



Understand disability

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Disability is a very ambiguous and complex concept, so there are many definitions. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that "a person with a disability is a person whose significant impairments and organism functional deficits prevent, impede or limit the efficient functioning in the society, taking into account factors such as gender, age and external factors." So much for the definition. It refers to the entire population as it affects almost 15% of the society. In addition, every person in the course of his / her life can become a disabled person, and many of us experience loss of abilities in the process of aging.

Definition is necessary for institutions and bodies acting for the benefit of persons with disabilities, as it informs about the individuals for various reasons being wholly or partly dependent, which is the basis for granting the forms of assistance. But in no way does it contribute to understanding the consequences of disability for the people experiencing it. How does it affect the reception of the world, daily activities, relationships with others, self-esteem... What exactly is disability? And can one understand it? On the level of empathic compassion? ... It's definitely worth a try. Start with yourself ... Consider for a moment what our existence is, our presence in the surrounding reality.

Thanks to the perceptive system (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch), we receive information about what is happening next to us and within us (eg we experience the position of the body). So we experience something: we see, we hear, we feel. These data are interpreted by the cerebral cortex so we understand what is going on around us. We are aware that, for example, we are just sitting at the computer and reading the article. At the same time (sometimes a little sooner or later) our brain evaluates the existing state of things. These are the emotions. We adopt an emotional attitude to the situation we are in. As a result, we are inclined to make a decision - what's next. If we are interested - we continue reading if bored, disappointed - we shut down the computer or look for something more interesting. We just take action. We continue to do so or change it. What is the situation of people with disabilities? Difficulties may appear at the beginning, at the "entrance", ie when collecting information from the environment starts. It may be lack of stimuli, limitations or disturbances in the sight, hearing or other senses. Dysfunctions can affect one, two, or even all senses simultaneously. They may have a very varied form and intensity. So the impressions that they convey from the outside reality will be different from this of the average person. The brain receives and processes the data, generates a picture of reality - and the person accepts it. Because it's his/her world. In individuals with perceptual dysfunction these "worlds" will more or less deviate from the average. People with autism are particularly vulnerable because their disorders can be not only very extensive and very intense but also variable, which is an additional and very serious impediment.

"Somehow" we perceive the reality that surrounds us and automatically interpret it at a rational level. We just understand where we are, what is going on, where we came from, or why ... The level of this understanding is very different and depends on our intellectual ability. On the average level - we have a good interpretation of the surrounding world to work in it without experiencing collisions. The lower - the harder it is to know where, what and how we are doing. In the case of people with profound intellectual disability, there is only the reception (and usually very distorted one) the stimuli, without the ability to integrate them, interpret, memorize. In this situation, daily experiences and repeated impressions for a very long time can be seen as completely new, not experienced before. This situation makes learning impossible. Every situation in which we find ourselves is accompanied by some emotional evaluation. It can be fun when we experience satisfaction, a sense of calm ... it can only be emotional excitement (eg when we are waiting for the exam result and this result will only decide whether it will be joy or sadness) or it can give uncomfortable feelings like feeling threatened, fear, sadness. In the safe situations of everyday life, when nothing unusual or threatening happens, we feel a sense of calm, a gentle acceptance of what is there. This is a priceless feeling of psychophysical wellbeing. Emotions are essentially independent of the level of



perceptual and intellectual ability. This means that we all feel similar emotions in response to external and internal feelings. Even if we can not call them and we are not fully aware of their experiencing.

As a result of the reception and interpretation of reality, we undertake some action. They are the responses to our needs and expectations of others to us. We do something, so we just go somewhere, we talk, we listen or sometimes - we do not do anything. Well, that's ok, if this is our decision. Worse - if it is a necessity. People with motor limitations may not always be able to engage in activities according to their own will. Sometimes they are just harder - but they can still be independent, sometimes forced to expect the help of others, and sometimes their capabilities are drastically reduced. It is worth mentioning here Jean-Dominique Bauby (author of the book "Diving bell and butterfly"), who was paralyzed at the age of 43 after a stroke. He kept his memories of his past life, he had the opportunity to hear and understand, but could only move his left eyelid. And using it - he wrote a book.

Such difficult situations, when there are serious damages to all aspects of conscious existence, sometimes involve small children. They live in "their own worlds" with very limited possibilities of being understood, with great difficulty in performing even the simplest moves. With a natural desire to experience psychophysical wellbeing. Even the deepest layers of parental love will not allow them to feel at the level of empathic harmony how their disabled children "experience life". It is biologically impossible. Because each of us has our "first home" - the body that generates individual experiences and actions. But we can, and even should, be aware of these "differences". Reflectively react on the causes of specific, sometimes very non-standard ways of responding. Understand them because they have their causes and what they serve. And above all, we need to know the real needs - among which there will always be a desire for security, belonging and love. And accept, because acceptance protects against "repairing at any cost." It will allow us to accept limits, promote development and accompany us in our life and give us a sense of existence.

We all want to live in a meaningful and friendly world, among friendly people. At the level of activity available. In a sense of well-being. I believe it is possible for everyone. Through openness, acceptance, kindness, and the help of others. Thanks to consciousness, good will, and empathy channel available only to us - humans.

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