

Chasing Normal is a compelling account of life from two remarkable perspectives and is a must-read for anyone who has or is connected to someone with a disability. I was born without arms, and the mantra in our house was “there’s no such word as can’t.” It worked for me but after reading Dinah’s book, I have re-evaluated the universality of that message. Chasing Normal doesn’t offer a quick fix, but is an honest, even disturbing account of reality and surprisingly inspirational. Who thought the cold truth could carry such a warm message.

— ALVIN LAW, SPEAKER AND BEST SELLING AUTHOR

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# CHASING NORMAL

A Guide for the Newly Disabled and for Those Who Love Them

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Dinah Chaudoir Federer

[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)



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## **Dinah Chaudoir Federer**

Author \* Advocate \* Educator \*

Dinah Chaudoir Federer holds a B.A. in psychology and has been in the field of vocational rehabilitation for over 23 years. She was a counselor for the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Wisconsin for 18 of those years. Dinah was born with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT). As a disabled adult herself, her consistent message to her newly disabled clients was “There is life after disability!”

At the age of 35 she developed severe bilateral trigeminal neuralgia which causes intense electrical shock type facial pain. She then found herself facing the same adjustment crisis that she had helped her newly disabled clients journey through. As she searched the internet for the supportive material she craved to help her adjust to this new pain syndrome, she was unable to find a practical, no-nonsense guide to accepting and thriving with new, life-altering challenges. Consequently, she felt compelled to write one herself and Chasing Normal-A Guide for the Newly Disabled and for Those Who Love Them was released in December 2008.

Dinah now devotes her time to writing, educating, speaking and supporting both the disabled community and their supporters as well as the professionals who work with people with disabilities. She believes that rehabilitation can be immensely successful and positive for all involved when every person at the table can maintain their honesty, openness and integrity as they explore what is right for the individual both for the short term as well as for the long term. Further, both her book and her presentation messages encourage people to take responsibility for their own healing process and become their own advocates in their path to recovery. She continues to focus on recovery and wellness rather than on illness.

Training opportunities exist through Chasing Normal via teleconferencing, webinars, one-on-one coaching and in-person presentations designed to meet the needs of the organization.

Dinah and her husband continue to reside in Wisconsin. She remains open to serving both the disabled and the professionals who serve them. To discuss the ways in which Dinah may be able to support you or your organization you can call her at 920-946-7207 or email her at [dinah@chasing-normal.com](mailto:dinah@chasing-normal.com)



[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Announcing: CHASING NORMAL  
A New Resource for the Newly Disabled**

February 2009 Sheboygan WI – Local author, Dinah Chaudoir Federer has released her new book: **CHASING NORMAL-A GUIDE FOR THE NEWLY DISABLED AND FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEM** to help the newly disabled navigate the long and winding road that comes with adjusting to a new disability.

CHASING NORMAL uses the author's personal and professional experiences to help people survive and learn to thrive with disability challenges. She addresses topics such as feeling fragile, dealing with failure, and talking about the 'Big IT' and suggestions are provided to assist the reader in moving through these emotionally trying situations.

"We have people surviving illnesses and accidents at increasingly higher rates thanks to medical advances; and combat survivors are also growing in unprecedented numbers" says Chaudoir Federer. She wrote the book to support those who suddenly find themselves trying to weave their way through the dizzying mine field of doctors, therapists, loss of functioning, family fears and personal terror.

Chaudoir-Federer has worked in the field of vocational rehabilitation for over 20 years. She herself grew up with a mobility impairment and then developed a secondary chronic pain issue at age 35. Her message to herself, her clients, and their families is simple and clear: "There is life after disability." Visit the web site at [www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com).

For more information about CHASING NORMAL or to schedule an interview please contact Dinah at 920-946-7207 or at [dinah@chasing-normal.com](mailto:dinah@chasing-normal.com).

