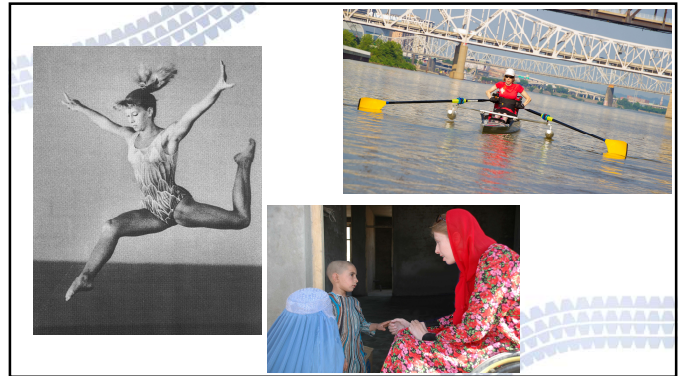


the Journey

discovering emotional
and spiritual health
after disability



Why focus on the emotional impact?

Why focus on the emotional impact?

Adults with disabilities are more than four times more likely to experience frequent mental distress, defined as fourteen or more mentally unhealthy days out of the past thirty days (Cree et al. 2018).

Why focus on the emotional impact?

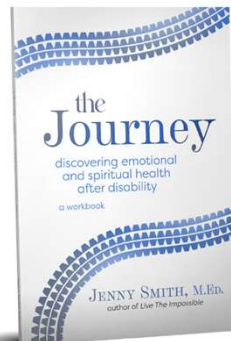
Many people with disabilities may believe they won't—or actually don't—experience the typical milestones of life in education, relationships, or work and volunteer opportunities (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment 2014).

The Journey

Educational support group to help people cope with the emotional and spiritual impact of disability

Topics include:

- ▶ Reflecting on Your Story
- ▶ Naming Your Losses
- ▶ Navigating the Journey of Grief
- ▶ Experiencing Change and Transition
- ▶ Living in Paradox
- ▶ Coping with Stress and Trauma
- ▶ Refilling Your Emotional, Physical, and Spiritual Resources
- ▶ Finding Meaning and Purpose in Life

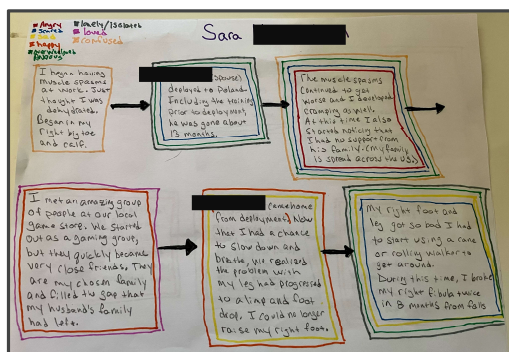
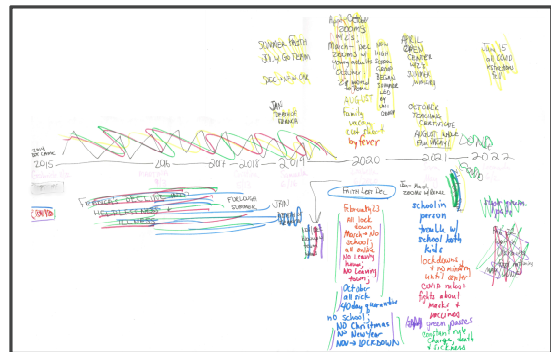


Why Take Time to Reflect?

Reflect *backward* upon our story to help us move *forward* into this unexpected life

Activity: Timeline

- Remember the people, events, and locations in our story
- The emotions go with those events



Naming Our Losses

Losses

- Tangible losses
- Intangible losses

Tangible Losses

- Loss of physical ability/health after the onset of physical disability or illness
- Loss of a job or career
- Death of a loved one

Intangible Losses

- Loss of identity
- Loss of income
- Loss of relationships or change in relationships
- Loss of confidence or self-image
- Loss of faith
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of independence
- Loss of holiday traditions
- Loss of dreams for the future
- Loss of safety and security

Journey of Grief



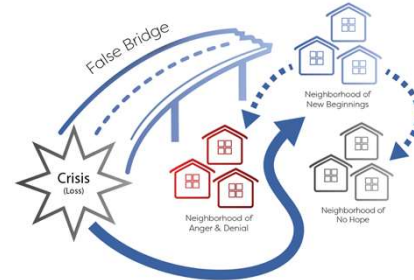
Adapted from *Healing the Wounds of Trauma*.
© 2021 ABS and SIL International. Used by Permission.

