

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Attitude towards differently able people:

When people meet another person with physical or mental disability they may be very apprehensive about how they should behave or interact with the other person.

Every person is different and some will find it easy to work and socialize with such individuals, whereas others will find it difficult to adjust. Some people hesitate to interact because they do not know how to start a conversation with them.

Always remember that a person with a disability is also a person, like anyone else, except for the special limitations of their disability. People with disabilities prefer that others focus on their abilities and potentials and not on their disabilities.

Appreciate the person first before becoming judgemental about their abilities.

Hidden Disabilities:

Not all disabilities are apparent and can be seen physically.

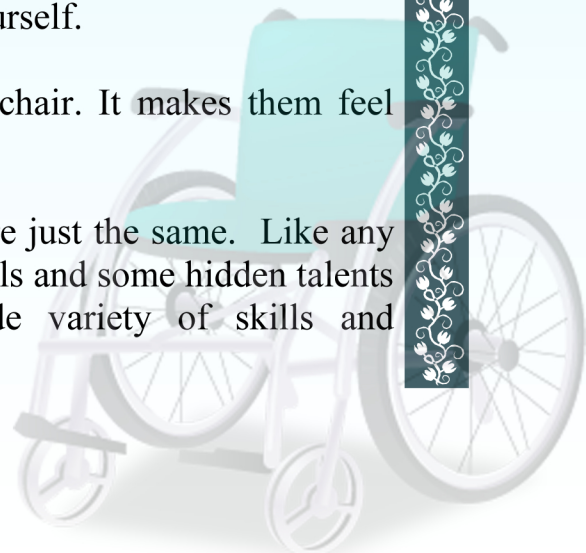
A person may have trouble understanding a casual conversation, may not respond spontaneously when spoken to. He may sometimes have some mannerisms or do something that seems inappropriate in that situation.

The reasons may be due to the fact that the person may have a hidden disability, such as low vision, a seizure disorder, hearing loss, a learning disability, a head injury, mental illness, or any other health condition. These are just a few of the many different types of hidden disabilities.

Don't make assumptions about the person or the disability. Be open-minded.

Things to Remember:

- Treat people as you would like to be treated yourself.
- Do not show pity or for a person in a wheelchair. It makes them feel demoralized.
- Do not think that all people with disabilities are just the same. Like any other person each one of them has different skills and some hidden talents also. They are not alike and have a wide variety of skills and personalities.



- Do not label all the disabled people as being incompetent, dependent and having low intellectual abilities.
 - a) Treat Adults as adults irrespective of their level of mental functioning.
 - b) Give importance to the person, not the disability.
 - c) Be patient and give your undivided attention, especially with someone who speaks slowly or with great effort.
- If they can perform some task independently at their own pace, then give them an opportunity to do that task. Remember, most people with disabilities do want to serve as well as be served and enjoy assisting others.
- **Be Yourself:** Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration that one shows to any other fellow being.
- Treat the person as an individual, not as a Disability.
- Don't assume that "disability" is all that person can talk about or is interested in. Find a topic of small talk the way you would with anyone.

How to offer help:

- Introduce yourself and start with any normal or casual courtesy talk and then offer assistance if required.
- Don't be offended if your help is not needed.
- Ask the person in what way he needs help and listen for their instructions.
- Be courteous, but NOT condescending.
- Assist individuals with disabilities when necessary or requested, but do not discourage their active participation.
- Allow a person DIGNITY to do what he or she wants to do for him or herself.