**Book Summary:**

**Self Help Style (paperback)**

**Author: Dinah Chaudoir Federer**

**ISBN: 978-0-615-26262-8**

**Format/Price: Paperback, 130 pages, \$12.95**

**Available at: [www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com) and at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)**



[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)

## Book Specification Sheet

Chasing Normal: A Guide for the Newly Disabled and for Those Who Love Them

**Author:** Dinah Chaudoir Federer

**Publisher:** Distynct Solutions

**Release Date:** December 2008

**ISBN:** 978-0-615-26262-8

**Retail Price:** \$12.95

**Category:** Self Help/Wellness

**Trim Size:** 6" x 9"

**Length:** 130 pages

**Binding:** Perfect (paperback)

**Cover:** 4 Color Glossy

**Please mail a copy of the review or tear sheet to:**

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[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)

## Filling the Void

~How the book CHASING NORMAL came to be~

By Dinah Chaudoir Federer

It is said that the Universe does not allow a vacuum. Whenever there's an empty space, the Universe will promptly fill it. Much to my husband's chagrin, this is absolutely true in our household. Thanks to me, our closets and previously empty spaces are full, always! I'm the space filler in our relationship.

When asked to discuss why and how I wrote the book CHASING NORMAL -A GUIDE FOR THE NEWLY DISABLED AND FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEM, I thought "Well, it was meant to fill, what I perceived as, a void or a hole in the rehab system." I have "atypical" CMT. I grew up walking with assistance of some kind— walking along walls and furniture, holding onto a friend's arm, crutches, etc. So, as I've said in the book, I grew up chasing normal.

At 35 I was diagnosed with Trigeminal Neuralgia bilaterally. It's intense, actually torturous, electrical shock type facial pain. The medication given for this pain is anti-seizure in nature. So, give someone with a neuromuscular challenge a drug that relaxes muscles and nerves and the result is life changing weakness. Suddenly I was dealing with severe chronic pain and a body that wasn't behaving the way it had for 35 years!

As a veteran vocational rehabilitation counselor for the state, you'd think I'd have been better prepared to deal with loss of functioning, grief, doctors who wouldn't believe the meds were causing weakness, etc. But, it's one thing to counsel people through loss and quite another to journey through it yourself. The knowledge in your brain doesn't stop the pain in your heart! During those initial years I would have liked to have been able to talk to someone else who was, not just surviving but thriving, through pain, weakness and loss. I looked on Amazon and didn't see much that felt applicable.

I remembered what kinds of things I said to my newly disabled clients as a way of supporting their journey and I tried applying it personally. I returned to my job after my initial diagnosis and med change so I could walk again, and found myself repeating the same things to my new clients. They were the things I had said to my clients before my world collapsed. They were the things I wished someone would have said to me. I was finding myself wondering why these things were not in print.

Ahhh, now we've come full circle. We're back to the void! –There's another old expression, "as within, so without!" We see in the world that which exists within us. I perceived a void in the rehab system and I intended to fill it. Remember, I'm the empty space filler! And as a result of aiming for the space "out there" I filled in the void in my heart that wondered why I'd been given two disabilities. I reminded myself of the truths I believe in. My goal of helping others with new disabilities to see that life really could be worth living helped me convince myself of that very thing.

So, if you're a newly disabled person, I wrote CHASING NORMAL for you. If you're a friend or family member of someone with a disability, I wrote it for you. If you're a medical or rehab professional serving people with disabilities, I wrote it for you. And by writing for all of you I gained peace of mind and heart for myself! May peace surround your journey too!!



### **Chasing Normal A Guide ...**

*Guest Author - Deborah Pipas*

Chasing Normal: A guide for the newly disabled and for those who love them

Written by: Dinah Chaudoir Federer

Published by: Distynct Solutions, LLC

Although dealt the hand of disability at birth, Dinah was lovingly taught by her family to be independent. Seemingly she was well prepared for life in spite of her disability but, at age thirty five she is diagnosed with a second disability that is incredibly painful. She is very informative giving the reader a great deal of insight into some of the pain and suffering she has endured due to her personal disabilities. This in turn establishes for the reader Dinah's credibility to write this book.

