

## **Beware of Negative Attitudes - Be Helpful**

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When approaching and working with persons with special needs, be aware that they too have feelings. While they may need your assistance, they need your respect first. The following guidelines offer some suggestions, and tips to remember.

- Don't assume people with disabilities need your help. Ask before giving or acting.
- Make eye contact and speak directly to the person, not through their companion (note – this is true even if the person is blind).
- Avoid actions / words that suggest a person should be treated differently.
  - Don't invite a wheelchair user to go for a walk or ask a blind person if they "see" what you mean (particularly if you don't know the person very well)
- Treat people with the same respect / consideration that you have for everyone else.
- Make basic information available in accessible formats: LARGE PRINT; Braille and electronic format.
- Offer a guided tour so persons with disabilities can familiarize themselves with layout of the new environment / facility (Orientation / mobility).

### Visual Impairments

- You do not have to speak loudly for a person with visual impairments;
  - Offer to read written information,
  - Offer your arm instead of grabbing theirs – talk with them.

### Hearing Impairments

- Face the person with the hearing impairment when talking so they can see your lips
  - Reduce your speaking rate slightly to better enable them to read your lips
  - Increase the level of your voice, but DON'T shout
  - Communicate in writing, if necessary

### Physically Impaired

- Try sitting or kneel down to talk to person in wheelchair
  - DON'T lean on person's wheelchair
  - Beware of what IS accessible to person in the wheelchair, and what is not, act accordingly