



Cultural Humility Guidelines for Interactions with People with Disabilities (PwD)

Guidelines for showing respect

- Tip #1: When in doubt, “ask.”
- Tip #2: When you make a mistake, apologize.
- Tip #3: Do your best and remember that you are human, too.

General Tips When Interacting with PwD

- Check Yourself (Self-reflection)
- Ask, “What are my beliefs and attitudes about disability?” How do your beliefs and attitudes impact your interactions with PwD?
- What is the role of “Emotional Intelligence” and the way you communicate with PwD?
Remember: we are all more alike than different.
- There are standard guidelines to effective communication to apply to PwD
Think about Accommodations
 - ⤴ Provide information and communication in alternate means
 - ⤴ Pre, during, and post contact considerations

General Communication Tips When Interacting with PwD

- Relax and if you don’t know what to do, ask. Do not remain frozen in silent in-action afraid to make a mistake.
- Treat adults as adults; they are people, first.
- Do not make assumptions about a person or their abilities.
- Do not assume a person experiences their disability the same way you do.
- Help and, if accepted, follow the lead of the individual.
- Address the individual, not their companion or interpreter.
- Do not distract service animals.
- Use person-centered approaches when communicating. Ask individuals to explain their view about disability and the terms they prefer to use when describing themselves.
- Use people-first terminology, such as, the “person who is sight-impaired.”
- Widely accepted euphemisms are generally acceptable when specific information is unknown.

Interacting With People who are Blind or Low Vision

- Greet verbally, identify yourself and others
- Offer alternative formats for providing or obtaining information
- Offer to assist with mobility and navigating area or facilities.
- Do not pet, touch, or play with service animals
- Consider pre and post care accommodations

Interacting with People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Wave your hand or tap on shoulder to initiate communication
- Look directly at the person and speak clearly, naturally, and slowly to establish whether the person can speech read.
- When a sign language interpreter is present, look at and speak to the person who is deaf, not the interpreter
- Know alternatives for communicating when interpreters are unavailable

Interacting with PwD using Wheelchairs

- Do not state people are “confined to a wheelchair” or are “wheelchair-bound”
- Speak at eye level as much as possible
- Never lean on someone’s wheelchair
- Speak directly to the person using the wheelchair and not their personal care attendant
- Identify and mitigate access issues into and around the area or facility

Interacting with People with Mental, Intellectual, Developmental Disabilities

- Avoid terms such as “this is crazy, nuts, insane” or “I forgot because of my ADHD” and never say “retarded”
- Keep your comfort level & skills (and those of the PwD) in mind when communicating with people who have mental, intellectual, developmental disabilities
- Keep literacy, health literacy & ADA requirements for effective communication in mind and
 - ✦ Provide information in a variety of formats
 - ✦ An “interpreter” might be required to facilitate communication; an instructor might be required to aid education

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