In the beginning of her book Dinah shares some thoughts and ideas with the reader listing some things she believes to be important to remember on life's journey. These ideas include being kind to yourself, learning to ask for help when you need it and giving back to others in ways that you are capable of giving. She is able to describe to the reader the feelings experienced by those who are disabled and to help the reader become more aware of the feelings experienced by family, friends and caregivers.

Dinah strongly urges those experiencing disability to reach out to others. Reading her book gave me a whole new understanding. She is able to make it clear that there is no shame in needing or asking for assistance. Whether the disabled person or someone closely connected to that person we all need to reach out sometimes. Perhaps just to talk with someone or to try to share thoughts and feelings and to try to encourage each other.

We learn from reading this book that those who are newly disabled often must work through many feelings and emotions such as denial, anger and fear just to name a few. Dinah's words throughout the book are encouraging to the disabled individual, family and caregivers. She helps all of us to understand the importance of proper nutrition and exercise for those with disability as well as their caregivers. Explaining that no matter what role we play in the situation we cannot accomplish all the things we need to attend to daily without physical strength, a strong heart and a steady hand.

Loneliness an emotion shared by many people is also high on the list in our disabled communities, Dinah discusses how to deal with this emotion and to learn to reach out to others for support. She speaks about how people often resist when learning they have a disability and that in so doing they make the journey

more difficult for themselves and those who love them. She speaks to the reader about how one can deal with feelings of failure, what to do when feeling fragile and learning to be okay with the disability.

There is a lot of information in this book that can be beneficial to the disabled, their family and friends, caregivers and even the general population. Anyone that will take the time to read and understand this book will walk away with a great deal of new and useful knowledge. There are many task and situations in life however, being disabled or being a caregiver to someone disabled is very high on the list as a cause of stress in the world today.

I highly recommend this book to everyone. I genuinely enjoyed reading Chasing Normal, A guide for the newly disabled and for those who love them and I hope that others will take the time to locate the book and read it. At this time Chasing Normal, A guide for the newly disabled and for those who love them is only available through Dinah's website, [www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com).





[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)

## **Testimonials**

### **Alvin Law, Best Selling Author and Speaker:**

"Chasing Normal is a compelling account of life with a disability from two remarkable perspectives and is a must-read for anyone who has or is connected to someone with a disability. I was born without arms and the mantra in our home was 'there's no such word as can't'. It worked for me but after reading Dinah's book, I have re-evaluated the universality of that message. Chasing Normal doesn't offer a quick fix but it is an honest, even disturbing account of reality and surprisingly inspirational. Who thought the cold truth could carry such a warm message?"

### **Urban Miyares, President/Founder Disabled Businesspersons Association:**

"'Chasing Normal' is a most unique and needed book dealing on both sides of the disability rehabilitation arena, from the perspective of being born with a disability, and also that of helping others with disabilities in their rehabilitation. Dinah's perspective and the easy-to-read language used provides the reader with a first-hand picture, from her perspective, which I know many readers will relate to. A wonderful publication that will definitely make one think, possibly question, but should be read frequently, and passed along to others to read. A must for anyone with a disability, their loved ones, and those serving people with disabilities. I truly enjoyed 'Chasing Normal,' and wish this book was written years ago."

### **Bonnie Hughes, Rehabilitation Professional:**

This book is an inspiration to anyone coping with the daily challenges of living with a disability. With refreshing candor and humor, the author shares her very personal experience of living with disabilities and the fear and myriad of emotion associated with becoming newly disabled. The author gives the reader extensive insight into the medical, social, emotional and interpersonal challenges she experienced and the lessons learned from meeting these challenges. The book provides practical advice on how to address the emotions and physical limitations associated with disability. The book comes complete with a checklist of things to remember and a section for the readers record of thought at the conclusion of each chapter. While the books message is primarily aimed at an audience of people with disabilities, friends and family of individuals with disabilities and more specifically, someone newly disabled, health care professionals, and educators might also find the book very appealing and useful for professional training.

### **Carol Westfahl Manitowoc, WI**

There is a desperate need for this book. Dinah is so capable of identifying the need and her response to it both in her personal life and her professional life. This book contains many untold truths and much wisdom for those facing disability as well as their caregivers. Reading Dinah's book is a learning experience.



