

Disability Awareness

Everyone deserves respect, but sometimes we are not sure how to show it. A person with disabilities wants to be treated like everyone else. Listed below are some guidelines that might be helpful when greeting a person with a disability.

Disability Etiquette – Do's

- ▶ When introduced to a person with a disability, offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting. If someone is unable to shake hands, try a nod or a smile.
- ▶ Always ask before offering to help a person with a disability. Don't assume that he or she requires help. If the offer to help is declined, do not insist.
- ▶ Address a person with a disability directly, not through their assistant.
- ▶ Stand to the front of a person with a disability when speaking. Whenever possible, position yourself at their eye level.
- ▶ If a person has a visual impairment, identify yourself by name and use his or her name when speaking to him or her in a group.
- ▶ Give assistance to a person with a visual impairment, by using words such as right/left, front/back, top/bottom.
- ▶ If a person has a visual impairment, and it is necessary to get their attention, touch the guest lightly on the arm. Allow the person to take your arm and then proceed by walking slightly ahead of them at a normal pace. Describe obstacles in their path.
- ▶ Be patient and allow the person to do all that is within their capability.
- ▶ Act naturally and be yourself.

Disability Etiquette – Don't's

- ▶ Do not ask a person about his or her disability.
- ▶ Do not ask a person with a disability personal questions about his/her life.
- ▶ Do not use words such as handicapped, crippled, lame, confined to a wheelchair, victim, tragic, etc.
- ▶ Do not treat a person with a disability as if he or she is sick or unhealthy.
- ▶ Do not assume that a person with a disability needs help.
- ▶ Do not assume that all persons with disabilities think or feel the same way.
- ▶ Do not touch someone's wheelchair, cane or crutches without their permission.
- ▶ Do not feed, pet, or give commands to service animals unless given permission.
- ▶ Do not assume that a person with a visual impairment also has an auditory impairment. Speak in a normal tone of voice.
- ▶ Do not offer unmerited admiration such as calling a person brave or heroic.
- ▶ Do not overly monitor your actions and words.

Disability Awareness (continued)

When referring to a person with a disability always refer to the person before the disability:

NOT: "A disabled person in the downhill ski event."

RATHER: "A person with a disability in the downhill ski event."

Vocabulary

- 1. AMPUTATION:** the act of removing all or a portion of an arm, hand or leg usually by surgery
- 2. ARTIFICIAL:** not real
- 3. ETIQUETTE:** manners; rules for behavior in polite society
- 4. OBSTACLES:** something that stands in the way
- 5. PARALYSIS:** loss of the power of motion or sensation in any part of the body
- 6. VISUAL IMPAIRMENT:** blind or partially sighted