

Eye on Health

Self-Help For Vision Loss

(NAPSA)—Vision problems are on the rise, especially among older adults. According to the American Foundation for the Blind, an estimated 70 to 75 percent of all new cases of visual impairment occur in people over 65.

Celia B. is just one example of how to deal with vision problems. She wakes to the sound of her alarm clock. The clock, with its black face and stark white contrasting numbers and hands, sits on a table next to her bed. Her stand magnifier is nearby on a recent copy of Reader's Digest's large-print magazine.

Celia heads for the bathroom. Since she's redecorated it with color-contrasted towels, bath mat and shower curtain, and added the magnifying makeup mirror, her day gets off to a good start. Ready to hear the television news, Celia presses the adapted remote control (so much easier to use with its light-colored, raised buttons against the black case). Watching television is also much more pleasurable since she purchased the acrylic TV screen enlarger, which virtually doubles the size of the picture.

After a while, Celia prepares to organize her day and writes her usual list of things to do. Using a writing frame and felt-tip pen, she records the items she needs from the local supermarket. Her friend also needs to visit the same store, so this will be an opportunity to practice walking with a "sighted guide." The lessons given by the orientation and mobility specialist from the local agency for the blind have given her much more confidence when moving about both inside and outside her home.

Time for breakfast, and the whistling kettle reminds her to



SIMPLE ADAPTATIONS can help people with vision loss find ways to accomplish everyday activities.

turn off the burner; the liquid level indicator placed in her mug "beeps" when the liquid gets close to the rim, and the easily adjustable knife slicer means she can enjoy her favorite (uncut) bread from the local Italian food store.

Using a check-writing guide, she writes a few checks and envelopes, and with the help of her large-print telephone dial, calls a local restaurant to make a luncheon reservation for two. She then calls her hairstylist to make an appointment and enters the time in her large-print diary.

These adaptations are samples of possible solutions to accomplishing everyday activities—safely and effectively. No two people use precisely the same approach, but there are solutions for everyone.

To learn more about how to increase the personal independence and quality of life of someone who is blind or has low vision, visit a new Web site—www.visionaware.org. The self-help site was designed for adults who are blind or have low vision, their families and those who work with them. It was developed with support provided from Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation.