

How to Conquer the World with One Hand...and an Attitude by Paul Berger Chapter Summaries for Week 3

Week 3 Assignment: Chapters 11-15

Audio on iTunes: Tracks 16-21

Chapter 11: Have Cane, Will Travel

Setting: his work, speech therapist's office, Ireland

Paul gets mugged. He hates feeling vulnerable, so he finds ways to become more independent. He takes driving lessons. Paul is thrilled to be driving again. He enjoys both the independence as well as being able to do things for Stephanie again.

Paul's speech is getting better but he is still frustrated about his speech. When he gets frustrated, he thinks back to the time when he could only say the word "ow!"

Stephanie and Paul decide to travel to Ireland. It is difficult to travel in a different country. His brace breaks, but a prosthetic maker fixes it. Despite the challenges, Paul enjoyed the trip to Ireland and looks forward to more traveling.

Stephanie and Paul decide to move to a one level (rambler/ranch) house.

Chapter 12: A Year of Many Transitions

Setting: his new house, his work

Joe, Stephanie's dad, dies from heart failure. Paul is devastated because he loved Joe and will miss his positive energy and attitude.

Stephanie and Paul move to their new house. Paul's new friends from the local model train club, Chip and Brian, build a table for Paul's trains. At one point, Paul is frustrated because they tell him "he is in the way" but he swallows his pride. Paul enjoys the creative process of his hobby but he now has to work with one hand. He and Stephanie find ways to adapt his tools and equipment.

Paul and Stephanie adopt two kittens. At first, Paul is angry and frustrated because they are poorly behaved. But Paul warms up to them when Stephanie is away on a trip. He likes the kittens because "they don't seem to mind" his aphasic speech.

Paul makes a breakthrough with reading: "I was overcoming the aphasia: moving from understanding single words, to whole sentences to whole paragraphs."

Paul's body continues to heal. His pain is subsiding and he can tolerate longer amounts of therapy for his right arm and hand.

Paul's boss tells him that there is no longer a position for him. He is devastated and feels betrayed. Paul decides to retire on disability. He looks for a new job and joins a group for people with disabilities. Paul decides to take a volunteer job in hopes that it will turn into a paid position.

Chapter 13: Always Open With A Joke

Setting: various jobs

Paul is depressed because he can not find a new job. He volunteers for a political delegate. He celebrates his fortieth birthday with family and friends. His brother gives advice about finding a job and suggests that he go to job interviews alone to demonstrate his independence. Paul also uses a comic strip for interviews. He finds a new job, but he is fired again. He looks for another job, and finds a job with a nonprofit group. He has to commute on the train. He has difficulty on the train because people push him and do not notice his disabilities. This makes him wonder: how many disabled people had I pushed out of the way without realizing it?

Chapter 14: Macho...Macho...Man...

Setting: a university, his house, Spain, Stuart's room, ski trips, and a hotel

Stephanie and Paul decide to travel to Spain. They book a ten day bus tour. It is still difficult to travel but he enjoyed the trip.

Stephanie and Paul discover that Stephanie's forty year-old brother (Stuart) has head and neck cancer. Stuart is very sick and will die soon. Paul thinks: *Just because I had suffered a stroke, the world around me didn't stop, and I was an active participant for both the good times and the bad.* Paul understands how Stuart feels. Paul thinks about how he got better, but Stuart will not. Paul decides to write a book about his recovery.

Paul and Stephanie also travel to England. Paul and a friend take a tour of a coal mine. They get separated from the group. In the coal mine, it was dark and the surfaces were uneven and slippery. Paul is terrified but is happy to have challenged himself.

Paul joins a club for people with disabilities and he goes on a weekend ski trip. He says: *I wanted everyone to see that there was a real man underneath this stroke disguise.*

Paul and Stephanie are upset because Congress thinks that stroke patients cannot benefit from long term therapy. They lobby Congress, and both Stephanie and Paul give speeches. Paul says: *This was a special turning point for me, going from being helped to being the helper.*

<u>Chapter 15: Graduating From the College of Courage</u> **Setting:** his house, Romania, a reception

Stephanie finds a new job. She commutes a long way, so Paul is often alone. They remodel their house to make it more accessible. Stephanie and Paul travel to Romania. Paul thinks the stroke helped him to be grateful for what he has.

Paul finds a full-time job and stops therapy. Paul speaks at a reception. He wants his speech to be perfect, but he has trouble: *I wanted to be perfect, but I still had aphasia*. President Nixon has a stroke and dies. Paul is upset by the newspaper article. Stephanie writes to the newspaper to advocate that long-term therapy is helpful.

Paul and Stephanie have a party to thank all of their family, friends and therapists for their eight years of support. Paul receives an honorary PhD in speech, physical and occupational therapy from the "University of Survival, College of Courage."