# disAbility 101:
# Exploring Today's Inclusive Work Setting

**Carolyn Phillips & Liz Persaud, Tools for Life**
**With contributions from Martha Rust**

**AMAC Lunch & Learn Series**

**May 8, 2015 from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM**

[www.gatfl.org](www.gatfl.org)

For Handouts: [http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki](http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki)

www.amacusg.org

# Tools for Life

We're here to help Georgians with disabilities gain access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services so they can live, learn, work, and play independently in the communities of their choice.

# TFL Solution Site

# Why Assistive Technology?

For a person without a disability, technology makes things easier.

For a person with a disability, technology makes things possible.



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# Get to Know Your AT Act Program



http://resnaprojects.org/

# Goals for disAbility 101

- We will explore common etiquette scenarios and tips for becoming disability-friendly in today's inclusive work settings.
  - Let's dive into disAbility culture and review:
  - People First Language
  - Myths vs Facts
  - A Closer Look at Assistive Technology
  - Q&A

# Who are We Serving

- Over 54,000,000 individuals in the United States have disabilities that affect their ability to:
  - see
  - hear
  - communicate
  - reason
  - walk
  - perform other basic life functions

# Guiding Principle and Public Law

- Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to:
    - (A) live independently;
    - (B) enjoy self-determination and make choices;
    - (C) benefit from an education;
    - (D) pursue meaningful careers; and
    - (E) enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society in the United States.

Public Law 108-364

# More Facts to Think About





- People with disabilities are the largest minority group in America.

- This group cuts across racial, ethnic, religious, gender and age boundaries.

- Anyone can become a member of this minority group at any time.

# Guiding Principles

- We, collectively, are brilliant and can find innovative paths and create brighter futures.

- We must think, live, and act from a place of abundance. We do have enough time, money and resources.

- We must focus on abilities.

# More Guiding Principles

- Just by working here – People see you as a Leader.

- The work we do is Transformational.

- Our Success is Interconnected.

- Success breeds Success.

- You have The power to make the difference – Lean into it.

# Carolyn - Why Am I Here Today?

- Master Our Skills!
- Expand Our Knowledge and
- Build Stronger Schools to Create an amazing, Inclusive and United Community!

# Liz - Why Am I Here Today?

# Consider this

- Our Success relied on
  - Support & Understanding
  - Communication about My disAbilities
    - Understanding My disAbility
      - Language is Powerful
      - Talking with Housemates, Partners, Professors and Employers about my specific disAbilities
      - And Listening
    - Understanding My Weaknesses
    - Understanding My Strengths

# Two

## Numbers and Letters, Stand Still!

### Up and Over

Up and Over
And in-between,
The Letters,
Words,
Paragraphs
Wash Over Me.
Like a thunderstorm
In Georgia on a summer afternoon Full
of Sound
and
Fury
I am drenched
and overwhelmed
I search the puddles
(nice muddle)
I sift and sort
and wash clean the concepts,
I then send these thoughts
to You.
I struggle to be understood
by you
Do you understand?
I am not Clear as Mud.

—Carolyn Phillips

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- Equal opportunity means that everyone should be treated the same.

- Students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of courses than other students, even when given support.

# Values Continuum #3

- Students with disabilities are too time consuming and their needs are too difficult to cater for in a university, institution or training environment.

- Science, medical, technological, business and applied science courses are not suitable for students with disabilities.

# What is Disability Culture?

- Disability culture embodies a broad definition.

- The words, "disability," and "culture" are each value-laden, and have different connotations.

- We all identify with more than one culture.

# One Definition

**What is Disability Culture?**

- **"People with disabilities have forged a group identity. We share a common history of oppression and a common bond of resilience.** We generate art, music, literature, and other expressions of our lives and our culture, infused from our experience of disability. Most importantly, we are proud of ourselves as people with disabilities. We claim our disabilities with pride as part of our identity. We are who we are: we are people with disabilities."

  Steven E. Brown, Ph.D., Co-Founder, Institute on Disability Culture, Published in a 1996 issue of MAINSTREAM Magazine

# Defining Medical Model

- Under the medical model, impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness.

- People with disabilities are to be adapted to fit into the world as it is.

# Medical Model of Disability

- The emphasis is on dependence.

- Focus is on the impairment, rather than the needs of the person.

- Often, institution is the norm where basic needs can be met.

