

**SELF-ESTEEM
AND ADJUSTING
WITH BLINDNESS**

Third Edition

SELF-ESTEEM AND ADJUSTING WITH BLINDNESS

The Process of Responding
to Life's Demands

By

DEAN W. TUTTLE, PH.D.

*Professor Emeritus, Division of Special Education
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado*

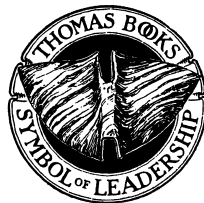
and

NAOMI R. TUTTLE, BSN, RN

*Instructor
The Hadley School for the Blind
Winnetka, Illinois*

With a Foreword by

Michael J. Bina, ED.D.



CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.

Published and Distributed Throughout the World by

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
2600 South First Street
Springfield, Illinois, 62794-9265

This book is protected by copyright. No part of
it may be reproduced in any manner without
written permission from the publisher.

©2004 by CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHERS, LTD.

ISBN 0-398-07508-5 (cloth)
ISBN 0-398-07509-3 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2004044015

With THOMAS BOOKS careful attention is given to all details of manufacturing and design. It is the Publisher's desire to present books that are satisfactory as to their physical qualities and artistic possibilities and appropriate for their particular use. THOMAS BOOKS will be true to those laws of quality that assure a good name and good will.

*Printed in the United States of America
GS-R-3*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tuttle, Dean W.

Self-esteem and adjusting with blindness : the process of
responding to life's demands / by Dean W. Tuttle and Naomi R.
Tuttle ; with a foreword by Michael J. Bina. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-398-07508-5 — ISBN 0-398-07509-3 (pbk.)

1. Blindness—Psychological aspects. 2. Self-esteem. 3. Blind—
Rehabilitation. I. Tuttle, Naomi R. II. Title.

HV1593.T87 2004

362.49129019—dc22

2004044015

*To those from whom we have learned much:
University and Hadley students,
workshop and conference participants,
parents and family members,
and, most of all, blind individuals both children and adults.*

FOREWORD

If you wish to know the road up the mountain, you must ask the man who goes back and forth on it.

—Zenrinkushu

Twenty-five years ago my doctoral advisor at the University of Northern Colorado, Dr. Dean Tuttle, was assisting me in selecting a dissertation topic. At the end of our session, he asked if he could “bounce an idea off me.”

He informed me he was thinking of expanding his series of lectures on the stages a person goes through in adjustment to vision loss, into a book. He asked if I thought the book would have relevance for a market outside his original intended audience—students in university programs studying to be teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility instructors, and rehabilitation teachers and counselors.

He was a man who had been “on the road up the mountain” day in and day out for years—dealing with his vision loss. En route, he learned of the works of Beatrice Wright that illustrated psychosocial responses to physical disabilities with biographical sketches and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross that detailed the stages that individuals go through in adjustment to the death of a loved one or their own dying. Dr. Tuttle’s idea for a book—applying Wright’s and Kubler-Ross’s works to blindness—was a “discovery.”

He had learned from personal experience, when one encounters a “bump in the road” such was to be expected. Knowing what to anticipate, he became more hopeful knowing that soon those bumps, in due course, would be in his “rearview mirror.” With predictability, he was reassured to know what lay ahead in “the trip’s” next phase. Still, he wondered, perhaps, if the Wright and Kubler-Ross “road maps” would generalize and transfer to others.

At the time, retinitis pigmentosa had deteriorated his vision to the

point that he was a Braille reader. His remaining vision was limited, but he still was able to use it effectively for everyday tasks. Ten years later we were eating in a restaurant and I noticed a change in his vision, or absence of any. I said, “Dean, it’s all gone, isn’t it.” His matter-of-fact answer was, “Yes.” I could tell he had traveled many miles each day on the mountain over the past ten years—and had done so successfully.

I recall that his original lectures focused on “adjustment” to blindness. When the book came out, “adjusting” with blindness was in the title. With this shifted paradigm, he took the works of Wright and Kubler-Ross and added value. From his experience, and those of the 104 case studies he used to illustrate and personalize his theory, dealing with one’s vision loss is a daily process—not a quickly achieved one-time event. By using the phrase adjusting “with” blindness rather than “to” blindness, he again shifted focus. Blindness is not a detached phenomenon, but rather is a characteristic one must embrace as a travel companion.