Hope

Hope is faith in someone or something that is foundational to our purpose. Hope with a capital *H* is not determined by our present circumstances (e.g., if we are happy, have all we want, or have good physical health). Hope can be rooted in faith, religious or spiritual practice, or personal beliefs.

hope is a desired outcome. Examples: the belief that research will provide a cure; the desire to have children; the expectation we will get married; the confidence that if we [work harder, pray more, eat right] we will [get better, have all we want, live an easier life].

The Grief Journey



Adapted from Healing the Wounds of Trauma.
© 2021 ABS and SIL International. Used by Permission.

We all grieve differently

- SCI
- Progressive neurological condition
- Aging with a disability since birth
- Aging with a disability since birth

Activity: Lament

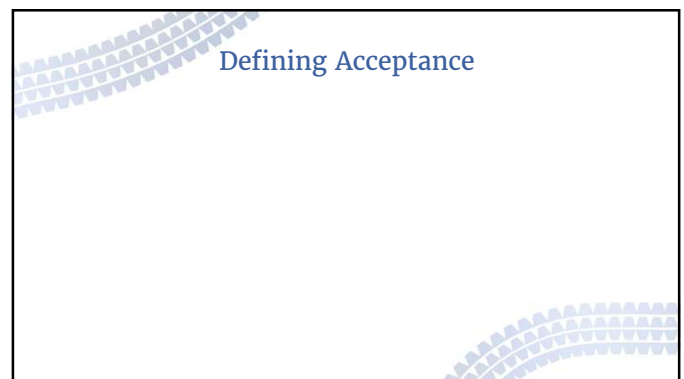
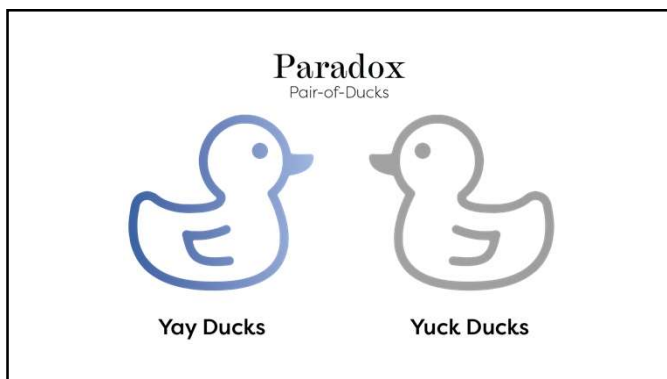
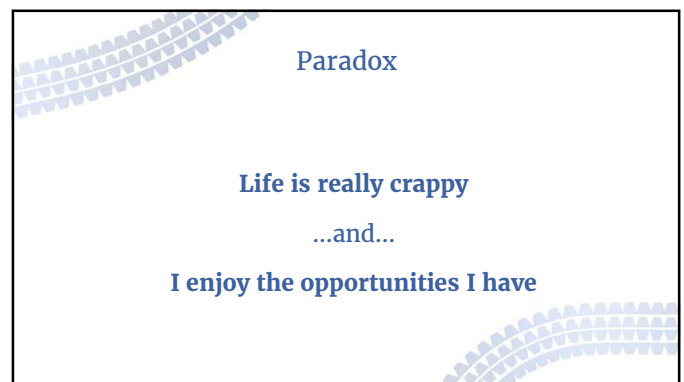
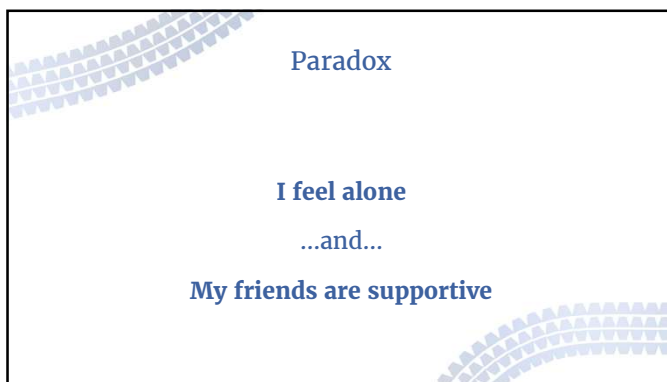
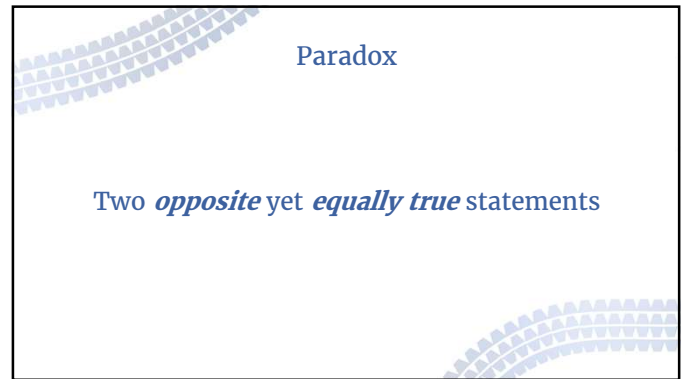
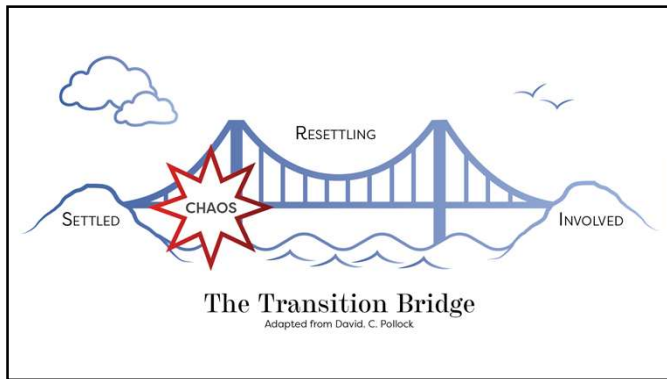
A written statement expressing a combination of sadness, anger, or helplessness, and usually contains a request or complaint directed at God

