

# RESILIENCE

A Lifestyle Magazine for People With Disabilities Who Want to Live More Fully

## Hey! You're Not Disabled!

### Starting and Running a Business With a Disability

### Disability Initiatives Benefit Individuals *and* Companies

### Can Disabilities Have a Positive Side?

### Can Happiness Be Learned?



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# RESILIENCE

[www..RESILIENCEmag.com](http://www.RESILIENCEmag.com)

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# Message From the Publisher and Editor

Welcome to *RESILIENCE*.

In this issue, we focus mainly on entrepreneurship.

It's well known that starting a business without a lot of personal wealth or external funding isn't easy.

And that's under great conditions.

Unfortunately, if you have a disability and are starting a business, you probably won't be doing it under *good* conditions, much less *great* conditions.

Like many people who start businesses, if you don't have access to the funds to pay others to do some, most, or all of the required tasks, you'll probably have to do those things yourself. And, you might have to do them for a long time — at least until your business starts succeeding financially.

As a person with a disability, the challenges you face will likely be greater than those of entrepreneurs without disabilities for a variety of reasons.

I don't say this to discourage anyone, but it's important to know the challenges you might face before starting.

Yet, even with the many challenges, a higher percentage of people with disabilities start businesses than those without disabilities.

While this doesn't make sense at first, it does when you look at it more closely.

While people with disabilities get the short end of the stick when starting a business, they also get the short end of the stick when seeking and maintaining employment.

So, those working a job may also face several problems but without some of the benefits of self-employment, which we'll discuss in this issue.

As you consider the challenges related to working a job or starting a business, you'll have to determine which works best for your specific situation.

We hope this issue will help you decide what you want to do and what it will take to do it.

We also list many resources that should help you out if you decide to start a business.

Help is available from the government and various organizations, so be sure to learn more about what's available before taking the leap.

Enjoy the issue.

*-Rick Bowers*

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*Your Dreams Are Our Business*

# Entrepreneurs With Disabilities

Facing and Defeating Challenges on the Path to Success

By Becca Wake

**Don't let**  
*Anything*  
Stop you from  
**Pursuing your**  
**Dreams,**  
Not even  
*You*



Writing had been Susie Winfield's dream since she was a child.

But she had never had the confidence to pursue it publicly and professionally.

“The more I studied the craft and created stories, the more I felt like I had no business even thinking I could do it,” she says. “What did I know? What could I teach people about? Who would even read what I had to say?”

Tormented by these questions and fears, she quit.

“I was the queen of quitting,” she admits. “Always afraid of what people would say instead of focusing on the people who would benefit from my knowledge and experiences.

“I did that for 30 years, but NO MORE!”



Today, Winfield publishes her writing regularly on Medium.com and has close to a thousand followers. She also publishes a Substack newsletter called *Purposeful Words* and her own blog. In addition, she has started a business called Write on the Scene ([writeonthescene.com](http://writeonthescene.com)).

“Finally I have the right mindset to dedicate the time to building a full-fledged writing business,” she says. “Write on the Scene was established to help aspiring writers/bloggers face their fears and pursue their purpose.”

“I know that I can help you if you are struggling with self-doubt because I’ve been there, and so far I’m kicking his butt.”

In between dreaming of being a writer and becoming a writer, Winfield dabbled at writing from time to time but largely left her dream deferred.

Instead, she spent 25 years in a government job with the IRS. Unfortunately, while that job paid the bills, it didn’t fulfill her true passion.

So, what changed for Winfield and brought her back to her dream?

Two things.

“In 2020, I had a stroke that slowed me all the way down,” she says.

Then, just as she was getting better, she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

**“In 2023, as I fought MS for dominance, I decided to try writing once again,” she says. “I’m sick of this dream being deferred, so I am putting most of my time and a lot of my energy into this writing game. I thought that if I died before I really gave this writing a chance that I wouldn’t be happy.”**



Susie Winfield.

Image courtesy of Susie Winfield

Winfield is not alone in joining the self-employment path.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “a larger share of people with a disability were self-employed than were those with no disability in 2023 (8.4 percent versus 5.9 percent).”

There are many reasons that people with disabilities are more likely to start businesses than people without disabilities.

According to the same report, “the unemployment rate for people with a disability was 7.2 percent in 2023, about twice that of those with no disability (3.5 percent). (Unemployed people are those who did not have a job, were available for work, and were actively looking for a job in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.)”

This might be because they weren't able to find a job, were laid off, faced a lack of accommodations in their workplace, endured discrimination, were in a hostile work environment, or lacked opportunities for advancement.

