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Matilda Ziegler Magazine for the Blind

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[Contributor Jennifer Streisand – A ‘Top Ten List’ to Achieve a New, Normal Living with Vision Loss: Part Four](#)

Posted by Matilda on November 30, 2012; This entry is filed under [Magazine Contributor](#).

So as not to scare off a low vision patient who may be reading this article, there is a certain learning curve in using technology, but once the low vision patient has made the transition to carrying out daily tasks in a different way, their rehabilitation is complete, says Vincent Rappa, Vice President of Low Vision Sales at HumanWare, a Florida-based company that sells low vision products, and products for people who are learning disabled.

“In other words, when somebody learns how to use our CCTV, they have been rehabilitated to read,” he says. As long as they have some vision, they will be able to use the CCTV, and once the person has mastered learning how to use it, the rehabilitation process of learning to read in a different way is complete, he adds.

To have accessibility or assisted technology on a computer, however, users can also tap into some of the options that already exist on mainstream computers and mobile devices such as Apple and Microsoft products.

According to information online at the Apple website, the iPhone 4S has full-screen magnification and a screen reader. The website tells readers that the program called “voiceover,” helps iPhone users read everything they would need on the screen, and can be enabled easily using the set-up assistant feature. This “voiceover” program is available on the iPhone 4S, iPhone 4, and the iPhone 3GS. Many Braille displays can now also be used with the iPhone.

The Apple iPad too, has many features that are useful for low vision patients, says Robert Chun, O.D., a low vision optometrist, and a post-doctoral research fellow at the Pangere Center for Inherited Retinal

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Diseases at The Chicago Lighthouse.

Apple is making great strides to help the visually impaired, he says. “The capabilities of the iPad and the iPhone are increasing and improving,” says Chun. The iPad has a lot of accessibility features that allow visually impaired patients to see the font size just about as large as they need it, so they can check their e-mail, read PDF documents, e-books, and so forth, explains Chun, allowing them full and comfortable access to the features that a person with normal vision would have. Many of these accessibility features can be used by changing the settings on the iPad, he says. There is also a dictation App on the iPad that types the text as the person speaks it.

For much more specific information on how to use the accessibility features on Apple devices, go to <http://www.apple.com/accessibility>.

Microsoft also has many features to help people with low vision, including a screen magnifier. On a Windows 7 computer, users can adjust their computers for better readability without buying any additional software, such as using the high contrast function or resizing the desktop icons to make them easier to see. Even on an older, Windows XP computer there is a perfectly functional screen reader, that reads the letters as the user types them. It is not a fast screen reader, but may be an excellent way to get started using a screen reader without any additional expense. For much more information on all of the low vision features on Microsoft computers, go to <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/help/accessibility>.

Although Apple and Microsoft features are free and already there, accessibility technology takes practice, and users need to become familiar with using the features, just as any other accessibility software.

“Don’t suffer in silence; get yourself wired, and go out and grab that opportunity. That is our message,” says Szlyk of The Chicago Lighthouse.

Consider, in life, that few things remain the same. Technology is truly adaptive, when the user creates a personal “techno repertoire” to improve his or her quality of life. Then daily activities really do feel like the new, normal routine.

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