Initially concerned that there might not be a sufficient market for his book, now twenty-five years later, the answer is crystal clear with 20/20 hindsight. As *Self-esteem and Adjusting with Blindness* is currently going into this the third edition, I now can answer my professor’s question with great confidence. Yes, there is relevance, Dr. Tuttle. And, there is a market. And it has positively touched many lives in profound ways. The work has filled a gap in our field’s body of knowledge. Its beauty and value is that it has made the road very clear and understandable with practical relevance for those with vision loss, their families and teachers and counselors.

His often-cited work has evolved into many unanticipated spin-offs. Hundreds of professional conference keynotes and workshops have resulted. Billy Brookshire has molded their work into a self-esteem workshop-training program for professionals called “Loving Me” published by the American Printing House for the Blind. The Hadley School for the Blind has offered a course based on their landmark work. Since 1989, 730 blind and low vision individuals, their family members, and professional service providers have benefited by taking this very popular Hadley course.

We are indebted to Dr. Tuttle who had the foresight twenty-five years ago to develop “his discovery” into a work of practical relevance and profound benefit. We likewise are appreciative of Naomi Tuttle,

co-collaborator, for this the third revision. Her sensitive and insightful contribution included the medical perspective as a nurse, the parent's perspective of a special needs son, and the sighted spouse's perspective working through her own adjusting process to blindness in the family. Their work has taken on its own life. What is exciting is that consumers, family members and practitioners, all from unique, personalized travels on the mountain will further refine its evolution.

MICHAEL J. BINA, ED.D.

President, The Hadley School for the Blind

PREFACE

In the past, a great deal has been written about blind persons, their early development, educational needs, employment opportunities, and their ability in general to meet life's demands in a sighted society. Biographies and autobiographies of visually impaired persons account for more than 150 books within the available array of literature. Some of this literature is objective and factual while some is subjective and emotional; some is research-based, some opinion-based; some is fragmented and/or narrow in scope, others provide a more global and cohesive theoretical structure.

Self-esteem and Adjusting with Blindness is an attempt to analyze a vision loss within the context of two overlapping theoretical constructs: the development of self-esteem and the process of adjusting to social and/or physical trauma. The book is divided into four sections. The first provides a brief overview of blindness, essential background for subsequent discussions. Section II explores the general theoretical model for the development of self-esteem common to all persons and analyzes the impact that a visual impairment imposes upon this model. Section III analyzes the process of coping with social and physical traumas or crises, and the way in which self-esteem is affected by the adjusting process. Section IV is addressed primarily to members of the blind person's support team, especially those who have significant and frequent contact. It provides some hints and suggestions for creating a climate for optimum development of a strong and positive self-esteem in the individual who happens to be visually impaired and offers the opportunity to gain insights from students' personal responses to the concepts presented in this book.

The title *Self-esteem and Adjusting with Blindness* may be misleading. A better title would be "An Analysis of the Relationship between a Person's Self-esteem and the Process of Adjusting to Life's Demands with the Personal Attribute of Blindness," but it is obviously too long. One does not adjust *to* blindness as though blindness were some external

circumstance, as when one adjusts to a new job or a new home. A visual impairment is only one of many personal attributes that make up the total person, and it is the total person who is engaged in meeting life's demands.

Although one of the authors, Dean Tuttle, is blind, he does not claim any special insights as a result of losing his vision during adolescence and young adulthood. Rather, the book grows out of the authors' combined sixty years of work in the fields of education and rehabilitation of individuals who are visually impaired.

The authors are indebted to the many capable blind persons who shared out of their own personal experiences. Although most of the biographies and autobiographies are written in retrospect, and thus subject to filtered interpretations of remembered experiences, the illustrations chosen represent a larger collection of events common to many. The excerpts cited illustrate a particular point in this text and by no means represent endorsement of any or all of the content of the biography or autobiography. These biographical sketches along with personal comments of Chapter 10 are not offered to prove a theoretical model but serve only to illustrate it. A list of the biographies and autobiographies reviewed for this book are marked with an asterisk in the bibliography.