"Individuals with disabilities continue to turn to self-employment and small business development as a viable alternative that provides greater control, choice and flexibility in terms of work schedule, environment and economic advancement," said Thomas Foley, executive director of the National Disability Institute (NDI) in 2022.

According to “Self-Employment & Entrepreneurship,” “Starting one's own business can offer [great] flexibility, allowing people to make a living while maintaining a lot of latitude in choices such as work hours, nature of tasks, and income.”  
(U.S. Department of Labor)

Clearly, among the reasons that people with disabilities start businesses are their lack of inclusion in the jobs labor force and the benefits of self-employment that they especially need. In a way, they are often forced into entrepreneurship.

Also, if they become disabled later in life, they might already have an existing occupation, skills or a passion that they want to pursue. If no one else provides the opportunity to continue it, they might need to make a way to continue it for themselves.

As in Winfield's case, starting a business might also be the only way many people with disabilities feel they can authentically pursue their goals.

By starting their own businesses, people with disabilities may be able to align their life with their dreams, passions and unique abilities.

However, regardless of their reason for starting a business, that doesn't mean it's easy.



## The Extra Challenges They Face

Starting a business can be extremely difficult and extremely risky for anyone, but for individuals with disabilities, both of these problems may be multiplied exponentially.

In fact, even before starting their business, entrepreneurs with disabilities are often at a disadvantage.

They're more likely to have had lower incomes for a long time; have little, if any, personal savings to support themselves and the business; have higher healthcare costs; and may have more health problems that interfere with their ability to work at times.

These problems can prevent them from starting out with as strong a financial runway as other entrepreneurs might have.

Also, once they start the business, they may also face the challenges of discrimination and stigma.

More than 60 percent of the respondents in a National Disability Institute (NDI) survey said that they felt they had “to demonstrate superior knowledge to be taken seriously as a business owner with a disability.”

As people with disabilities are too aware, first impressions matter. And, unfortunately, when many people first see someone with a disability, they assume that the person is less intelligent, less capable, or “less than” in some other way.

Unfortunately, according to NDI, these disabled business owners also often have to “overcome unique barriers to entrepreneurship as they strive to compete alongside their non-disabled counterparts in a business world that does not fully recognize their abilities and resilience.”

Such issues may make it difficult for people with disabilities to get funding, investors, and customers or clients.

Accessibility issues are also a major challenge that may prevent them from entering and functioning in various places, may cause travel problems for them, and can even hamper them in the digital world.



Image made using Midjourney

How, for example, can a person with paralysis be as available to meet potential clients or investors as someone without paralysis?

How can a blind person gain access to all of the human knowledge that is available easily and quickly to seeing people?

How can these budding entrepreneurs, whether they have mental or emotional issues; paralysis; speaking, hearing or seeing disabilities; or other disabilities, achieve success in a world that is not set up for them?

### **Meredith Johns-Foley and Her Struggles to Become Independent**

When Meredith Johns-Foley, who has myasthenia gravis, decided to start her first business, a childcare/babysitting facility, she saw it as an opportunity to get out of a life of poverty.

She was tired of struggling to live on her disability income as a single mother with children and wanted a higher income and to be independent.

With a smart business mind, she was able to get some initial funding through vocational rehabilitation to start her business and was soon able to open its doors.

Fortunately, the business started getting customers quickly and was doing fairly well. However, like many new businesses, it had its up and down periods and didn't always make enough to pay the business expenses and provide enough income for Johns-Foley's family. In addition, her condition sometimes made it difficult for her to work on some days.

After much struggle and the inability to get additional funding to continue the business, she had to close it.

It was a major disappointment.

Unfortunately, the businesses probably "failed" not because Johns-Foley wasn't "good enough" but mainly because she ran out of time before the business was able to reach sustainability. Having the time to grow is a major ingredient for most business success, and she ran out of time because she ran out of money with no other sources of funding.

Fortunately, she was able to continue surviving on her disability income after the business closed.

But that was not her dream.

## It's Hard But Not Impossible

Johns-Foley's story is not meant to be discouraging.

In fact, she was likely close to success when she was forced to quit.

Her experience is simply a warning that you'll likely need more time and money to make it than you might expect.

## What Helps Some Succeed?

Still, many individuals with disabilities do make it work despite the challenges — proof that, while disabilities make it more challenging, they don't always have to end one's dreams and aspirations.

Some key factors for those who succeed are experience at problem solving and community support. Some key traits are creativity, resilience and grit.

