

POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

1. Remember that a person with a disability is a person like anyone else. Explore your mutual interests in a friendly way. The person probably has many interests other than those related to the disability.
2. Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally, without prying. Be guided by the wishes of the person with the disability.
3. Relax. If you don't know what to do or say, allow the person who has the disability to help put you at ease.
4. Appreciate what the person can do. Remember that difficulties the person may be facing may stem more from society's attitude and barriers than from the disability itself.
5. Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to get things said or done. Let the person set the pace for walking, talking, etc..
6. Look and speak directly to the person who has the disability. Don't consider a companion to be a conversational go-between.
7. Wheelchair etiquette: Don't move a wheelchair or crutches out of reach of a person who uses them. Never start to push a wheelchair without first asking the occupant if you may do so. When pushing a wheelchair up steps, ramps, curbs or other obstructions, ask the person how he/she wants you to proceed. Don't lean on a person's wheelchair when talking.
8. Give whole, unhurried attention to the person who has difficulty speaking. Don't talk for the person who has difficulty speaking, but give help when needed. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. When necessary, ask questions that require answers or a nod or a shake of the head.
9. Speak calmly, slowly, and distinctly to a person who has a hearing problem or other difficulty understanding. Stand in front of the person and use gestures to aid communication. When full understanding is doubtful, write notes.
10. Be alert to possible architectural barriers in places you want to enter with a person who has a disability. Watch for poor lighting, which impairs communication for persons with hearing impairments.