# Medical Model: Barriers

- Environmental and design barriers make it difficult to have a successful future whether it is in work, school, leisure and entertainment facilities, transport, training, higher education, housing or in personal, family and social life.

- Practices and attitudes are seen as "disabling".
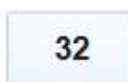
**Yaniv Aviran**   Become a fan

Israeli copywriter, children's author, motivational speaker

# Why I Choose to Ignore My Medical Chart

Posted: 11/11/2014 10:37 am EST   |   Updated: 01/11/2015 5:59 am EST

"This is your first column, what are you going to do? What will you write? How will you introduce yourself? Don't let it sound too childish or self-pitying. Be brave and spill your guts in front of everyone, just keep your privacy and that of your family and friends. Don't you dare over exaggerate with wild descriptions, but don't just write down dry facts."

Dry facts? That's just not me -- you can ask my doctors for some though. If they introduced me it would probably sound like this:

"Yaniv Aviran, male, suffers a muscular dystrophy called SMA type 2. One out of 6000 infants are born with this disorder. The main symptoms include gradual muscle weakness and loss of motor skills. Yaniv, surprisingly, is already 27-years-old and he is completely supported by his surroundings, 24/7. Due to his neuro-whatever disability he is now supported by a wheelchair, is extremely underweight and suffers from breathing deterioration. In short, he's a handicap."

I look up, get a bit startled, then I laugh a little. If I was reading this medical report of somebody else, I would be shocked. I would probably feel pity, empathy and protest

# Defining Social Model

- Disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment or difference.

- Views that the position of disabled people and the discrimination against us are socially created and has little to do with our impairments.

- Restructuring society

# Social Model of Disability

- Explores ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people.

- When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

# Social Model: Solutions

- Traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.

- Encourages people with disabilities to redefine what "disability" means to them.

- Perpetuates confidence and self-esteem.
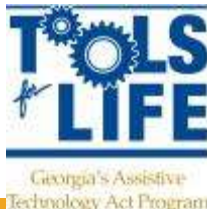
# Common Ways People with Disabilities are viewed and treated:

- Unfortunately, and inaccurately, people with disabilities are often viewed as:
  - victims, or objects of pity
  - horrible or grotesque
  - burdens, either on society or on their families and carers
  - evil, or some threat to the comfort and safety of others
  - unable, or assumed to be unable, to do things
  - having multiple disabilities (such as assuming that a person who uses a wheelchair also has an intellectual disability)
  - childlike
  - "special"

- Such misconceptions are based on insufficient or inaccurate information about people with disabilities and can perpetuate inappropriate interactions.

# Understanding Attitudinal Barriers

- People with disabilities face many barriers every day–from physical obstacles in buildings to systemic barriers in employment and civic programs.

- Often, the most difficult barriers to overcome are attitudes other people carry regarding people with disabilities.

- Whether born from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding or hate, these attitudes keep people from appreciating–and experiencing–the full potential a person with a disability can achieve.

# Types of Attitudinal Barriers

- **Inferiority** - Because a person may be impaired in one of life's major functions, some people believe that individual is a "second-class citizen." However, most people with disabilities have skills that make the impairment moot in the workplace.

- **Pity** - People feel sorry for the person with a disability, which tends to lead to patronizing attitudes. People with disabilities generally don't want pity and charity, just equal opportunity to earn their own way and live independently.

- **Hero worship** - People consider someone with a disability who lives independently or pursues a profession to be brave or "special" for overcoming a disability. But most people with disabilities do not want accolades for performing day-to-day tasks. The disability is there; the individual has simply learned to adapt by using his or her skills and knowledge, just as everybody adapts to being tall, short, strong, fast, easy-going, bald, blonde, etc.

# More Types of Attitudinal Barriers

- **Ignorance** - People with disabilities are often dismissed as incapable of accomplishing a task without the opportunity to display their skills. In fact, people with quadriplegia can drive cars and have children. People who are blind can tell time on a watch and visit museums. People who are deaf can play baseball and enjoy music. People with developmental disabilities can be creative and maintain strong work ethics.

- **The Spread Effect** - People assume that an individual's disability negatively affects other senses, abilities or personality traits, or that the total person is impaired. For example, many people shout at people who are blind or don't expect people using wheelchairs to have the intelligence to speak for themselves. Focusing on the person's abilities rather than his or her disability counters this type of prejudice.

