The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) has some great resources for job seekers with disabilities as well as employers, including an article about accommodations for driving:

www.askjan.org/articles/Accommodations-for-Driving.cfm

Furthermore, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) offers guidance here about when driving may be considered an essential function of a job.

www.eeoc.gov

Basic information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) can be found at www.ada.gov

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**Cane Training: My Own Terms**

By Brandi Darby

The need or desire to use a cane within the albinism community is met with a variety of responses. Adults with albinism often see cane usage as overkill, while parents tend to view it as an additional tool for their child to navigate with. One thing we can all agree on is that cane usage is a personal decision that is best made on a case-by-case basis.

I’m 37 and a few weeks ago, I made the decision to receive cane training. My parents were offered this option for me when I was a child but declined because I seemed to navigate well without it. As an adult, I agree with their decision on my behalf. Although I’m legally blind, not having a cane as a child gave me time to find my own way and to incorporate tools if and when they became necessary.

I gained from finding my way without it has taken me further than a cane ever could. Conversely, as a teenager, when I learned exactly how wide the spectrum of albinism was, I met people who shared my condition but had less vision acuity and more eye fatigue than me. My teenage peers taught me how their tools allowed them to do the same things I was doing, thus bridging the gap between our abilities.

Confidence isn’t the only thing I gained along the way: I have experienced defensiveness as a common accompaniment to albinism. Society assumes a lot about our abilities, or lack thereof; therefore, if we’re keeping it real, ego plays a part in many of our decisions to go tool-less. I felt small amid all the vision aides people insisted I needed and the things they said I couldn’t do. I was determined to defy every limitation ever applied to me, and I did. It’s always been important for me to define my own limitations and not allow them to be assigned to me. When I sought out cane training, it was with pride because I had come to it on my own terms, which is the most empowering position to make this kind of decision from.

As an adult with albinism, I understand the idea of canes and other such tools being excessive if the suggestion is that we should all be using them. I believe using a cane at a young age would have led me to think that I couldn’t navigate without it. The confidence if my life existed within the limits of my city or neighborhood, a cane would never be helpful to me.

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Do I really need accommodations and to register with disability services at my college/university?

You may be a whiz at using technology. You may have all the latest programs and apps and know how to find new solutions when tough situations arise. This will serve you well in the academic setting. However, courses at the college level can vary tremendously; each instructor has their own style, and each class has its own requirements. Universities do not provide accommodations until the student has disclosed a disability to the appropriate office, provided documentation, gotten approved for selected accommodations, and notified the instructor. Because this can take some time and it might be difficult to predict future problems, consider communicating with your university disability office before you begin school. This is a proactive step that can support your needs in the long run. You do not have to get or use accommodations if you do not need them.

For all the things that make us different on this spectrum of albinism, something we’re all looking for is our own way in the world. I’m grateful that we have a variety of tools at our disposal to allow that. I respect my friends who’ve rejected the stigma of using para-transit, canes, dogs, braille and other assistive assets to bring the world to them.

Dr. Kimberly Avila is a PWA and the professor-in-charge of the teacher preparation program in blindness and vision impairment at George Mason University.

Are you planning to go to college? For students with albinism, applying to college often entails additional considerations. Each student with albinism is different: this article outlines some common questions, potential considerations, and advocacy tips for students with albinism.

Albinism and Advocacy: College Accommodation Considerations

By Kimberly Avila, PhD, TBVI, COMS