

Disability awareness

Remploy

Putting ability first

Hints and tips for disability etiquette

Around 19 per cent* of the population have a disability or health condition. Many of these will be unseen, such as epilepsy and mental health conditions. This means you might not realise someone is disabled. The way you speak about disabilities - your disability etiquette - demonstrates your, and your organisation's values. Your language and behaviour can show that you respect people regardless of their background or ability.

Don't avoid people with disabilities or health conditions because you are worried about saying the wrong thing.

Tips that may help

- ⦿ There are some phrases which are common, which are fine to say. For example, it is ok to say 'see you later' to someone who is blind or visually impaired.
- ⦿ Don't assume that someone who is deaf can lipread. It's actually not that common.
- ⦿ Disabled people prefer to focus on their abilities. Avoid terms such as 'suffer from' or 'the victim of'. It is much better to say someone has a condition. For example, instead of 'he suffers from epilepsy', just say 'he has epilepsy'.
- ⦿ Don't describe someone in terms of their disability. Avoid things like she is diabetic; instead say she has diabetes.
- ⦿ Say that someone has a disability or condition. Never say that they are handicapped.
- ⦿ Never lean on or move people's disability equipment, such as a wheelchair or cane. Those things are part of a disabled person's personal space.
- ⦿ Finally, don't make assumptions about what a disabled person can or can't do. Speak to them as you would anyone else to find out what they want to do and can do by themselves.

Examples of questions to ask

The following questions are a good starting point of how you can prevent any incorrect assumptions about a person's disability or health condition:

- ⦿ How would you describe your condition/disability?
- ⦿ How does your condition/disability affect you?
- ⦿ How can I help?
- ⦿ What do you need help with?

It is important to remember that everyone is different so take your lead from the individual.

*Disability facts and figures 2016
Papworth Trust

Contact us:

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