

BOOK REVIEW

Disability Across the Developmental Life Span: For the Rehabilitation Counselor, 1st edition, J. Smart, pp 518, 2011. Price £57.14. ISBN: 978-0826107343, ISBN-10: 0826107346. Springer Publishing Co., New York.

This handbook describes a broad scope on living with a disability in an able-bodied (American) world. The author normalizes living with disabilities (“abnormal is normal”) and emphasizes the limiting society’s prejudices, stigmas and difficulty in looking beyond a person’s disability (“master status”). This view is strengthened through the use of many quotes by persons with disabilities, illustrating the lived experience.

The handbook describes theories of development and disability (in Part 1) and provides a quite extended overview of developmental theories, ranging from psychoanalytic models of Freud to Behaviorists, such as Pavlov and Skinner (in Part 2). This makes interesting reading, especially for those unfamiliar with developmental psychology. Part 3 (“The experience of disability”) offers a lifespan approach and sums the onset of most types of disabilities across the developmental stages. The author relates to the impact on parents and siblings, as well as understandable pitfalls in setting lower standards in raising and

education of children. These paragraphs are especially relevant for professionals working with children with disabilities and their families, because they provide alternative approaches. In addition, the impact of disabilities on the different stages of the lifespan, both congenital and acquired, are described, although the long-term consequences of not achieving developmental milestones are not given. For readers interested in lifespan approaches for adults with congenital conditions, the book is less relevant. The strength of the book is its focus on identity and social roles, which are influenced by having a disability and the social response to it. It can therefore be recommended for students, clinicians and researchers working with people with disabilities. For people with disabilities and their families the book will contribute to understanding and acknowledgement of their challenges and daily situations in life.

Sander R. Hilberink, MSc

Erasmus MC – University Medical Centre Rotterdam,
Department of Rehabilitation Medicine & Physiotherapy,
PO Box 2040, NL-3000 CA Rotterdam, The Netherlands.
E-mail: s.hilberink@erasmusmc.nl