Diego Mariscal is the founder of 2Gether-International, a startup accelerator run by and for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

"People with disabilities are innate problem solvers," said Mariscal in "16 founders with disabilities using technology for good." "From the moment we wake up, we have to figure out how to get dressed, how to drive, how to communicate, how to live in a world that is not built to fit our needs." (Oct. 22, 2021)

Accordingly, many people with disabilities who start businesses have seen problems that they want to solve for others. In many cases, they've had the same or similar problems themselves.

## More Opportunities Today

Fortunately, many people with disabilities have additional opportunities to start a business today.

Two relatively new trends are opening additional doors: more opportunities to work remotely and fast-developing advanced technology.

The ability to work remotely can be a game-changer for people with mobility issues or such problems as social anxiety.

In addition, since remote businesses don't require an outside office with utility bills and other costs, they're usually less expensive to start.

Technology is also making it easier and less expensive to make the move.

*RESILIENCE* founder Rick Bowers is a great example of someone taking advantage of these trends.

He's started multiple businesses with the ability to work remotely and the use of new technology.

## From the Urge to Start a Business to Making It a Reality

Bowers is the former editor of *inMotion* magazine and *Amplitude* magazine, two of the leading national publications for amputees.



After working at these publications, he kept having an urge to start a new magazine and, of course, he thought about people with disabilities.

Bowers had developed full-blown diabetes somewhere around 2010, maybe earlier, and has had to deal with its complications. He's also had obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) perhaps all of his life, although it seemed to worsen when he was in his 20s.

These and other undisclosed disabilities, along with spending several difficult years as a full-time caregiver for his parents before they passed away, enlightened Bowers to such problems and made him want to help solve them for others.

In 2023, new technologies such as ChatGPT made it possible for Bowers to start *RESILIENCE* and another publication called *Founders 411X*, which helps founders of businesses and organizations succeed.

"I didn't have a lot of extra money just lying around to start a new business, and I certainly wasn't able to pay a team of writers, editors, proofreaders, advertising salespeople, graphic designers, photographers and marketing folks," Bowers says. "So, if I wanted to get these publications off the ground, it was up to me to do it all."

Fortunately, as mentioned, Bowers had a background in writing, editing and proofreading multiple magazines and could do most of that part of the work himself. If he could do the graphic design, photography and illustration as well, he might be able to get a few publications going on his own.

Fortunately, he also had some experience in each of those areas.

"I'd done some photography at conferences in a previous position," Bowers says. "I'd also done layout and design for newspapers as a copy editor decades ago. And I had originally been an art major my first year in college before changing my career path to journalism. On top of that, I'd been a communications & public relations manager and had headed an advertising department for a magazine. So, I was pretty well set to start these publications."

Some of his confidence to start the publications came from the experience of one of his friends who had started a magazine over a year earlier. When he lost his graphic designer after about a year, he considered stopping his magazine as a result. Then, after a lot of consideration, he decided to try to design it himself using Canva.

