

# Social Exclusion within the Community: Can we Change it?

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Dedicated to my parents, **Rivka and Israel Aphri**, of blessed memory.

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In the Western world, the promotion of human rights is one of the cornerstones of modern society. Although this concept is reflected in current governmental legislation, groups and individuals in Israeli society find themselves excluded from everyday community activities, as granting legal rights does not in itself enable the ability to exercise them. This article discusses social, health, and occupational exclusion, as well as the attitude of society toward this issue. It also addresses the obligation of society to ensure that rights granted by law, such as the "Patient's Bill of Rights" and the "Law of Equal Rights for People with Disabilities," are exercised. The article also addresses our duty as therapists and agents of change to promote equality, and describes the projects in which we, as occupational therapists, fulfilled our professional obligation to promote occupational justice by providing intervention to populations excluded from the community. These projects represent community interventions provided

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through the aegis of the occupational therapy department at Tel-Aviv University over a span of years, led by faculty members and students, a group that comprises a broad variety of human resources. Integrating the student body and staff in various community projects contributes and helps promote health and social objectives. Community activity integrated within the curriculum of higher education is highly significant, and represents yet another aspect of formative education. It has a considerable effect on the academic community's awareness of various health situations that characterize other communities and varied cultural backgrounds. The involvement of academia in the community not only contributes to the community itself, but also to the student population, and the participating academic institutions.