



COAST
Central Office for Assistive Services & Technology

Diversity in the Workplace: Disability Awareness & Etiquette

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Definitions

- A disability is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease which may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function
- A handicap is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability

Changing phrases is difficult when outdated statements come naturally
Many reasons include being taught the old fashion way and not being corrected

Oblivious of how the statements effect a person with a disability

Etiquette is considered appropriate when interacting with people with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy.



Disability Laws

Rehabilitation Act: 1973



Picture shows the rally for the Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act-Section 508 was passed but wasn't funded until 1978.

The rally was done to ensure that the funding went through

Rehabilitation Act

Section 501- Prohibits employment discrimination

Section 504- Prohibits discrimination of participation in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance

Section 508- Requires that Federal agencies' electronic and information technology is accessible to people with disabilities



Disability Laws

Americans with Disabilities Act: 1990



- ADA Goal

- Tear down the barriers to equality that face 54 million Americans with disabilities
- Unemployment rate of people with disabilities is over 70% (Find source)

- New Freedom Initiative

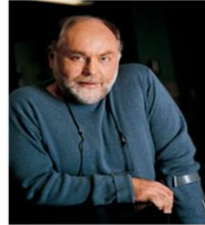
- Created by President Bush to help remove the barriers
- To increase access to assistive technologies, expanding educational opportunities, increase the integration of pwd into the workforce and promote access into daily community living.



People with Disabilities



Michael J. Fox, Marlee Matlin, & Stevie Wonder



James Earl Jones & Robert David Hall

Michael J Fox: Parkinson's Disease, Marlee Matlin: Deaf, Stevie Wonder: Blind, James Earl Jones: Speech Disability, Robert David Hall: Physically disabled (amputated legs).

Disability organizations have made strides improving accessibility, increasing access, and opening opportunities. Where progress is still needed is in communication and interaction with people with disabilities. Individuals are sometimes concerned that they will say or do the wrong thing, so they say or do nothing at all – thus avoiding interaction with people with disabilities.

Close your eyes for 30 seconds – raise your hand to answer this question
Briefly describe what you have seen thus far in the room (anything)

Communication is...

Emotions: Fear, nervousness, happiness, sadness etc. will show in the body language, voice pitch, tone

People with disabilities become isolated and excluded from activities, water cooler conversation, general office chatter



Communicating with People with Disabilities

Don't Say

- Handicapped
- Crippled, lame
- The blind
- Suffers from a hearing loss
- Mute

- Nuts, crazy

Say

- Person with a disability
- Person with a physical disability
- Person who is blind
- Person who is hard of hearing
- Person who communicates differently
- Person with a psychiatric disability

Put the person first



Interacting with People with Disabilities

Top 5 Things to Consider

- Ask before you help
 - People desire to be independent and treated with respect
- Be sensitive about physical contact
 - People depend on their arms for balance, consider equipment part of their personal space
- Think before you speak
 - Speak directly to the person
- Don't make assumptions
 - People are the best judge of what they can or cannot do
- Respond graciously to requests
 - An accommodation is not a complaint



Exercise 1



Can anyone give me a scenario where someone with a mobility or dexterity related disability would have difficulty in the areas of communication, personal space, spatial issues, access issues etc.



People with Dexterity/Mobility Disabilities

- Place yourself at eye level when communicating
- Do not lean on their wheelchair or assistive device or ask them to hold items (coat, umbrella, etc.)
- Don't push or touch their wheelchair (personal space)
- Keep ramps and wheelchair accessible doors unlocked and unblocked
- Don't grab the arm of someone using canes or crutches (lose balance)





Assistive Technology Solutions

Dexterity/Mobility Disabilities

- Alternative keyboards & pointing devices
- Keyboard enhancement systems
- Speech recognition software and training
- Ergonomic chairs
- Back rests and foot rests





Exercise 2



Scenario:

A group of co-workers are walking to the metro including an employee who is blind and uses a cane. They are on their way to a destination meeting. An employee grabs the blind employee's bag "I'll take that for you," grabs arm of blind employee "Let me help you cross the street."