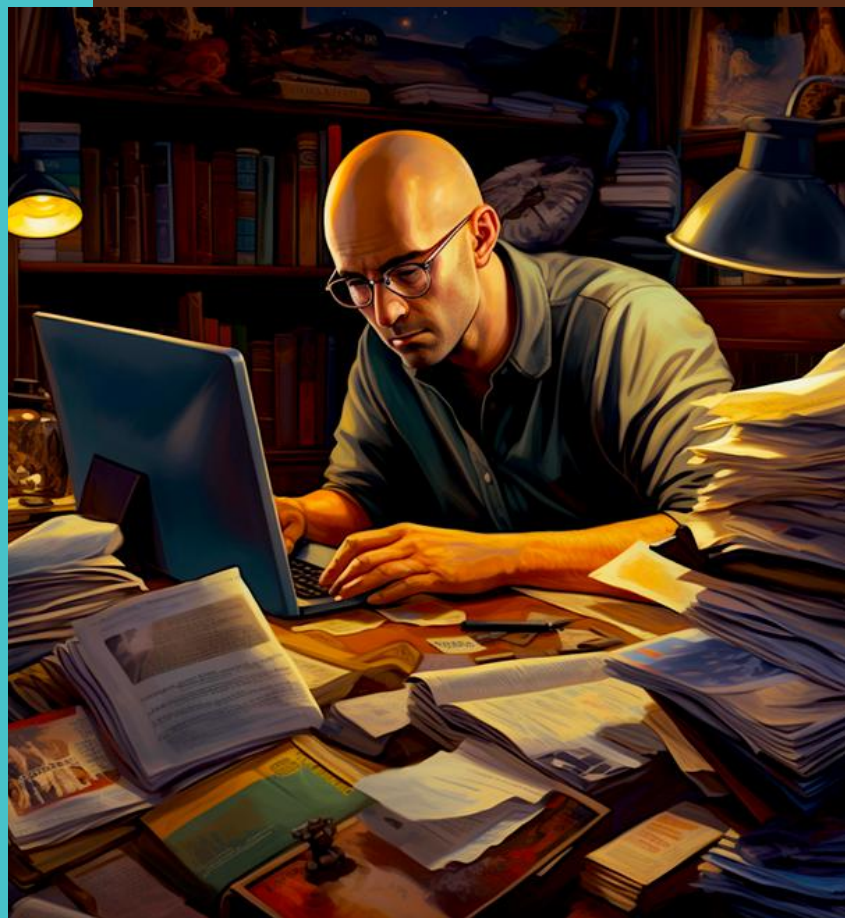


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Canva is a free online template-based graphic design tool. It can be used to create magazines, logos, social media posts, posters, annual reports, presentations, videos and much more. For those who want to get more features, it offers a Pro version for a small monthly fee.

Bowers' friend was able to design his entire first issue using Canva, and it came out surprisingly good. He then designed another issue, also with success.

Bowers saw this as an opportunity to start his own magazines too using Canva.

He started coming up with the ideas for his articles and began writing them. At the same time, he began playing with some ideas for the design of *Founders 411X* on Canva using Canva Pro, a low-cost, higher-level version of the tool. It was \$12.99 a month.

As he wrote more articles, he also began using artificial intelligence (AI) to help in various ways. Using ChatGPT, which also has free and inexpensive paid versions, he could quickly come up with first or early drafts of articles that he could revise extensively, adding information to make the articles his own. He never simply used a ChatGPT-written article as it was. He knew the articles needed more.

“AI is great for researching and writing information as a quick early draft, but AI-written articles don't have the personality and 'life' of human-written articles,” Bowers says. “That could change in the future, but for now, I try to inject that feeling into the articles myself. In addition, AI-generated writing needs to be fact-checked and edited.”

Next, he began playing with an inexpensive image-producing AI platform called Midjourney, which he believed could help him produce images. It worked well, and he's used it to make numerous images for his publications.

Ultimately, by using technology such as Canva, ChatGPT and Midjourney, Bowers was able to produce several publications at a professional level cost-effectively.

And there's more to come.

“I love Canva, ChatGPT and Midjourney,” Bowers says. “This technology is making it possible for me to start the businesses I've wanted to start for years. Everything just seemed to converge at once, and I knew that I should take advantage of it.”

## What About You?

Perhaps you too are noticing problems that others with disabilities face and are mulling over an idea for a business.

How do people with disabilities learn to drive?

Are there better accessibility solutions for restaurants?

How can people with disabilities go on trips to areas that are considered inaccessible?

How can they find romantic partners?

How can children with disabilities attend summer camp?



How can people who use wheelchairs find clothes that work for them while they are sitting for long periods of time.

So many problems.

And there may be multiple solutions.

If you have a great solution — one that others will want — you might have a potential business too.

It's something to think about.

## For More Information

### Susie Winfield

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Medium – @susie.winfield20

Substack – [Purposeful Words Newsletter](https://purposefulwords.substack.com/p/welcome-to-purposeful-words) –  
[purposefulwords.substack.com/p/welcome-to-purposeful-words](https://purposefulwords.substack.com/p/welcome-to-purposeful-words)

Write on the Scene <https://writeonthescene.com>

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Medium - @RESILIENCE News

[Founders411X.com](https://founders411x.com)

[EurekaVision1.com](https://eureka-vision1.com)



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# RESOURCES

## **SCORE: Support for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities**

<https://tinyurl.com/scoreorg22>

## **Vocational Rehabilitation**

<https://tinyurl.com/statevoc>

## **National Disability Institute's Small Business Hub**

<https://www.disabilitysmallbusiness.org/>

## **Small Disadvantaged Business Program**

<https://tinyurl.com/sbadisadvantaged>

## **Ticket to Work Program**

<https://www.ssa.gov/work>

## **Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts**

These special accounts help people with disabilities save more money without losing their benefits.

