

Reading Passage (233 words): Three Misconceptions about Disabled People

Reading Time = 4 minutes

According to The National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research website, under the American Disabilities Act, a person with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is registered as having such an impairment. The ADA defines major life activities as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, breathing, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, and working. Research shows that society views anyone who cannot do those things as being different and often has false beliefs about these disabled people.

Many in society believe that all disabled people are sick, which means they are afflicted with ill health or disease. Sick can also mean that disabled people may be mentally, morally, or emotionally deranged, or corrupt.

In addition, society also views disabled people as having a poor quality of life. In other words, disabled people are poor because they are usually unemployed, live in old broken-down houses, have overall bad physical and mental health, and have limited or no access to higher education.

Finally, society sees disabled people as being inspirational, brave, and courageous for living with their disabilities. For example, society sees a wheel-chair bound individual as having courage to go to school or work each day despite being unable to walk, and often people in society are inspired by these disabled people.

Writing Prompt: Summarize the main points in the lecture explaining how they clarify the misconceptions mentioned in the reading passage.

Listening (350 words): Correcting Three Overgeneralizations about Disabled People

Society views tend to be overgeneralizations that do not apply to most if not all disabled people. Keeping this in mind, let's examine some of the misconceptions of disabled people.

First of all, having a disability is not the same as being sick. Disabled individuals have varying degrees of need depending on their disability, but having specific needs does not necessarily mean they are sick. For example, some people have a hearing impairment, whereas others cannot see. Both groups have disabilities which have nothing to do with being sick. Of course, they can sometimes get sick just as able-bodied people can sometimes get sick, but it does not always have to do with their disability.

Second of all, if a person has a disability, it does not mean he or she has a poor quality of life. People who have a disability can do most of what able-bodied people can do if they put their minds to it. In other words, where there is will, there is a way. Advances in technology and the American Disabilities Association have made it easier for them to have a good quality of life. For instance, people who are visually impaired are able to get higher educations since technology allows their textbooks to be converted into audio recordings. When they go to college, even the deaf can have interpreters who will help them understand what is being taught in the classroom. Even today, there are mechanically-operated leg braces which can help wheel-chair bound people to walk.

Finally, people who have disabilities do not like to be considered inspirational, brave, or courageous. They just do what they can to live a happy life like everybody else. Most disabled people do not want to be seen as anything special. The majority just want to be seen as normal like anyone else in society. Consider wheel-chair bound racers who sometimes engage in 42 to 100 km races just like bicyclists. These disabled people consider themselves athletes and not in any way constrained by their physical limitations.

Writing Prompt: Summarize the main points in the lecture explaining how they clarify the misconceptions mentioned in the reading passage.