



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

1. The needs of seniors often are similar to persons with disabilities.
2. When talking to a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
3. When you introduce yourself to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
4. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
6. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on or hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
7. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
8. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.

9 To get the attention of a person who is deaf, place yourself in the direct line of sight and wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. For those who do lip-read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands and food away from your mouth when speaking. If that doesn't work, then tap the person on the shoulder.

10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seems to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

This information is provided courtesy of the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. For more information: 212-788-2830; TTY: 212-788-2838 NYC.gov/mopd.