<https://www.ablenrc.org>

## **Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)**

<https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>

## **Disability:IN**

<https://disabilityin.org/>

## **2Gether-International: The Leading Startup Accelerator for Disabled Founders**

<https://www.2gether-international.org>

## **United States Disability Chamber of Commerce**

<https://usdisabilitychamber.com/>

## **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Small Business Development Centers**

<https://tinyurl.com/sbacenters>

## **The Best Funding Resources for Disabled Entrepreneurs**

<https://tinyurl.com/bestfunding>

## **Disability Entrepreneurship Toolkit**

<https://tinyurl.com/respectools>

## **Accion Opportunity Fund**

<https://aofund.org/small-business-loans/>

## **National Association for the Self-Employed**

<https://www.nase.org/>

## **Access Technologies, Inc. (Device Loan Library)**

<https://www.accesstechnologiesinc.org/device-loan>

## **Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs**

<https://ataporg.org/>

## **ADA Technical Assistance**

<https://archive.ada.gov/taprog.htm>

## **Business Without Barriers**

<https://tinyurl.com/bwbinuk>

# Disability Initiatives Benefit Individuals *and* Companies

Companies whose leadership teams are committed to inclusion for people with disabilities and are guided by complementary values deeply embedded in their organizations experienced improved performance, positive employee perceptions, and a cohesive, unified culture, according to research published in the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*. The fidelity and prominence of the disability-inclusive actions and practices moderated their relative outcomes.

Disability is commonplace in society but not in the U.S. labor market. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Labor, the participation rate of people with disabilities in the workplace in 2023 is nearly half that experienced by people without disabilities.

“Employer-driven disability initiatives can indeed have a positive impact on both company performance and organizational climate. Our study identified the motivations and best practices that led to successful outcomes: improved business and financial results, better morale, and unity within the company,” explained lead investigator Brian N. Phillips, PhD, CRC, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling, Utah State University. “These best practices should serve as a beacon to other organizations to actively recognize disability as a valued part of company diversity.”

The findings suggest that employers can gain a great deal from seeing the disabled as a valuable and largely untapped part of the workforce. The study combined findings from case studies conducted across seven companies of varying size and industry.



Image produced using Midjourney

Recognizing the limited amount of research on the topic, the investigators sought increased understanding of employer-driven disability initiatives, what motivated them, and what impact they had on the company's productivity and overall success. The greatest success seemed to come to companies that took the most decisive action in implementing their initiatives.

“It is powerful to appreciate how much inclusion in the workplace can be a competitive advantage. At the same time, it's important to point out that companies adopting a disability initiative on more of a trial basis or with more skepticism generated less favorable results,” noted co-investigator Timothy N. Tansey, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison. “Many employers prioritize diversity but underinvest in providing support for people with disabilities.”

Co-investigator Paul Wehman, PhD, Virginia Commonwealth University and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, noted, “The literature suggested we would find a relationship between employer disability initiatives and company performance, and that commitment from leadership would be influential. However, we were surprised to learn that the disability initiatives had such a positive impact on non-disabled co-workers. Many employees with whom we spoke reported feeling a new sense of pride in the company and a greater closeness to their co-workers.”

Phillips commented that companies in the study all shared a value of being employee-centered, acknowledging that employees didn't exist solely to help the company, but that the company also existed to help and support employees through flexibility, training, upward mobility and compensation.

*This article was adapted from information provided by IOS Press.*

“We were surprised to learn that the disability initiatives had such a positive impact on non-disabled co-workers. Many employees with whom we spoke reported feeling a new sense of pride in the company and a greater closeness to their co-workers.” - *Paul Wehman*



# Sometimes Disabilities Have a Positive Side

## Researcher Determines That ADHD Gives Entrepreneurs an Edge

The brains of people with ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) function in ways that can benefit them as entrepreneurs, according to research from the West Virginia University (WVU) John Chambers College of Business and Economics.

Associate professor Nancy McIntyre said her paper in the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research* broadens the scope, in an entrepreneurial context, from “if ADHD functions” to “how ADHD functions.” The paper is based on a study demonstrating that an entrepreneur with ADHD is able to use routines, patterns and habits like a big net that captures and stores stimuli from the environment for later use.

“My co-authors and I are advancing the idea that ADHD is not a cognitive deficit or disability when considering entrepreneurship,” she said. “Someone with ADHD and high entrepreneurial intent might go to a big event and meet person after person with knowledge, advice, contact information, venture capital, or other resources to offer. Because their mind tends to hop all over the place, they’re making lots of connections and filing them in a way that allows them to use those resources in the future. Their net becomes thicker and thicker with resources that could be used to start or support their company.”

McIntyre is the former owner of an advertising agency and has ADHD herself. She said that “in one-on-one conversations and larger meetings, the ADHD created a constant rattle in my brain: ‘Boy, it’s cold in here. Are those new glasses he’s wearing? Would our client like red on that brochure more than blue? Are the kids having fun at day care?’”

