
Preface: Laying the Framework

Often, we meet clients in our practice who have had a brain injury or another type of neurological illness. When trying to explain the importance of the brain, we tell them that our brain directs everything our body does. Without the brain, or to be more realistic, without its functions, we would not be able to do most of the things we do on a daily basis, from the mundane to the rare. Our brain is a central processing unit that translates our thoughts, feelings, memories, and opinions into a complicated nerve cell firing process and chemical release. These processes are responsible for our behaviors, and these connections are complicated and difficult to explain. Recently, there has been a growing awareness of the functional implications caused by the injured brain. Traditionally, professionals have used neuropsychological batteries or impairment-based assessments to document the patients' symptoms. These traditional assessments, however, do not focus on learning how the symptoms interfere with daily activities, or why.

We were inspired to compile this book because in the past 20 years we have seen numerous clients through clinical practice and research that share the common characteristic of a central nervous system that functions less than optimally, accompanied with diminished engagement in activities of daily living and social activities. This could be due to injury, illness, or just advancing age. When practitioners and researchers discuss the symptoms experienced, they discuss the impairments that were caused by the damaged brain. These impairments could be cognitive or motor in nature, among others. Our clients, however, speak about how these impairments have impacted their life. They often mention the fact that they cannot go to work anymore, and that they no longer receive social invitations, or drive their car. However, for some patients this link is not linear, which makes this connection between the brain and the behaviors even more complicated. For example, one may see two people with memory impairment, one diagnosed with a preclinical dementia and the other having sustained a TBI. The person with the dementia does not leave his house anymore and does not attend any social events. The person with the TBI went back to work and manages an active life. Why the difference in behavior? The observation of differences in such behaviors across various patient populations, coupled with the challenges affected individuals and their families have in understanding these differences, triggered the writing of this book.

This book includes 13 chapters, all with a common theme—the link between diagnosis, brain, and behavior as it plays out in everyday activities. We also sought to explore different causes of distinct behaviors. Is the diagnosis the essential element, or is it the course of illness, or perhaps cultural factors? Or, is it a combination of such factors that leads to distinct difficulties in daily life activities? In each chapter that follows the diagnosis and its characteristics are described, followed by the relationship between the symptoms and disability. In addition, factors such as culture and society are discussed. In most chapters we sought to illustrate the dynamic link between impacted brain structures, impairment, and participation in everyday life performance. We hope that the reader of this book will be aware of both the complexity in the functioning of the brain and, more importantly, how brain function/dysfunction affects the performance of everyday life activities. The purpose of the book is to educate the reader in regard to the changes in everyday life that are encountered with various mechanisms of brain insult/brain changes. A discussion of the impact of such changes from the perspective of the patient is also included. The book was designed to be useful to the professional, but also of interest to those directly affected by brain injury, brain illness, or brain changes that come with normal aging.

In order to present the most accurate information about the different types of changes in brain function resulting from the different etiologies, each chapter was written by experts in the topic areas. Thus, one can read the entire book or just the chapter of particular interest. While each chapter is a standalone chapter, some chapters such as Chaps. 1 and 11 are general and relate to all types of disability. We are very grateful to the authors who took their time to contribute to our understanding of their area of expertise. We are also grateful to the patients who contributed their portrayal of how the injury or disease affected their life.

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Impact on Daily Life

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