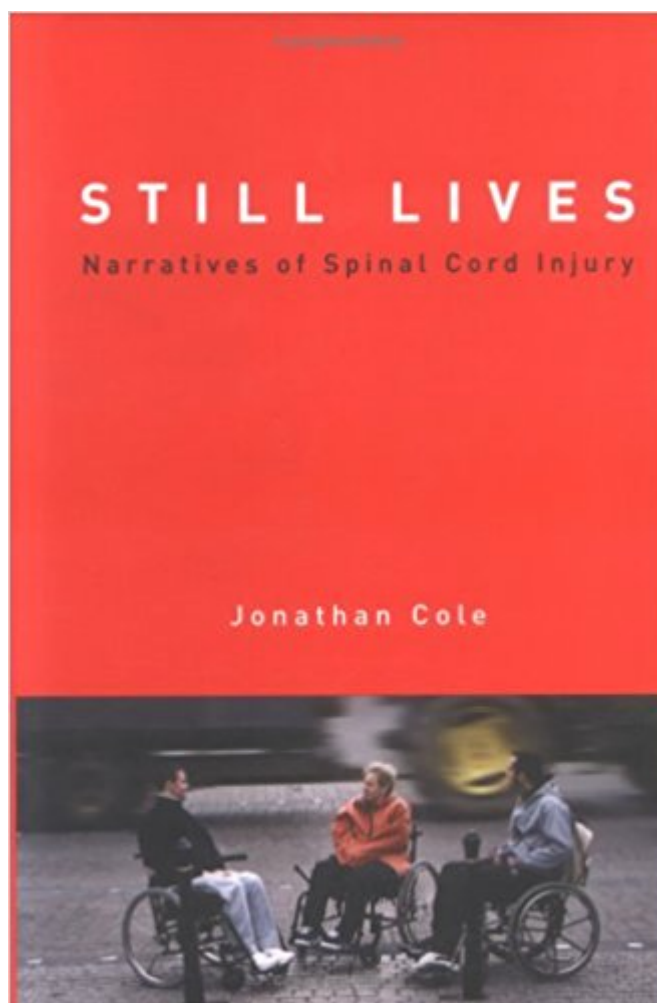


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# Still Lives: Narratives Of Spinal Cord Injury (Bradford Books)



## Synopsis

In writing *Still Lives*, Jonathan Cole wanted to find out about living in a wheelchair, without having what he calls "the doctor/patient thing" intervene. He has done this by asking people with spinal cord injuries the simple question of what it is like to live without sensation and movement in the body. If the body has absented itself, where does the person reside? He describes his method in the first chapter: "I have gone to people, not with a white coat or a stethoscope...[but] to listen to their lives as they express them," and it is the candid and powerful narratives of twelve people with spinal cord injuries that form the heart of the book. Asking his simple question, Cole discovers that there is no single or simple answer. The twelve people with tetraplegia (known as quadriplegia in the US) or paraplegia whose stories he tells testify to similar impairments but widely differing experiences. Cole employs their individual responses to shape the book into six main sections: "Enduring," "Exploring," "Experimenting," "Observing," "Empowering," and, finally, "Continuing." Each concludes with a commentary on the broader issues raised. *Still Lives* moves from a view of impairment as tragedy to reveal the possibilities and richness of experience available to those living with spinal injuries. More universally, it offers new perspectives on our relation to our bodies. In exploring the creative and imaginative adjustments required to construct a "still life," it makes a plea for the able-bodied to adjust their view of this most profound of impairments.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Illuminating reading; inspiring, too." Roy Herbert NewScientist  
"These interviews...have a documentary quality that makes them gripping." Druin Burch Times Literary Supplement

"In this excellent book Jonathan Cole thoroughly examines spinal cord injury with the compassion of both a first-rate doctor and a caring human being. Many voices are heard, some for the first time in public. This is a truly distinguished work, accessible to the layperson and most notable for its empathetic inclusion of widely differing viewpoints." --Christopher Reeve  
"Cole gets better and better at capturing and communicating the experiences of patients who find it difficult to put the full range of their problems into words. In *Still Lives* he encounters and recounts remarkable cases of those who suffer from spinal cord injuries -- some of them whose consciousness is 'consumed' by their situation, and some of them who turn paralysis into an instrument for social change.

Philosophically, this is a book about normal embodiment as much as about paraplegics and tetraplegics. These interviews throw into relief exactly the things that those of us who can move take so much for granted -- not just the ease of willful action, but the ability to express ourselves and to relate to others. Cole draws a picture of the radically different lives of these patients, their differing responses to their injuries, and the various worlds defined by their experiences. He provides expert insight into the medical conditions, but also into the social conditions, that define the situations of those with disabling paralysis. Throughout, Cole moves effortlessly from the personal to the political to the philosophical, as he maps out the stories of people who are still living despite their still lives."

--Shaun Gallagher, Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, University of Central Florida

"Jonathan Cole has let twelve people with spinal cord injury talk to us, showing us their minds as they adjust their lives to their bodies. This is a compelling and thought-provoking book, written from a viewpoint which combines scientific knowledge, a total respect for the individual, and an awareness of the contribution that our body makes to who we are." --Patrick Haggard, Reader in Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London

the observations were more clinical than personal but I still was able to gain some understanding about the things I am experiencing and that was my goal when I bought the book.

I purchased this when I became friends with a man in a chair. I think it helped me understand better some of what he has had to deal with, and I hope it has made me a better friend to him.

Right off the mark - What a ridiculous and condescending title. I'm a quad and my life is not "still".

Not when I'm going to work as a physician & not when I'm chasing around my two year old! People with weakness or paralysis are not "in chairs" - many need to USE wheelchairs to get around - just like someone without a spinal cord injury might use a bike to go a long distance. Maybe we should leave the writing about people with spinal cord injuries to those who've had one - say, Christopher Reeves for example!

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