Like McIntyre, many people with ADHD find it especially difficult not to immediately attend to new information. They’re predisposed to speedy cognitive processing and quick decisions, bouncing from stimulus to stimulus, continually scanning their environments and swiftly shifting their attention from old data to new.



Image produced using Midjourney



To deal with the constant influx of information, people with ADHD often develop habits, routines, processes or shortcuts that help them assimilate all that data without becoming exhausted by it. Those routines are examples of what McIntyre calls “resource-induced coping heuristics.”

She has developed her own set of heuristics to help her cope with the massive quantity of information streaming into her mind.

“In the morning, my executive assistant provided me with a schedule. At the end of each day, she provided me with a summary and action items. She was always at my side taking notes, or if she wasn’t available, she had a recorder on the table so I could review the tape later. Those routines helped me use my resources to focus on the important information.”

McIntyre explained that a cognitive heuristic takes the load off your brain. A “walking” heuristic, for example, allows a person to walk without thinking about every step as they take it. A “driving” heuristic allows someone to start the car, fasten their seatbelt, step on the brake, and shift into gear more or less automatically.

Everyone uses heuristic routines to perform common tasks efficiently, without thinking through or about each part of the process. But McIntyre’s research reveals that for entrepreneurs with ADHD, heuristics can be critical to three key qualities for their success: alertness, adaptability and entrepreneurial intent.

McIntyre identified individuals with ADHD among 581 survey respondents who answered questions about those qualities.

Alert entrepreneurs were good at recognizing the business opportunities around them, reading voraciously and interacting with others in order to have an ear to the ground. Those who were adaptable could change course when appropriate, challenging their own assumptions and double checking their comprehension about a problem or task. And those with high entrepreneurial intent were committed to establishing their own business, searching actively for start-up opportunities. ADHD helped drive each of these positive outcomes, McIntyre found.

She said she was interested in ADHD in a specifically entrepreneurial context because, while traditional employment rarely leaves much room for “running off in a lot of directions,” she believes entrepreneurship can offer those with ADHD the freedom to fail and try again.

“We need to get rid of the word ‘disability’ and learn to value differences and adapt to them as a society,” McIntyre said. “Even in the world of traditional employment, many companies—Ernst & Young, Goldman Sachs, IBM, JPMorgan Chase, Microsoft—are starting to look for job candidates with cognitive differences because those differences make them very skilled at certain tasks. Those with ADHD are known to be more curious, creative, imaginative and innovative.”

“For people with ADHD who do want to pursue entrepreneurial careers, this research shows the more they can do to strengthen their net of routines for gathering and organizing information, the better.”

This research, of course, also brings up other questions.

Does your disability—obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), for example—also have a positive side?

Longtime editor and proofreader Dean Malchik noted that while his OCD sometimes slowed him down in his work, it also kept him from letting a lot of errors get through in his work. So, if the work is needed quickly, his OCD could be a negative, but if the work needed to be more accurate, his OCD could be a positive.

Moreover, many people with disabilities have noted that their disabilities improved their lives in various ways, such as giving them resilience, making them more empathetic, teaching them humility and making them grateful.

The main point is that disability should be looked at from multiple perspectives rather than simply as a catastrophe in one’s life.

Has your disability had any positive effects in your life?

*This article was adapted from information provided by WVU.*



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Join our community and movement for black  
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Showing up *unapologetically*  
to reshape what visible  
disability looks like



**[DivasWithDisabilities.org](https://DivasWithDisabilities.org)**

In My Opinion



**“Hey! You’re Not Disabled!”**

By Zach Kiser

Image made  
using Midjourney

“Why are you parking there? That spot is only for people with disabilities. You don’t look disabled to me!”

“Hey, that stall is for people with disabilities. Shame on you for using it when someone who has a disability might need it!”

“Hey, that guy’s not disabled; he just wants sympathy.”

Perhaps you’ve been on the receiving end of such accusations and anger—or perhaps you will be one day. Or perhaps you’ve been the person judging, yelling or accusing someone.

While those judging people who don’t look like they have a disability for parking in a spot for people with disabilities, using a restroom stall for people with disabilities, or some other assumed infraction may mean well, they may actually be guilty of unintended discrimination against someone with an “invisible” or a “highly mitigated” disability.

These situations are just a few of many examples where those with invisible or highly mitigated disabilities are wrongly perceived as not being disabled.