Will there ever come a day
When I don't have to pray
For the strength not to care
About the things I cannot share?
Oh God, you're my Father, and you made me, sure
But...I want to be more
More cool, more agile, maybe celebrated
Just not this incomplete mess that you have created!
You made everything and you said all is good
So why is it I'd change a lot, if I could
I hesitate to say you didn't get it right
Because I know I don't have your insight
But I'm over pretending to be fine
Struggling to accept the life that is mine
So I shriek at you and say
Will there ever come a day?

by Julie (54 years post-SCI)

Change and Transition

- **Change:** happens to us
- **Transition:** the internal process of adapting to a new situation



Acceptance

We can think of acceptance as the willingness to live in the tension of paradox.

Stress and Coping Strategies

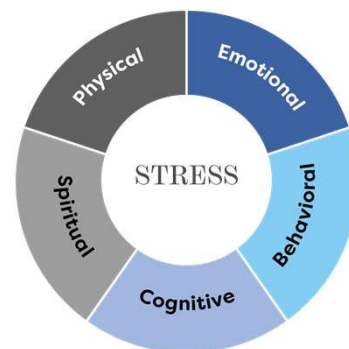
Spinal Cord Injury Survivor
JOB DESCRIPTION



What is Stress?

Stress is a process involving environmental events (stressors), our own reactions to the stress, and the resources we use to cope with the stress.

Kotersky & Sotz, online brochure Stewardship of Self for Christian Workers: Stress



What is Trauma?

Trauma occurs when a person experiences
intense fear, helplessness, or horror

Symptoms of Trauma

- inability to sleep
- panic attacks
- debilitating anxiety
- nightmares
- substance abuse
- numbing all emotion
- depression
- in some cases—post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Coping Strategies for Stress and Anxiety

- Deep Breathing
- Rhythmic Tapping
- Listen to your heartbeat
- Break the day into segments
- Imagine a container

Refill Your Cup



Characteristics of Rest and Refilling

- Looks different for everyone
- Must be intentional

Characteristics of Rest and Refilling

- What happens when a person has lost the primary sources of rest and refilling (e.g., physical activity, walking in nature, taking a long drive, having a hot shower, etc.)
- Name activities they can adapt to refill their emotional, physical, and spiritual resources.
- How can these activities be adapted?

He who has a “why” to live for can bear almost any “how.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Finding Meaning and Purpose

- Setting goals and pursuing new experiences
- Loving selflessly
- Finding courage and meaning in suffering

My purpose and meaning statement:

I will use my skills of _____ to
(talents, strengths, abilities)
 _____ SO
(what I love to do)
 _____.
(what I am passionate about)

My purpose and meaning statement:

I will use my skills of discernment, listening, and
 patience to encourage others so they can live a
 full and abundant life.

Closing

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone
 who asks you to give the reason for the hope that
 you have (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).










Now

The Church's Role in Supporting the Disability Community (Christian Standard)



SPEAKER TOPICS:

- Live the Impossible (Keynote)
- The Journey (Interactive workshop on the emotional impact of disability)
- What You Want to Know about Spinal Cord Injuries: The Physical, Emotional, Sexual and Spiritual Impact
- 10 Tips for Traveling with a Disability
- Room at the Table: Welcoming People with Disabilities in the Church and Missions

