

Always Acknowledge A Person's Ability....Merit....and Dignity

Tips on Etiquette and Interacting

People with disabilities have the same rights as everyone - the right to fall in love, marry, hold down a job, acquire an education, and above all, the right to self-esteem. Here are some tips to help insure the rights of all:

People Who Use Wheelchairs

- Always ask the person using the wheelchair if he or she would like assistance before you help.
- Don't lean on a person's wheelchair. It is part of their personal space.
- If a conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get to eye level.

People Who Are Visually Impaired

- Always identify yourself and any others who may be with you - for example, "On my right is....."
- Use the person's name when starting a conversation to let him or her know where the conversation is directed. Let the person know when you need to leave.
- Ask a person if he or she wants help in getting about. When providing assistance, don't grab and steer...allow the person to take your arm, bent at the elbow.
- When offering a handshake, say, "Shall we shake hands?" If the person extends a hand first, take it.

People Who Are Hearing Impaired

- If necessary, get the person's attention with a wave of the hand or light tap on the shoulder.
- Don't be embarrassed about communication via paper and pencil.
- Speak clearly and slowly but without exaggerating. Don't shout! Use body language or facial expression to help.
- Try to maintain eye contact. Allow for a clear view of your face - the person may be lip reading. Don't speak directly into the ear.

People Who Have Speech Difficulties

- Give your whole, unhurried attention to the person.



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- Keep your manner encouraging, rather than correcting.
- Don't speak for the person - allow extra time and give help when needed.
- When necessary, ask questions that require short answers or a not or shake of the head.
- Don't pretend to understand when you don't. Repeat what you do understand - the person's reaction will clue you in and guide you.
- Look for communication aids like pictures or symbols.

Learn the Language of Love

- Speak of the person first, then the disability.
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
- Treat everyone as an individual.
- Don't patronize or give excessive praise or attention.
- Be aware always that choice and independence are important.
- Treat adults with disabilities as adults.
- Be considerate.
- Remember the difference between a *disability* and a *handicap*: A disability is a functional limitation to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc., but a handicap is something that is imposed by us, by the environment, or the individual himself that makes the disability insurmountable!

SOURCE: Community Interface Services of Carlsbad California, 760.729.3866

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