Disability Etiquette Guidelines

Building Inclusive Communities Together

Disability etiquette is a set of guidelines dealing specifically with how to interact with a person who has a disability. The focus of these principles is based on treating people with respect. A basic understanding of these principles can help make community members feel more comfortable when interacting with peers with disabilities.

And remember if you are not sure JUST ASK!

# Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their companion, staff, aide, or family member.

# Be age appropriate when you speak with an adult with a disability, as you would any other adult.

# Ask before you help a person with a disability.

# Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, or unfortunate.

# Avoid cute euphemisms such as being physically challenged, inconvenienced or differently abled.

# When communicating about a person, equally important, ask yourself if the disability is even relevant and needs to be mentioned when referring to individuals.

# Look past the disability get to know someone by asking questions.

# Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do = presume competence.

# Avoid portraying a person with disability as inspirational simply because they live with disability. Implying a person is courageous or superhuman for doing everyday things can be patronizing.

# Use person first language to tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS. An objective way of acknowledging and communicating about disabilities. "A child with Epilepsy" rather than "The epileptic child".

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