D.W.T.
N.R.T.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many have contributed to the development of this book, both directly and indirectly. Both of our parents, while they were living, were a constant source of support and encouragement. Dean's mentor through graduate school in special education, Georgie Lee Abel, contributed to the basic philosophy and attitudes toward visual impairments reflected in the book.

Our appreciation is extended to Gil Johnson, Director of the American Foundation for the Blind West in San Francisco, who agreed to review the original manuscript, to offer suggestions from the rehabilitation perspective, and to write the forward to the first edition. Gil's sensitivity and insights regarding the issues under consideration have earned him national respect.

Other professional colleagues have contributed in many different ways. We are indebted to Gid Jones of Florida State University for help in the book's early development; to Dean's fellow faculty in Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado for their advice and counsel, and especially to Dave Kappan for his critique of the orientation and mobility sections; and to Jennifer Hill, an experienced teacher of visually impaired children, for her review and helpful comments.

We are also indebted to Michael J. Bina, President of The Hadley School for the Blind, for agreeing to write the Foreword to this third edition. Mike's strong vantage point in work for the blind includes leadership positions as a director of special education in the public schools, principal and superintendent at two different residential schools for the blind, and president of the International Association for Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Our thanks is extended to Robert Winn and Dawn Turco of Hadley for reviewing the text of Chapter 10 of the second edition and offering valuable suggestions.

Finally, we want to take this opportunity to publicly express our ap-

preciation to each other. This revision would not have been possible without Naomi's extensive library research and her skillful editing abilities to incorporate necessary revisions, and our combined insights into the subtle and sensitive topics handled in the book. We continue to thank God for each other. The fact that we could work together so intensely on a professional project for over a year and still remain on speaking terms is a credit to both.

CREDITS FOR QUOTED MATERIAL

- From *Thurber: A Biography* by Burton Bernstein, 1975, Dodd, Mead and Co., Inc. Publishers. Used by permission of Burton Bernstein.
- From *This House Had Windows* by David Scott Blackhall. Published 1962 by I. Obolonsky. Used by permission of Mrs. Edna Blackhall.
- From *Now I See* by Charley Boswell and Curt Anders, 1969, Hawthorn/Dutton. Used by permission of Charles Boswell.
- From *I Begin Again* by Alice Bretz. Copyright © 1940, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Used with the permission of McGraw-Hill Book Co.
- From *More Than Meets the Eye* by Joan Brock and Derek L. Gill. Copyright © 1994 by Joan Brock and Derek L. Gill. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- From *Corridors of Light* by Eleanor Brown. Copyright © 1958, The Antioch Press. Used by permission of Paul H. Rohmann.
- From *The Kingdom Within* by G. Caulfield. Published 1960 by Harper and Bros. Used with permission of the Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc.
- From *Brother Ray* by R. Charles and D. Ritz. Copyright © 1978, Warner Books, Inc. Used by permission of The Dial Press and The Aaron M. Priest Literary Agency, Inc.
- From *My Eyes Have a Cold Nose* by H. Chevigny. Copyright © 1946, Yale U. Press. Used by permission of Mrs. H. Chevigny.
- From *A Psychiatrist Works with Blindness* by L.S. Cholden, published in 1958. Used by permission of American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
- From *Eyes, Etc: A Memoir* by Eleanor Clark, Copyright © 1977 by Eleanor Clark. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, A Division of Random House, Inc. and Wm. Collins.
- From *None So Blind* by Bernice Clifton. © 1963 by Rand McNally and Company publishers. Used by permission.
- From *Millicent* by Millicent Collinsworth and Jan Winebrinner, WRS Publishing, Waco, Texas, 1993. Used by permission of WRS.
- From *Breaking Through* by H. Cordellos. Copyright © 1981. Used by permission of *Runner's World Magazine*, 1400 Stierlin Rd., Mountain View, Ca.
- From *Finding My Way* by Borghild Dahl (Dutton). Copyright by B. Dahl 1962. Used by permission of Joy Chute.
- From *Keep In Touch* by Graeme Edwards. Copyright © 1962. Used by permission of Granada Publishing Limited.