### **What Are Invisible and Highly Mitigated Disabilities?**

Invisible disabilities are disabilities that are not seen or recognized by others, although they may cause fatigue, weakness, pain, numbness, confusion, communication problems, lack of bodily control, fear, paranoia, and other symptoms. In some cases, the symptoms also come and go so that the person feels fine at one time and terrible the next. There are many invisible disabilities, but a few examples are neurological conditions, such as epilepsy; mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression; learning disabilities; autoimmune conditions, such as lupus and multiple sclerosis; and secondary conditions of diseases, such as diabetic neuropathy.

While such conditions can dramatically impact people’s ability to function, because they are not easily visible to others, people who have them are often not considered disabled by others and can be unintentionally discriminated against.





These people may also have less access to resources, accommodations for their disabilities, and support from others. This can cause them to suffer feelings of isolation, loneliness and shame, as well as anger and frustration at being misunderstood and treated unfairly.

Worse still, some people with invisible disabilities might even find themselves discriminated against by others with visible disabilities who consider their disabilities less significant or even assume that they are faking a disability to get sympathy or some sort of benefit.

Highly mitigated disabilities are disabilities that are dramatically lessened by medication, medical devices, or some other means to a degree that others would not be able to easily tell that they have them. An example would be when amputees who use prosthetic legs walk so well that no one knows they are amputees.

### **The Parking Issue**

As noted, one situation where these people may feel the sting of misunderstanding is when they use a disability parking spot and are judged, yelled at or blamed, even though they qualify to use the spot.

That's why, while parking wrongly in a spot reserved for people with disabilities is a problem, we should be extremely careful before judging or blaming someone for doing so since they could have an invisible disability or one that is temporarily mitigated. If we do blame such people or confront them, we could embarrass them wrongly and be extremely embarrassed ourselves if we later find out that they do indeed have a disability. Plus, we would have done something to them we almost certainly would hate being done to us.

First of all, judging others without unequivocal proof is almost always a mistake. It is not our job to be the judge of everyone's actions or whether or not they have a disability. As noted, the lack of visibility does not prove that a person is not disabled.

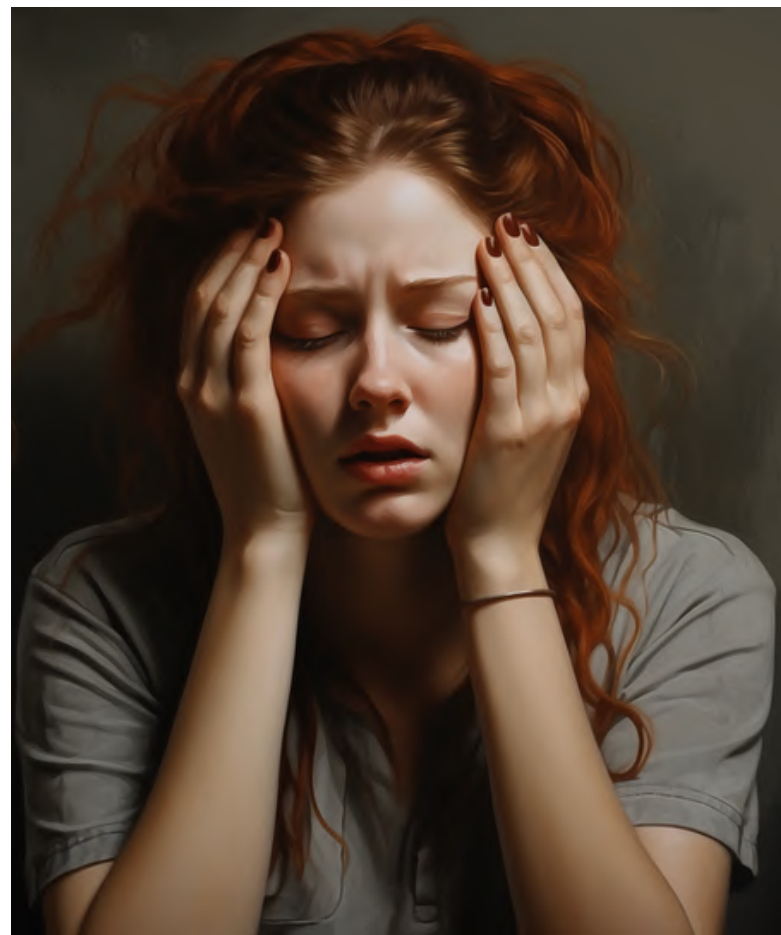


Illustration made using Midjourney

A better solution for dealing with the potential problem would be to remain calm and to think carefully before acting. (Did you even check to see if they had a parking permit before accusing them? Be honest.)

