



Introducing Health Sciences: Visual Impairment

Dealing with External Environment

Man

The external environment has got more difficult for blind people, blind and partially sighted people, over the last twenty-five years. The existence of a lot more street furniture, the speed and quantity of traffic, the simple things like people use mobile phones now which can be quite confusing if you're walking along in a sound environment, if you see what I mean, because the thing you're depending on is your hearing, and quite often you'll hear people seemingly talking into, to you, but in fact they're talking to somebody on a mobile 'phone so it's a slightly strange experience. And then of course there are the aspects to being blind which are bizarre anyway where people who come to your assistance will ask you the most strange questions so you've got to be quite resilient, I think, I think I've learnt to be quite resilient over the years because you are slightly public property when you're blind, and I've lost count of the number of times people have wanted to put their hands on my head and restore my vision, or ask me about my sex life or whatever, you know, it's just really extraordinary the things that complete strangers come up to you. But we're always very grateful for their assistance, so you have to kind of negotiate how much you tell people about yourself in return for their help, and there are situations where you're in a very busy, big concourse where, frankly, it's a bit too much even for the guide dog, and it's often the case that I will just wait until offers me assistance 'cos that's the safest option, and particularly when I'm on the railway platforms, the train platforms themselves, I think normally I would seek an arm from somebody.