Disability Language and Etiquette
Disability Language
For successful communication
Person First: Disability Is Secondary

- A PERSON comes BEFORE a DISABILITY
  - Person with a disability
  - People who have disabilities

- Affirms one’s value and worth as a person, separate from their disability

- Default to this language model

- Respect individual language choice
## Respectful Disability Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE THESE TERMS</th>
<th>RETIRE THESE TERMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man with an intellectual disability</td>
<td>Differently-abled; Special; Slow Epileptic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl who has a seizure disorder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman of short stature</td>
<td>Midget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man who uses a wheelchair</td>
<td>Wheelchair-bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with a brain injury</td>
<td>Brain Damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with a physical disability</td>
<td>Invalid; Deformed; Crippled; Lame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People without disabilities</td>
<td>Normal; Able-bodied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Parking &amp; Restrooms</td>
<td>Disabled/Handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just call me Joe!</strong></td>
<td>Handicapped Coworker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Just call me Joe!*
How to Speak with a Person who has a Disability

- Use Person First Language
- Use a person’s name!
- People with disabilities are real, 3-dimensional people
- Disability IS the term
Disability Language: The Take-Away

By using Person First disability language, you’re more likely to connect with a person.

And whenever possible –

Simply use a person’s name!
Disability Etiquette

For positive interactions
Respectful interactions with people who have disabilities

1. Don’t make assumptions

2. Respect individuality and autonomy

3. Allow time for mutual understanding

4. Treat adults as adults
Don’t make assumptions

People with disabilities are the best judges of what they can or cannot do

• Ask before helping
• Get instructions
• Don’t over-assist
• If you must assume something, assume that the person is competent
What is and isn’t helpful to a person with a disability?
Respect individuality & autonomy
Presume competence!

- Talk to me directly, rather than to someone who’s with me
- Make eye contact & speak at a normal volume
- Make small talk – like we do with everyone else!
An uncomfortable visit with the doctor

- What do you see when you're taking care of Kathy?
Allow time for mutual understanding
Schedule extra time, or MAKE time

- Be patient: Listen, don’t interrupt and give people enough time to respond
- Use plain language: make your meaning clear
- Alternative communication methods
- When indicated, adjust communication based on the person’s actions and reactions
A positive visit with the doctor

- So I see you have some serious technology.
Treat adults as adults

- An adult with a disability is NOT a child
- Use age-appropriate language & tone
- Treat others how you’d want them to treat you
- Don’t touch people without permission; don’t pat people on the head
Treat us the way you would want to be treated

Hello, ladies. How are you?
Disability Etiquette: The Take-Away

Don’t make assumptions.
Respect autonomy.
Practice patience.
Treat adults as adults.
And if you don’t know –

Just ask!