

You know how you like to be served at a store, a restaurant, a hotel, or information desk; you want respect as a customer and as a person who knows what he or she wants and needs. You want to transact your business in a pleasant and efficient atmosphere...and you try to take care of your customers in the same way...

BUT

...there are some customers with disabilities who make you feel a little nervous, or embarrassed, or shy...because you're not quite sure how to handle the situation.

Here are some suggestions that will help you and a person with a disability communicate.

I HAVE A DISABILITY

When you meet me as a customer, I would like you to treat me just as you would any other customer...with respect and courtesy. Please look me in the eye, and speak directly to me, not to my companion.



If I am struggling, ask if you may help, just as you would anyone else...and respect my answer, whether yes or no

If I have difficulty in speaking, give me time to make my tongue express what my mind is saying.

If I have trouble seeing or hearing or moving easily, please remember that it is my eyes or ears or muscles which do not work as well as yours...beyond that, I have the same needs and wants, hopes and desires as you do.

Your best bet is to ask me how you can be helpful. I am an expert on what I can and cannot do and what assistance would be most helpful.

Never move wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, etc. out of my reach. Be sure to ask first before assisting with walking, sitting, or standing. Sometimes "help" can upset a delicate balance.

When serving people who have trouble with hand coordination, offer to help with cutting food. You could ask if I would prefer to have the food cut in the kitchen.

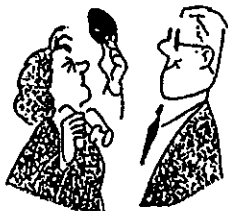
Sometimes uncoordinated movement is mistaken for intoxication, causing great embarrassment to both of us. Take time to assess the situation correctly and to respond appropriately.

If I am hard of hearing, I can probably hear some noises and hear or understand some spoken messages, with or without the help of a hearing aid. I rely heavily on lip reading so speak distinctly at a regular rate in a normal tone facing me. Be careful not to cover your mouth or turn your head while talking. Writing notes can be helpful.



If I am deaf I may use sign language. Lip reading, reading and writing English may be difficult. Gestures and mime are helpful. Write notes but remember the language difference.

When you observe me having difficulty seeing, you can help by speaking directly to me. Announce yourself as you approach and also announce when you are leaving. If you are giving directions, be very specific using words instead of gestures. Offer to read price tags, menus or instructions if material is not available in Braille or large print.



OFFER TO READ PRICE TAGS

When handing money to a blind customer, count out the change. Talk directly to me rather than my companion. When a customer is blind, do not assume the bill will be paid by a sighted person.



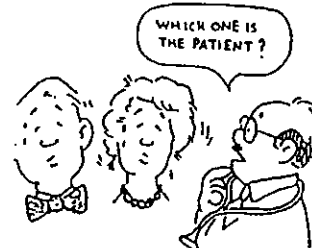
THE EYES HAVE IT.

If you are serving someone who is severely disfigured or burned, making contact with my eyes will help you to respond in a considerate manner. Focus on me rather than on the physical condition.

Persons who are retarded often have no apparent disability. However I may function slowly in response to you. It may be necessary to repeat directions, questions, etc. BE PATIENT.

If I have a seizure, even though it might be frightening to you, it is important that you don't panic. There is nothing you can do to prevent or shorten a seizure.

Some seizures are only slightly visible. I may stop in the middle of a sentence or not respond to you. I will usually respond again in a few seconds.



In a grand mal seizure, I may become unconscious or fall. You can best help by moving objects away that might cause injury. When my muscles relax, you can turn my head to one side but leave me where I am until I am fully conscious. Your calm acceptance and your reassurance will make both of us more comfortable.

People with speech disorders are hard to understand. It is important for you to be patient with yourself and your customers. Allow me to speak at my own pace. Repeat back what you think you heard. Let me guide you in other methods...notes, hand signals, pointing, and body language are all helpful aids to understanding each other.

INFORMATION



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IT'S THE "PERSON FIRST"—THEN THE DISABILITY

What do you see first?

- The wheelchair?
- The physical problem?
- The person?

If you saw a person in a wheelchair unable to get up the stairs into a building, would you say "there is a handicapped person unable to find a ramp?" Or would you say "there is a person with a disability who is handicapped by an inaccessible building?"

What is the proper way to speak to or about someone who has a disability?

Consider how you would introduce someone—Jane Doe—who doesn't have a disability. You would give her name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in—she likes swimming, or eating Mexican food, or watching Robert Redford movies.

Why say it differently for a person *with* disabilities? Every person is made up of many characteristics—mental as well as physical—and few want to be identified only by their ability to play tennis or by their love for fried onions or by the mole that's on their face. Those are just parts of us.

In speaking or writing, remember that children or adults with disabilities are like everyone else—except they happen to have a disability. Therefore, here are a few tips for improving your language related to disabilities and handicaps.

1. Speak of the person first, then the disability.
2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
3. Do not label people as part of a disability group—don't say "the disabled," say "people with disabilities."
4. Don't give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don't patronize them.
5. Choice and independence are important; let the person do or speak for him or herself as much as possible; if addressing an adult, say "Bill" instead of "Billy."
6. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc. Use handicap to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself.

What else can you do? If you see or hear reporters use incorrect terminology (even to save space in a headline or time on the air), call them up or send them this page so they can be aware of the appropriate words to use. Tell them it matters to you and to people with disabilities.

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SAY	INSTEAD OF . . .
child with a disability	disabled or handicapped child
person with cerebral palsy	palsied, or C.P., or spastic
person who has . . .	afflicted, suffers from, victim
without speech, nonverbal	mute, or dumb
developmental delay	slow
emotional disorder, or mental illness	crazy or insane
person who is deaf or hard of hearing	deaf and dumb
uses a wheelchair	confined to a wheelchair
person with retardation	retarded
person with epilepsy or person with seizure disorder	epileptic
with Down Syndrome	mongoloid
has a learning disability	is learning disabled
nondisabled	normal, healthy
has a physical disability	crippled
congenital disability	birth defect
condition	disease (unless it is a disease)
seizures	fits
cleft lip	hare lip
mobility impaired	lame
medically involved, or has chronic illness	sickly
paralyzed	invalid or paralytic
has hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body)	hemiplegic
has quadriplegia (paralysis of both arms and legs)	quadriplegic
has paraplegia (loss of function in lower body only)	paraplegic
of short stature	dwarf or midget
accessible parking	handicapped parking