



Coping with Blindness: Personal Tales of Blindness Rehabilitation

Mr. Alvin Roberts M.S.Ed

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Currently, 1.7 million Americans are either blind or are in the process of losing their vision. Sightless himself and a veteran of four decades of helping people cope with blindness as well as with the possibility of blindness, Alvin Roberts decided that telling stories drawn from the community of the blind and from his fellow rehabilitation workers was the best way to reassure others—especially the elderly, who are most at risk of becoming visually impaired—that "blindness need not be the end of active life, but rather the beginning of a life in which [people] will depend on their residual senses to continue full, active living."

Through good stories well told, then, Roberts offers reassurance that competent help exists for the visually impaired. He chooses stories that demonstrate to those facing blindness that they, too, can learn to cope because others have done so. Yet that is only part of his message. Seeing humor as a great facilitator for successfully reentering mainstream society, Roberts also dispels the commonly held belief that blind people are a somber lot and that those who help them encounter little humor. Many of these stories are frankly funny, and blind people and those in the rehabilitation field certainly are not above practical jokes.

Roberts's personal experiences and conversations with colleagues have provided a wealth of incidents on which to base stories of rehabilitation workers with the blind going about their daily tasks. He paints a positive picture of what it is like to be blind, replacing fear, dread, and myth with reality.

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