- From *But You Can Feel It* by Emil B. Fries. Copyright © 1980, Binford and Mort. Used by permission of Emil B. Fries.
- From *White Coat, White Cane*. Copyright © 1978 by David Hartman and Bernard Asbell. Reprinted with permission of PEI Books, Inc.
- From *The Opening Doors* by Lois T. Henderson (John Day Company). Copyright 1954 by Lois T. Henderson. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.
- From *Emma and I* by Sheila Hocken. Copyright © 1977 by Sheila Hocken. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, E.P. Dutton, Inc. and David Higham Assoc.
- From *Touching the Rock* by John Hull. Copyright © 1990 by John M. Hull. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc.
- From *An Elephant's Ballet* by Robert G. Kemper. Copyright © 1977 by The Seabury Press, Inc. Used by permission of the Seabury Press, Inc.
- From *The Psychology of Blindness* by D.D. Kirtley. Copyright © 1975. Used with permission of the publisher, Nelson-Hall.
- Reprinted by permission of Harold Krents from *To Race the Wind* by Harold Krents. Copyright © 1972 by Harold Krents.
- From *Educational Implications of Self-Concept Theory* by W. LaBenne and B. Greene. Published 1969, Goodyear Publishing. Used by permission of W. LaBenne.
- From *Little by Little* by Jean Little. Copyright © Jean Little, 1987. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Books Canada Limited.
- From *The Stars Come Out Within* by Jean Little. Copyright © Jean Little, 1990. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Books Canada Limited.
- From *If You Make a Noise I Can't See* by Lucy Lunt. Copyright © 1965. Used by permission of the publisher, Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- From *Journey Out of Darkness* by Marie B. McCoy, published 1963 by McKay. Used with permission of Mr. and Mrs. W.B. Coleman.
- From *Blind Man's Buff* by H. Garland Minton, published by Elek, 1974. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Limited.
- From *Uncharted Country* by Mary Mitchell. Copyright 1964. Used by permission of the publisher, Longman Cheshire.
- From *Seeing Eye Wife* by Virginia Blanck Moore. Copyright 1960. Reprinted with the permission of the publisher, Chilton Book Company, Radnor, Pa.
- From *Obstacle Course* by B.K. Morgan. Copyright © 1979. Used by permission of the publisher, Chronicle Books.
- From *Sun and Shadow* by Rose Resnick. Copyright 1975 (Atheneum). Used with permission of Rose Resnick.
- From *Second Sight* by Charlotte Sanford and David Lester. Copyright © 1979 by Charlotte Sanford and David Lester. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, M. Evans and Company, Inc., 216 E. 49th St. New York, NY 10017.
- From *Out of Sight: Ten Stories of Victory over Blindness* by Al Sperber. Copyright © 1976 by Al Sperber. By permission of Little, Brown and Company.
- From *If You Could See What I Hear* by Tom Sullivan and Derek Gill. Copyright © 1975 by Thomas J. Sullivan and Derek L.T. Gill. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

From *Let Your Mind Alone* by James Thurber. Copyright © 1937 by James Thurber. Copyright © 1965 Helen W. Thurber and Rosemary T. Sauers, published by Harper and Row. By permission of Helen Thurber.

From *Elizabeth* by Sharon Ulrich. Copyright © 1972 by The University of Michigan Press. Used by permission of the University of Michigan Press.

From *Lend Me An Eye* by Albert Vajda. Published 1974. Used with the permission of the publisher, Granada Publishing, Limited.

From *Assessment and Planning with the Visually Handicapped* by C.J. Vander-Kolk. Published 1981. Used by permission of the publisher, University Park Press.

From *How Do You Kiss a Blind Girl?* by Sally Wagner. Published 1986 by Charles C. Thomas. Used by permission of Thomas Wagner.

