

Tips for Effective Communication

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When you meet a person with a MOBILITY disability

- Offer help, but wait until it is accepted before giving it. Giving help before it is accepted is rude and sometimes can be unsafe.
- Accept the fact that a disability exists. Not acknowledging a disability is similar to ignoring someone's gender or height. But to ask personal questions regarding the disability would be inappropriate until a closer relationship develops in which personal questions are more naturally asked.
- Talk directly to a person with a disability. Because an individual has a functional limitation, it does not mean the individual cannot communicate for himself/herself.
- Do not park your car in a parking place that is specially designed for use by a person with a disability. These are reserved out of necessity, not convenience.
- Treat a person with a disability as a healthy person. Because an individual has a functional limitation, it does not mean the individual is sick.
- Keep in mind that persons with disabilities have the same activities of daily living as you do.

When you meet a person with a COGNITIVE disability

- Use very clear, specific language.
- Condense lengthy directions into steps.
- Use short, concise instructions.
- Present verbal information at a relatively slow pace, with appropriate pauses for processing time and with repetition if necessary.
- Provide cues to help with transitions: "In five minutes we'll be going to lunch."
- Reinforce information with pictures or other visual images.
- Use modeling, rehearsing, and role-playing.
- Use concrete rather than abstract language.
- Limit the use of sarcasm or subtle humor.
- If you are not sure what to do or say, just ask the person what he/she needs.