

Disability Insurance - Forget the Odds: Experience Speaks Volumes

<http://www.insuranceneutral.com/article.asp?n=1&id=69905>

By Ron Cohen, RHU, RR

At the Inaugural Meeting of the International DI Society in Tampa, on October 7th, 2005, I made a statement which seemed to amaze the audience.

"My father, mother, sister, wife, both of my sons, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law and yes, even me, all had one thing in common. All of us had been disabled. Ironic? Horrifying is more like it.

Agents and home offices, brokers and articles, odds and salespeople can all tell you different stories, yet, personal experience speaks volumes. My view is simple. The odds of a disability happening to you are irrelevant. The reality of a disability destroying your life, been there, done that.

The last thing a disabled person should be concerned with is money. Plain and simple, disability insurance removes that problem. Is it needed? It can save a family and maintain the dignity of the disabled person who, (and I can tell you first hand,) feels "worthless" and "non-productive".

A disability normally follows patterns and stages.

Stage One:

The first stage is obviously being disabled. If it is permanent in nature, or terminal, the effects will be felt by those closest to the disabled person. It becomes an emotional rollercoaster that gets out of control. Personal feelings must be kept from the disabled person. Each person involved seems to go it alone. Thoughts run through each family member's mind without stop. It is overwhelming! The burdens are not only emotionally and physically draining, but economically draining as well.

When you factor in the "economic loss" (if the disabled person is a bread winner), fear enters the picture. Fear of losing not ONLY the disabled person, but we are all human and human nature finds us fearing the loss of our homes, cars, tuition for the kids college and on and on. That's what disability insurance takes out of the picture: Fear of economic loss. Having disability insurance lessens the burdens that can befall the entire family. It also allows the disabled person to know, (and this is crucial to understand) that the disabled person must maintain not only their dignity, but their contribution to the family must continue. If it continues by removing the family's financial fears, the disabled person feels no loss to their role as bread winner and provider.

Stage Two:

Recovery (This stage could take weeks, months or even years.)

If the disability is not terminal or permanent, there usually is a period of recovery needed. During this transition, the family and disabled party find some adjustments to their normal routines and schedules might be needed. Perhaps, driving the recovering person to and from the attending physician or a rehabilitation site might be necessary. At a later stage of recovery, driving the recovering person to and from the workplace might also be necessary. Adjusting schedules again, as in today's society, most husbands and wives both work. Typically, friends, other family members and neighbors all take part in this process. No one said it was easy and few realize how many people actually get involved. Been there, done that.

Stage Three:

Overcoming the "Worthless" stage and maintaining your dignity. Something happens to all of us when we are not productive. Our self esteem is lost and suddenly, and this is not unusual, suicidal thoughts enter our minds. I have seen it for the past 37 years. It is the most frightening stage of all.

Without personal contribution to our families and loss of ability to do our jobs, our careers gone, we assume the "pity mode" and thus withdraw into a shell of personal worthlessness. In the disabled person's mind, they have lost their "human life value".

A true disability insurance salesman would say, "Your disability insurance becomes the rose that you can smell during your lifetime". Indeed, it will, indeed it does. It helps. More so than most know and here is why. The most important stage is the transition from helplessness and the feeling of worthlessness (and dependency) to recovery. This is what a good disability policy realizes and provides for. Recovery allows for the disabled person to get back to becoming an income producer and bread winner again.

Typically, disability policies will provide for some type of "partial" benefit and or "loss of income benefit" which pays the insured a percentage of the total benefits normally paid. Therefore, going back to work and trying to recover is in everyone's best interest. The disabled person wants to go back and the insurance company wants them to as well. Without this provision, malingering (or not wanting to, or prolonging a disability because there is no provision for recovery) could run rampant at claim time.

Stage Four:

Back to work (If you're lucky.)

At this point, one could be 100% recovered. Or, back to work in a new position, or back to their job working less time and doing less duties or even doing everything they did before but suffer a loss of income as a result of the disability. No one can predict what will happen. Good disability insurance will provide for all these scenarios and more.

The only thing that can be predicted, well, without disability insurance, no matter what the odds, the result is not pleasant. You see, of all the people I mentioned in the beginning, I was the only one to be lucky enough to have disability insurance.

Been there, done that.

Notation

Of those family members mentioned, 5 of the disabilities were permanent and terminal, two almost terminal but recovered within 6 months, three recovered within 90 days, and my own disabilities, well there were three:

One lasting 6 months, one lasting 12 months and one lasting 14 months.

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