From “Psychosocial Dimensions” by Richard Welsh in *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility*, R. Welsh and B. Blasch, eds., published in 1980. Used by permission of American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

From “An Analysis of Attitudes—Dynamics and Effects,” by B.A. Wright in *New Outlook*, 68: 108–118, 1974. Reprinted with permission from *New Outlook*, published by the American Foundation for the Blind.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Foreword—Michael J. Bina</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	xi

Section I—A DEFINITION OF BLINDNESS

Chapter

1. OVERVIEW AND IMPACT OF BLINDNESS	5
Severe Visual Impairment and Self-Esteem	5
Overview of Blindness.	8
Historical Perspective	8
Terminology.	12
Extreme Variability	15
Prevalence and Incidence	16
The Impact of Blindness	18
Implications for Personal and Home Management	21
Implications for Travel	22
Implications for Reading and Writing	28
Implications for Employment.	31
Implications for Recreation	34
Summary.	36
2. PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF BLINDNESS	37
Sociological Implications.	37
Psychological Implications	49
Degree of Independence and Level of Self-esteem.	57
Summary.	68

Section II—THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ESTEEM

3. SOURCES OF SELF-ESTEEM, EXTERNALLY ORIENTED	73
--	----

Self, Self-concept, and Self-esteem	74
Self-esteem and Reflections	78
Self-esteem and Relationships	92
Self-esteem and Self-appraisal	98
Summary.	100
4. SOURCES OF SELF-ESTEEM, INTERNALLY ORIENTED	101
Aspirations and Expectations	103
Performance and Observed Performance	108
Self-evaluation and Evaluation by Others	110
Responses to Evaluations: Success or Failure.	115
Value Priorities.	119
Basic Drives and Developmental Needs	123
Summary.	126
5. SELF-ESTEEM AND THE RESOLUTION OF DISCREPANCIES AND CONFLICTS	129
Sources of Discrepancies and Anxieties	131
Reactions to Discrepancies and Conflicts.	133
The Resolution of Discrepancies	134
Defense Mechanisms	141
Characteristics of High and Low Self-Esteem	142
Summary.	146
Section III—ADJUSTING WITH BLINDNESS	
6. THE ADJUSTING PROCESS, Part I: Reaction	149
The Meaning of Adjusting.	150
Phase One: Trauma, Physical or Social	152
Phase Two: Shock and Denial	159
Phase Three: Mourning and Withdrawal	164
Phase Four: Succumbing and Depression	170
Summary.	178
7. THE ADJUSTING PROCESS, Part II: Rebuilding	179
Phase Five: Reassessment and Reaffirmation.	179
Phase Six: Coping and Mobilization.	188
Phase Seven: Self-acceptance and Self-esteem	200
Summary.	212

8. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADJUSTING PROCESS 214
 Factors Internal to the Individual 214
 Factors External to the Individual 229
 Summary 239

Section IV—FOSTERING SELF-ESTEEM

9. GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
 FOR NURTURING SELF-ESTEEM 243
 Guidelines for Working with Visually Impaired Persons 245
 Attitudes and Behaviors that Foster Affective Growth 248
 Activities to Stimulate Affective Growth 250
 Summary 262

10. PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE 263
 Description of Students 264
 Responses to Course Questions 265
 Summary 280

Bibliography 281
Index 297

**SELF-ESTEEM
AND ADJUSTING
WITH BLINDNESS**

Section I

A DEFINITION OF BLINDNESS

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW AND IMPACT OF BLINDNESS

The experience of blindness is both a physical and a psychosocial phenomenon. The medical component provides data regarding etiology, diagnosis, prescription, and prognosis. However, it is more important that the experience of living with a severe visual impairment be described in terms of the interaction among three elements: the needs and desires of an individual with little or no vision; the physical and social environment of that individual; and the common perception of blindness. In order to understand better the interactive process, one must first come to grips with the concept and dynamics of blindness.

SEVERE VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND SELF-ESTEEM

The title, *Self-esteem and Adjusting with Blindness*, may erroneously suggest to some readers that self-esteem is a problem unique to persons who are blind or visually impaired. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The needs for food and shelter, for love and belonging, for responsibility and productivity, for self-acceptance and self-esteem are universal regardless of whether the individual is blind or sighted. The factors that contribute to anyone's self-esteem are the same ones that contribute to the self-esteem of a person who is severely visually impaired. The way people feel about themselves influences the way they are able to perform, and performance, in turn, affects the way they feel about themselves and the way they are perceived by others. The way others perceive them impacts on the way they feel about themselves and thus, the way they are able to perform. Self-esteem and competence are the keys to successfully meeting life's demands. However, a severe visual impairment contributes some added dynamics deserving special attention.

The real pain I was beginning to feel was not physical, it was spiritual. It was a loss of self-esteem. That thing I call the elephant was really a big creature with