

# Stephen hawking and fdr coping with disability essay example

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



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## **Communication**

### Stephen Hawking and FDR: Coping with Disability

It is interesting that both Stephen Hawking and Franklin D. Roosevelt are considered heroes to people with disabilities. Each of them has communicated much differently about their problems to the outside world. Franklin D. Roosevelt hid his disability from the public. On the other hand Stephen Hawking is very public about his disability. His photographs can be found many places on the web and on the back covers of his books. Although the way the two men dealt with their contemporaries about their disabilities perhaps they each did what was best.

Fame Franklin D. Roosevelt was a leader during a time when men and women were expected to play very strict roles. Men were supposed to be strong and manly so the President of the United States could not seem weak in any way and expect to remain popular. Roosevelt was in robust health until he contracted polio in 1924. Fortunately the polio was not fatal but the paralysis he suffered meant he could not walk on his own again. He was governor of New York State and he was a two term US President yet very few people knew he did not have the ability to walk without help. People who

knew about his disability respected his decision to keep the information private. The media also did not pry into his private life as it would in today's world.

Stephen Hawking is now a famous physicist at a time when diversity is celebrated. He wrote a book which made him well known around the world, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. The book is about science and physics but it is written without any mathematics in it. The book became a best seller because it is accessible to anyone with an interest in science and the universe. That is when people started to understand that the author, Hawking, was dealing with a difficult disability. From the time he was 21 years old he has been dealing with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) which is also called Lou Gehrig's disease. His nerves are damaged so he cannot control his speech or how he walks, he also cannot control body functions like breathing and swallowing.

Going public Franklin D. Roosevelt was famous around the world and was considered a great leader of his time. But it is only in recent history that his use of a wheelchair and leg braces has become common knowledge. Now though it will not be a secret again because a statue of him sitting in his wheelchair was unveiled in Washington, D. C. on December 10, 2000. Some people were against the statue showing his disability because FDR may not have wanted to be shown in a wheelchair. Others wanted to show how even with his disability he was able to accomplish great things. Duncan (2001) reports an example of just how empowering the statue can be. She quoted a young child on crutches, four-year-old Hannah McFadden who said " It means people on crutches and in a wheelchair can do anything."

Stephen Hawking does not seem to have let his disability slow him down for a minute. He does not seem to shy away from the public limelight either. He is also fortunate that his illness was not fatal even though his doctors did not expect him to live more than two years after the diagnosis. The photos of Hawking show the more obvious problems he deals with such as not being able to hold his head up normally. He is also always shown in his high technology electronic wheelchair which allows him to travel without someone pushing the wheelchair. He uses a specially designed computer which allows him to type text messages and to speak using electronics to produce a voice.

## **Conclusion**

Roosevelt hid his disability when he was in the public limelight whereas Hawking makes his disability no secret. Yet both men are considered heroes. They have demonstrated that seemingly impossible challenges and obstacles did not stop them from to be a strong force in the world.

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