

Social Media for Raising Awareness

Jihong Hwang

BEFORE YOU READ: What does it mean to “raise awareness”? Has social media ever helped to raise your awareness about something?

Social Media Gives Disabled People a Voice

When I was in elementary school, we had some lessons to teach us about people with disabilities. Some kids covered their eyes. They didn’t want to learn about people with disabilities. Other people felt sympathy. I was young, and this lesson impressed me, but I did not think too much about it.

These days, I notice that the media can play a big role in helping people learn about disabilities. There are characters on TV who have disabilities, but they are just part of the story. Their disability is not the most important thing about them.

Social Media Helps Connect People

Social media can help caregivers and people with disabilities find each other and share their experiences. For example, parents of children with disabilities use social media to share ideas about how to find the right school for their child or how to find transportation. People with disabilities talk about how they spend their time. They gain courage from each other.

Disability Matters to All of Us

It makes a difference for people with disabilities to be more visible. You can change your perspective when you find out how people with disabilities navigate the world. Maybe it can prepare you for when you are disabled. You never know.



Lisa Bufano, 1972-2013, was a talented visual and performance artist. When she was 21, she got an infection, which led to her becoming a bilateral amputee. She lost both of her legs below the knee. She also lost most of her fingers. In this photo, she performs a dance on stilts made of dining room table legs. Photo: Julia Wolf, CC BY-SA 2.0

You might become disabled. You might get in an accident. I am aging. Every person I know is aging. Disability sometimes comes with aging.

We need to recognize that disabilities *are* our business. Recently, I saw the bus driver wait

and help someone who uses a wheelchair get on the bus. Everyone on the bus waited for them patiently. I was surprised and pleased by this experience. Maybe we are learning. Maybe social media is raising our awareness.

We Should Pay Attention

When I started to write this essay, I thought my elementary school lesson did not matter much. But now I think it was important. It helped me learn how to pay attention to people who have disabilities.

If you don't have a disability, it might be hard to understand everything that about people with disabilities are going through. But we can learn. We can pay attention. We can value everyone and try to understand their situation. One day, we will probably all have a disability or be a caregiver for someone with a disability.

AFTER YOU READ: According to the author, what are the benefits of making people more aware of disability?

Jihong Hwang is an ESL student at Piedmont Virginia Community College. She is Korean but he lived in Japan for over 10 years. She now lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.



Raising Awareness

Disability Arts

Disability Arts Online:

<https://disabilityarts.online/>

Activism, Advocacy

“Crip Camp” – a documentary about the people who met at a summer camp and later became key leaders of the Disability Rights Movement.

<https://cripcamp.com/>

A listing of advocacy groups for people with disabilities:

<https://www.sralab.org/lifecenter/resources/listing-advocacy-groups-people-disabilities>

Social Media and Bloggers

A list of bloggers to check out:

<https://www.handinhandqc.org/blog/bloggers-with-disabilities-you-should-know>

Chloe Tear:

<https://chloetear.co.uk/>

And these 10 influencers:

<https://www.digitalvoices.com/blog/10-inspiring-disability-influencers-making-a-difference>

