

Derrick Davis
Observing people that use assistive technology

Recently, I had the chance to sit with two individuals that used assistive technology in their lives. The first individual was born with a disability and the second person was just diagnosed with a disability in the past 7 days. What I was able to take away from my experience will impact me for the rest of my life. In this short paper I will discuss what I saw over the course of two visits with two people using assistive technology in their lives.

Initially, I thought living with a disability would always be a challenge. After spending time with Annie, I realized that over time a disability is just something that inconveniences you at the beginning, but after a while it's like chewing gum you don't even think about it.

Annie is a quadriplegic, she was born with this disability and I've known her for 21 years. I haven't seen her in years, until recently. I went to her home to spend the day with her. She has learned to use her hand in a claw like fashion to grasp things. Just recently she was given a stylus for her mouth so she could write on a tablet PC. She loves computers and this appliance allows her to click and write on a computer without the help of others. I tried to use a stylus to click icons on her tablet, and I can say it was very challenging. Watching her do it made me think it was simple. It was very challenging to the point I got frustrated, and immediately started to find ways to improve the technology.

The second person I observed recently was Sarah, she was recently diagnosed with Diabetes, and her body shut down this past week. She passed out and was unable to walk. I was able to visit her over the weekend at a local hospital, and she had to learn how to walk using a walker. As the tears dripped down her face I realized how we take for granted our abilities. The nurse used a nylon belt to guide her as she took baby steps. The walker was equipped with tennis balls so she could effectively slide the walker across the floor.

From both of these subjects I realized that although there situations are entirely different, you have to move on with life and adapt to your circumstances. Will power and understanding of the devices and also realizing that if you don't use the technology presented you will not be able to move forward with your life.

The second observation was more challenging for me to grasp because the person was just diagnosed recently, and they were learning there devices as I was there. I also realized that learning to live with a disability can be the biggest hump in adapting to the technology presented in front of you. And as you use the devices given to you over time they can aid your life in positive ways.