



Introduction

If you are an able-bodied person, you may have difficulty understanding the needs of someone with a disability. I have experienced first hand the need to design an accessible environment. My mother suffered from senile dementia and my grandmother lived to be 102 years old, both living in our home. As with my loved ones, a large number of the elderly population may share space with other members of the family, who may also become their caregivers. These caregivers must be able to assist their loved ones with a limited degree of exhaustion and frustration.

In this book, I have addressed one of the most utilized rooms in the home—the bathroom. If you have

some form of disability and/or use a wheelchair, it is difficult to maneuver well within the bathroom. Since the bathroom is more than likely the first room you will visit upon rising, making it comfortable for the user and/or caregiver is very important and can set the mood for the rest of the day.

Defining accessibility depends upon the person's needs. For an elderly person—comfort, familiarity, and safety are key issues. An accessible room means something different for someone who is in a wheelchair compared to someone who has poor eyesight, or has trouble reaching or bending. This is where the challenge lies—we must address the needs of the individual using the space. A basic design checklist can help eliminate most of the barriers found in many bathroom designs. For instance, with an elderly person, avoid complicated gadgetry and remove physical demands that can contribute to stress. In addition, utilize user-friendly products, such as a shower wand and lever handles on plumbing fixtures.

Our aging community has issues that are uniquely theirs. Some have suffered a stroke disabling them, or have experienced a certain degree of dementia. In addition, weakened vision, hearing loss and decreased dexterity comes along with aging, and may be factors

to consider. As we age, we need a certain amount of assistance to accomplish the day-to-day tasks within our living environment. One of the ways to help is through eliminating common obstacles within the bathroom. With the proper planning, the elderly can continue to live in their home with dignity and independence.

Although we have come a long way with accessible products and design, as a caregiver or designer, you are the expert in what features you will need. Everyone's needs are not the same; therefore, it is up to you to make the design decisions. In order to achieve the best results you will need to plan carefully, ensuring that you will be happy with the results and the cost.

Accessible Bathroom Design will allow you to determine how to design for someone who is disabled and why it is important. In putting together this book I have utilized information from various sources, i.e., Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Guidelines, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), American National Standards Institute (ANSI), International Code Council (ICC), American Standard, Inc., and the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association.

Both consumers and builders can utilize this book in a practical way to look at how the bathroom can be

made more accessible for all people. Also, that aging in the home can be made safer and more satisfying for both seniors and others experiencing some form of disability. I will go even further to say that as an extra bonus, make it more marketable in the process. By reading this book you will become more aware of what the individual's or caregiver's needs are and design to meet those needs.