



# 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

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

# 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

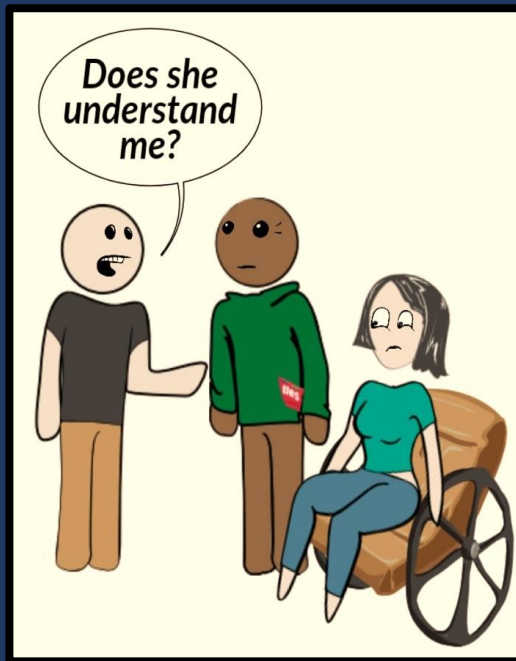
What is and isn't helpful to a person with a disability?





# 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





# 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!