Once they get to the meeting there are only hard copy documents available. The presenter talks about a colorful annual review including graphs and charts "Now you see that in the chart that there is an increase showing in red ..."



People who are Blind/Low Vision

- Identify yourself before making physical contact (entering and leaving a room)
- Provide a tour of a new facility (new employee)
- Describe setting, environment, obstacles when en route
- Don't grab their arm to guide them
- Offer your arm or shoulder if they need guidance
- Don't pet their guide dog without asking them first
- Offer to read information





Assistive Technology Solutions

Blind/Low Vision Disabilities

- Screen reader software
- Magnification software
- Closed circuit television
- Scanner/readers
- Portable notetakers
- Braille displays
- Braille embossers





Exercise 3



Scenario:

A group of employees are at work luncheon including a deaf employee with an interpreter present. Everyone is communicating amongst each other talking about an upcoming after work office get together. An employee exaggerates their speech and speaks louder than usual. While addressing the deaf employee, an employee looks at the interpreter while saying “tell him that we are all getting together after work at the Grill.” “Ask him if he knows where it is. Would you like to join us as well?”



People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Utilize a sign language interpreter or write things down
- Look directly at the person not the interpreter
- Do not obstruct view of mouth when speaking
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace
- Recognize the use of assistive listening devices
- Do not shout or exaggerate speech



Person who is deaf: tap their shoulder or arm gently to get their attention, speak directly to the person not the interpreter

Person who is hard of hearing: Speak at a normal tone, keep mouth in clear view of whom you are speaking

Don't say "Tell him"



Assistive Technology Solutions

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Disabilities

- Interpreting services
- Assistive listening devices
- Personal amplification devices
- TTY phones
- Signaling devices
- Captioning services
- Blackberry's





People with Learning (Cognitive) Disabilities

- Offer to be in a quiet or private location
- Give verbal explanations
- Speak clearly
- Allow adequate time for actions (reading, writing, speaking)
- Ask if they need clarification or have questions
- Provide alternative ways of communicating the message (demonstrations, in writing)
- Be patient, flexible and supportive

Ask how the person best communicate (verbal, written, visual demonstrations, graphs, charts, pictures etc.)

Brain injuries –loss of muscle control or mobility that is not obvious

Excess stimulation may be too distracting so offer to move to a quiet or private location

Offer assistance completing forms, understanding written instructions and provide extra time for decision making

Do not over assist



People with Speech Disabilities

- Give person full attention
- Don't interrupt or finish sentences
- Ask for clarification if person is misunderstood
- Repeat them for verification
- Ask them to write it down
- Move to a quieter environment



Person with a speech disability: Be patient, don't finish statements for them, ask for clarification if they are misunderstood

Don't pretend that you understand

Take as much time as necessary

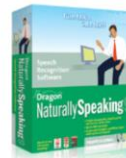
Ask questions that require short answers



Assistive Technology Solutions

Cognitive/Communication Disabilities

- Voice recognition software
- Word prediction software
- Screen reader software
- Cueing/memory aids
- Text based devices
- Communication devices
- Assistive listening devices





Things to Remember

- Relax
- Listen, let the person set the pace
- Offer assistance but do not insist
- Treat people as you would want to be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy
- Remember that outdated perceptions lead to complaints
- Ask the person with the disability if you have a question about accommodation or communicating with them

People with disabilities are not sick, incompetent, unintelligent or contagious

They are the expert on what they need and what level of abilities they possess.



Resources

- **Disability Etiquette Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities**
 - <http://www.unitedspinal.org/documents/DownLoad/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf#search='Disability%20Etiquette>
- **Disability Etiquette Handbook**
 - http://www.sanantonio.gov/planning/disability_handbook/disability_handbook.asp?res=1024&ver=true
- **DOL, Communicating with and About People with Disabilities**
 - <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/comucate.htm>
- **The Ten Commandments**
 - <http://www.rehab.cahwnet.gov/workplace/comand10.htm>



Contact Us

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