a blue shirt and Beckie wears a blue dress.

17. **Page 29**: Jeff and Beckie share a smooch in front of Jeff's classic car. The car is large and white with shiny silver chrome. Beckie's hair is long and dark.

18. **Page 30**: A photo of our author Rev. Rebecca L. Holland shows her with a big smile wearing her Pastor's collar. Her long dark hair is swept over her right shoulder. She is wearing fashionable eyeglasses and pink lip color.

19. **Page 31**: Close up and slightly blurred image of two silver wedding bands tied together with white satin ribbon. A strand of pearls can be seen off to the side.

20. **Page 32**: An image of blue icons representing a wide range of abilities/disabilities. For example hearing loss, a wheelchair user, pregnancy, arm in a sling, mobility cane user, etc.

21. **Page 33**: A white themed decorated modern looking barn-like banquet hall with picnic tables and colored lights strung on the rafters.

22. **Page 34**: Author, David Solano (sitting in his wheelchair) is posing with his family in a partially filled arena. His wife Angel is standing next to him and in front of her is their youngest daughter and to her left is their oldest daughter. They are casually dressed and smiling for the camera.
23 Page 36: Circular bio photo of David with his daughter Julia standing next to him in a gymnasium. There is a table in front of them with several tall gold trophies.

24. Pages 37 thru 39: The three photos on these pages are described within the article by the Author, Victoria Claire.

25 Page 39: Circular bio photo of Author, Victoria Claire. She is sitting, leaning forward, looking directly at the camera. Her straight blond hair parted in the middle frames her face. Wearing minimal makeup she is stunning with pink frosted lip color and is wearing a sleeveless black dress with a keyhole neckline.


27. Page 41: A circular bio photo of Author, Catherine Boldt. Catherine looks fabulous in a geometric print dress in varying shades of purple and topped with a pink cropped cardigan. Her red hair is shoulder length with bangs and her lip color coordinates perfectly with her outfit. She is posing with color coordinated canes.

28. Page 42: On October 6, 2018, Beckie smiles and poses for a photo after completing her first half marathon. Her one hand is on her hip and her other hand holds her running accessories, which include two water bottles, a headband, and an iPhone. A medal hangs around her neck.

29 & 30. Page 45: Two images are on this page. In the top photo, Beckie grins broadly with her hand on her hip before the Fourth of July 5k in 2018. She wears a pink visor and a pink tank top that reads, "Mind Over Matter." In the second one, Beckie smiles as she holds up her gold medal from the Bedford Fair 5k. She is glowing with happiness because she has won first place in her age group. She has released her long dark hair from its braid and wears a Wonder Woman tank top.
Image Descriptions

31. Page 46: A photo of our author Rev. Rebecca L. Holland shows her with a big smile wearing her Pastor’s collar. Her long dark hair is swept over her right shoulder. She is wearing fashionable eyeglasses and pink lip color.

32. Page 47: The Artist, Victoria Claire describes the wooden sculpture in her article.

33. Page 48: Circular bio photo of Author, Victoria Claire. She is sitting, leaning forward, looking directly at the camera. Her straight blond hair parted in the middle frames her face. Wearing minimal makeup she is stunning with pink frosted lip color and is wearing a sleeveless black dress with a keyhole neckline.

34. Page 49: Ramses II temple carved in the rock at the side of a mountain.

35, 36 & 37. Page 50: Three images on the left margin (#40 Views from the Aswan Botanic Garden Island to the Nile. #41 Beatriz and her Mat friend sailing the Nile on a felucca #42 Four 20 meters statues representing Ramses II at the entrance of Ramses II temple.

38 & 39. Page 51: Image #43 is Beatriz in front of Philae temple in Aswan. #44 Is the circular author bio photo of Beatriz standing outside in a gray winter coat. As she is on one of her many travels, in the background of the photo are blurred images of people and several indistinguishable buildings.

40. Page 52: Close up photo of a camera.

41 & 42. Page 54: Image number 46 is a stack of folded newspapers. Photo 47 is a circular bio photo of Author, Juan Alcazar that shows him smiling while posing with his white cane and an 8mm camera.

43. Page 55: Close-up blurred photo of a woman’s well-manicured hands holding a cell phone.
Image Descriptions

44. Page 58: Slightly blurred image of a hand using an upright tablet.


46. Page 60: A close-up photo of a stethoscope with a red heart standing upright in the middle of the photo. This image is representative of Hearth Healthy Month.

47 thru 52. Pages 61 thru 66: The images on these pages alternate between right and left margins. Each is representative of AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month and Rare Disorder Day. The first photo is a closeup of an eyeball, second is a magnifier, third is a blurred laboratory, the rest are microscopic photos of DNA strands, red blood cells, and a cell nucleus.