[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)

## **Suggested Interview Questions for Chasing Normal**

Dinah Chaudoir Federer worked in the field of vocational rehabilitation for over 20 yrs. She was born with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT) and acquired a chronic pain syndrome called trigeminal neuralgia at age 35. She wrote the book to assist the newly disabled in their adjustment process.

CHASING NORMAL: A GUIDE FOR THE NEWLY DISABLED AND FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THEM has proven to be a helpful guide both for the newly disabled and for people with lifelong challenges. Feedback from a wide cross section of readers has indicated that people from all backgrounds are finding help, understanding and validation of their personal experiences and journey through disability. Further, family members, teachers, counselors, and other professionals will gain deeper insights into the adjustments people with disabilities are making or have made.

Chasing Normal is available on our web site at [www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com) as well as Amazon.com.

Questions:

- 1) What is your background with working with the disabled?
- 2) What are your own personal disabilities?
- 3) Tell me why you decided to write this book.
- 4) What is your personal philosophy about being disabled?
- 5) What are the differences/similarities between being born with a disability and acquiring a disability?
- 6) You have a lot of lists in the book. There is an identical list at the beginning of the book and at the end. There are also short lists at the end of each chapter. Tell me about why you did this.
- 7) What do you hope to accomplish with this book?
- 8) Are you available to speak to groups who may be interested in bringing you in to address their staff and/or clients?
- 9) What comments can you share about attitude and its influence on disability?
- 10) In your book you refer to the "What If" game as a coping technique. What is that?
- 11) You have a picture in the book of a piece of a tree hanging on a wire and you use it as a metaphor for our lives. Can you go into detail about that and what we can learn from that tree and from nature?
- 12) You have some interesting chapter titles in your book. Can you talk to about Describing Blue—what it means and how you came up with it?

- 13) You dedicate the book to your husband. How has he coped with the changes in your personal physical conditions?
- 14) How did you come to publish your book?
- 15) You're offering your first teleseminar on May 6. Can you tell us about it and what your future plans are regarding training and networking?
- 16) Why is networking important in recovery and in on-going coping?
- 17) In the book you make the point that "your disability is new to you but it is not new to the world." Talk about why you made that point and why it's so important.
- 18) What would you say to family members of the newly disabled?
- 19) What is your opinion on dreams and what happens to people's dreams with a new disability?
- 20) The book has some great photography in it. Tell us about that and how it came to be part of the book.



[www.chasing-normal.com](http://www.chasing-normal.com)

### **Author's Past and Future Speaking Schedule:**

#### **Radio:**

March 4, 2009 5:30pm CDT

[www.weft.org](http://www.weft.org)

Radio Interview with Vicki Niswander of Disability Beat

March 28, 2009 8:00pm CDT

[www.voiceofthepeopleradio.com](http://www.voiceofthepeopleradio.com)

Radio Interview with November Hanson

April 19, 2009 7:00pm CDT

[www.1100kfnx.com](http://www.1100kfnx.com)

Autism Talks Radio Show

April 30, 2009 3:00pm CDT

[www.HealthyLife.net](http://www.HealthyLife.net)

Faith Ranoli and the Heart and Home Radio Show

#### **Personal Appearances:**

Book Signing

Bookworld, Sheboygan, WI

February 27, 2009

Amputee Support Group, Plymouth, WI

April 29, 2009

Teleseminar—From Surviving to Thriving

May 6, 2009

Healing Arts Health Fair, Sheboygan, WI

June 1, 2009

Webinar-- Making the Move from Crisis to Opportunity:  
Creating a Road Map That Works for You  
June 24, 2009

Sheboygan Falls Senior Center, Sheboygan Falls, WI  
July 1, 2009

Howards Grove Senior Center, Howards Grove, WI  
July 7, 2009

Taskforce on Aging, Newport News, VA  
July 23, 2009

Visiting Angels Staff In-Service, Newport News, VA  
July 30, 2009

RCS Empowers Employer Award Luncheon, Kohler, WI  
October 27, 2009