In some (probably most) cases, it would be better to just leave the situation alone. However, if you sincerely believe that someone is wrongly — and illegally — parking in a spot reserved for people with disabilities and feel that they must be confronted, it might be better to contact law enforcement and let them deal with it instead of confronting the person yourself, which could even lead to violence. Unfortunately, because of some cases of law enforcement ending up accidentally harming or killing disabled people after complaints, even this approach has risks.

### Preventing and Solving the Problem

Because of the potential for error, it is essential to keep in mind that looks can be deceiving when it comes to disabilities, and people who look fine could be dealing with more than we realize.

Yes, there are certainly people who fake disability; however, in most cases, rather than trying to catch those people, we can probably accomplish more by spending our energy doing something else.

We could better help prevent and solve such misunderstandings and discrimination against such people before it occurs through education and advocating for more accommodation and accessibility for people with all disabilities, both invisible and visible.

People with visible and invisible disabilities should unite and work together to establish a stronger, more influential voice for all people with disabilities. There is strength and influence in numbers, and we should take advantage of that rather than letting ourselves be divided and weakened.



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# Research-Based Information Related to Living With a Disability

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"We sometimes base our decisions and actions on our past experiences or on intuition or advice from others. Those strategies often, but not always, are effective and turn out well for us.

However, in many, if not most, cases, we will be better served by basing our decisions on scientific research and data. This section shares research that could help us make better and more successful decisions. It's at least worth considering."

- Rick Bowers, *RESILIENCE* Editor

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# Happiness Can Be Learned, But We Have to Work at It, Study Finds

We can learn to be happy, but only get lasting benefits if we keep practicing, a first-of-its-kind study has revealed.

The team behind the University of Bristol's 'Science of Happiness' course had already discovered that teaching students the latest scientific studies on happiness created a marked improvement in their well-being.

But their latest study found that these well-being boosts are short-lived unless the evidence-informed habits learned in the course – such as gratitude, exercise, meditation or journaling – are kept up over the long-term.

"It's like going to the gym," said senior author Professor Bruce Hood. "We can't expect to do one class and be fit forever. Just as with physical health, we have to continuously work on our mental health; otherwise, the improvements are temporary."

Launched in 2018, the University of Bristol's Science of Happiness course was the first of its kind in the UK. It involves no exams or coursework and teaches students what the latest peer-reviewed studies in psychology and neuroscience say really makes us happy.

Students who took the course reported a 10 to 15 percent improvement in well-being. But only those who continued implementing the course learnings maintained that improved well-being when they were surveyed again two years later.

Published in the journal *Higher Education*, it is the first to track well-being of students on a happiness course long after they have left the course.

"This study shows that just doing a course – be that at the gym, a meditation retreat, or on an evidence-based happiness course like ours – is just the start," said Hood. "You must commit to using what you learn on a regular basis."

"Much of what we teach revolves around positive psychology interventions that divert your attention away from yourself, by helping others, being with friends, gratitude or meditating."

"This is the opposite of the current 'self-care' doctrine, but countless studies have shown that getting out of our own heads helps get us away from negative ruminations, which can be the basis of so many mental health problems."

Hood has distilled the Science of Happiness course into a new book. *The Science of Happiness: Seven Lessons for Living Well* reveals an evidence-informed roadmap to better well-being.



Image made using Midjourney

# Takeaways From the Science of Happiness Course

- **Talking to strangers makes us happier, despite a majority of us shying away from such encounters.**
- **Social media is not bad for everyone, but it can be bad for those who focus on their reputation.**
- **Loneliness impacts our health by impairing our immune systems.**
- **Optimism increases life expectancy.**
- **Giving gifts to others activates the reward centers in our brain — often providing more of a happiness boost than spending money on oneself.**
- **Sleep deprivation impacts how well we are liked by others.**
- **Walking in nature deactivates part of the brain related to negative ruminations, which are associated with depression.**
- **Kindness and happiness are correlated.**

*This article was adapted from information provided by the University of Bristol.*



Walking in nature deactivates part of the brain related to negative ruminations, which are associated with depression.

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Join our community and movement for black  
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# RESILIENCE is evolving.

After this issue, *RESILIENCE* is changing from a magazine format — a compendium of several articles published at a single time — to a newsletter format.

Because of the speed at which information is available today, it makes less and less sense to publish a traditional magazine, which can't be published until a group of articles are compiled and are ready to be published all at once.

With a newsletter published at Medium.com and emailed to subscribers, we will be able to publish our articles immediately as each is completed.

It's time for us to get with the times.

## It's time to evolve.

You'll be able to find us at [medium.com/resilience-news](https://medium.com/resilience-news) and on our website ([RESILIENCEMag.com](https://RESILIENCEMag.com)).

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