

Playing with disabilities

“Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you're needed by someone.”

- Martina Navratilova

In the US, 12.9% of people aged 21 to 64 have some form of disability¹. The numbers are slightly higher in South Carolina coming in at 15.7% for the same age group. From the same study roughly 2/3 of the disabilities are physical in nature and 1/3 mental.

What does this mean for those of us in the lifestyle? You can generally assume quite a few of us have some form of disability. Look around, do you know 100 people in the lifestyle in South Carolina? Roughly 15 of them have some form of disability. Roughly 10 of them have a physical disability, and 5 of them a mental disability.

People with disabilities need affection just as much as people without them. They desire sex and physical contact just as much, and they are just as prone to desire alternative lifestyles as anyone else.

Many of us don't even think of the disabilities we do have because we are so used to coping with them on a daily basis. They do become important though when we meet and play with new people, these people need to be aware of any special needs we may have.

Someone who is disabled in some way is still able to top or bottom, or be dominant or submissive. A wheelchair does not make anyone less dominant or less able to serve if allowances for their condition are made. We will all reach a point in our lives when we can no longer swing the flogger, or be on it's receiving end. And we all deal with people with some form of disability on a daily basis.

Physical and mental disabilities may result in poor self-image in some people, we may need to make extra efforts to keep from using terms or language that will make a disabled person feel poorly about themselves.

Communication is the key to dealing with disabilities.

¹ 2006 American Community Survey (ACS)

Equipment useful for dealing with disabilities:

Adjustable chair with no arms – Good for the Dom/me to be seated while flogging, etc.

Bariatric electric tilt table – Table can be raised or lowered, and tilted to various angles.

Bondage chair – Allows bondage for those who cannot stand for longer periods.

Foam wedges (Liberator) – Useful for getting into more comfortable positions.

Gynecological chair – Useful for bondage, medical exams, and sex.

Heavy duty footstool – Allows the bottom to sit at the top's feet without needing to kneel.

Kneeling pad – Allows those with knee problems or heavier weight to kneel without hurting their knees as much.

Massage chair – Good for flogging/whipping those who cannot stand for longer periods.

O-ring gag – Allows a gag to be used without restricting breathing.

Remote vibrators – Once in place allow a top to control it with the flick of a switch.

Sex machines – Great for those who wish to penetrate their partner, but have erection issues.

Spanking horse – Allows the bottom's weight to be spread out rather than just on their knees for a spanking.

Swivel flogger – Useful for minimizing the strain on the top's joints.

Weight bench – Useful for bondage and sex.

Work boots – Makes standing for long periods easier.

What is the difference between a disorder, an impairment, and a disability?

Disorder – A disturbance in the normal function of the mind or body. Disorders may be caused by genetic factors, disease, or trauma.

Impairment – A loss of all or part of a physical or mental ability, such as the ability to see, walk, or learn.

Disability – A physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Some common disabilities:

- ADD/ADHD – Easily distracted, do not handle immobility for long periods well, Hyper-focus, tactless, miss social cues, perfectionism, Thrill-seeking.
- Allergies – Many have a latex allergy or a metal allergy.
- Amputee – Will have limited mobility if it is a leg, or limited ability to carry and manipulate objects if an arm, may not be able to stand for long periods if they only have one leg.
- Anxiety disorders and phobias – May panic easily, may or may not have an obvious trigger, may need to be taken out of bondage situations quickly.
- Asthma or other breathing disorder – Should avoid anything tight around their neck or chest, breath play should be avoided.
- Arthritis (degenerative joint disease) – Limits ability to move quickly, may limit certain positions, or limit time that can be spent in a position, special care needed if the joint is prone to popping out of joint.
- Bi-polar – Sudden mood shifts can totally change the feeling of a session, may be impulsive, restless, may behave inappropriately, may be disoriented, may shift self-esteem suddenly, may seek out physical pain.
- Blindness – May need to help lead them around, be aware they will not pick up on visual cues.
- Carpal Tunnel – Generally avoid restraints or ropes around their wrists, these can cause extra pain we do not intend.
- Cerebral palsy – May have limited range of motion, may go into convulsions or spasm, may have limited sight or hearing.
- Coronary Heart Disease – Some sessions are intense and can induce an increased heart rate, do NOT attempt electrical play, generally best to avoid full restraints when playing, partner would do well to learn CPR.

- Deafness - May need to avoid blindfolds and arrange sessions so the top and bottom can see each other during play, may work better to use a safe motion rather than a safe word.
- Diabetes Mellitus – Blood sugar levels may drop very low during or after an intense session, make sure to have juice and food on hand for them, aftercare should include paying attention to their responses for an altered level of consciousness. May heal slower than normal.
- Epilepsy – May go into seizures from flashing lights, do NOT attempt to restrain someone who is experiencing a seizure.
- Fibromyalgia – May have pain sensations, fatigue, anxiety, may experience cognitive dysfunction (brain fog).
- Multiple sclerosis – May be weak or clumsy, may feel sensations differently, may have spasms, may have trouble speaking or seeing, may experience chronic pain.
- Muscular dystrophy – May be weak or clumsy, may have a limited range of motion, may have breathing troubles.
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder – Generally obsessed with a particular world order, may need to plan play sessions out in detail and have them followed exactly, may need to organize toys a particular way or have them sanitized in a particular way.
- Paralyzed – May use an assistant for intense sessions if they are topping, will need extra help moving around if they are bottoming.
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – Something simple like a loud sudden noise may set them off, not only in ex-military, but also possible in victims of abuse or rape, avoid situations similar to what they went through.

“It was ability that mattered, not disability, which is a word I'm not crazy about using.”

- Marlee Matlin

Resources:

- Less Abled BDSM – <http://www.lessabledbdsm.com/>
- Kinked – <http://www.kinked.org/>
- SexAbility - <http://sexability.blogspot.com/>
- Wings of Fire - <http://www.wingsoffiresurvivors.com/>

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