# Even More Types of Attitudinal Barriers

- **Stereotypes** - The other side of the spread effect is the positive and negative generalizations people form about disabilities. For example, many believe that all people who are blind are great musicians or have a keener sense of smell and hearing, that all people who use wheelchairs are docile or compete in paralympics, that all people with developmental disabilities are innocent and sweet-natured, that all people with disabilities are sad and bitter. Aside from diminishing the individual and his or her abilities, such prejudice can set too high or too low a standard for individuals who are merely human.

- **Backlash** - Many people believe individuals with disabilities are given unfair advantages, such as easier work requirements. Employers need to hold people with disabilities to the same job standards as co-workers, though the means of accomplishing the tasks may differ from person to person. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require special privileges for people with disabilities, just equal opportunities.

AMAC Accessibility for All

# Lupus and Diet: From Wheelchair-Bound to Mrs. New York USA

One woman shares her story during Lupus Awareness Month.



One woman's journey to leaving her wheelchair behind.

By Marisa Zeppieri-Caruana

May 1, 2015 | 7:00 a.m. EDT

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# Types of Attitudinal Barriers cont'd

- **Denial** - Many disabilities are "hidden," such as learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, epilepsy, cancer, arthritis and heart conditions. People tend to believe these are not bona fide disabilities needing accommodation. The ADA defines "disability" as an impairment that "substantially limits one or more of the major life activities." Accommodating "hidden" disabilities which meet the above definition can keep valued employees on the job and open doors for new employees.

- **Fear** - Many people are afraid that they will "do or say the wrong thing" around someone with a disability. They therefore avert their own discomfort by avoiding the individual with a disability. As with meeting a person from a different culture, frequent encounters can raise the comfort level.

# Tips for Breaking Down Barriers

- ✓ Power of Language

- ✓ Value Laden Language

- ✓ disAbility negative vs disAbility neutral Language

- ✓ Tips for Interacting with People with disAbilities

- ✓ Understanding and Using Assistive Technology

# The Power of Language

- **Language is continually evolving**, and that includes language related to people with disabilities.

- Staying current is important, not to show that you are "politically correct" but to communicate effectively and with respect.

# Putting It into Perspective

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug."

Mark Twain

# Value Laden Language

- Says more about our values

- All staff members should be sensitive to the language they use in referring to customers.

- When we refer to the condition instead of the person, we devalue the person.

- People first language is about referring to the person first and the disability (injury, illness or procedures) second.

# More to Think About

- It may not be visible.
- It may be temporary.
- Some may have more than one disability.

- It may be the staff member who has the disability.

- Either way, the person is not his or her disability.

# What is Value-Laden Language?

- What you say and write may enhance the dignity of people with disabilities or inadvertently reflect stereotypes and negative attitudes.

- Some words and phrases don't recognize the broad range of capabilities of people with disabilities.

- People with disabilities don't need or want to be pitied, nor should they be deemed "courageous" or "special" as they accomplish daily activities or work.

That's so...

childish absurd
uncool
pointless careless
irrational
irresp senseless
un illogical
trivial dull
ill-consid

...and
you choose
retarded?
Buy a dictionary.

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# People First Language

- Avoids generic labels

- Emphasizes abilities, not limitations

- Avoids euphemisms (that are condescending and avoid real issues)

- Avoids implying illness or suffering (e.g., afflicted, suffers from, victim of)

# Value-Laden Language

Promotes
- Distance
- Stereotypes
- Pigeon-holes

Reduces sense of:
- Self-worth
- Power
- Self-direction

# Value-Laden Language: Creates Categories

- We vs. They
- Good vs. Bad
- Strong vs. Weak
- High vs. Low (expectation)
- Sick vs. Well
- Superior vs. Inferior

# Emphasize Abilities, Not Limitations

- When talking or writing about people with disabilities, show them as active participants in society.

- Of those people with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64 in 2005, 49% were actively employed.

# Value-Laden Language: Promotes Distance

- Abnormal
- Afflicted
- Burdened
- Defect
- Deformity
- Mute (Deaf and Mute)
- Palsied
- Spastic
- Stricken with
- Sufferer
- Victim
- Invalid
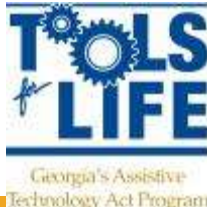
Home / News / Deaf and mute people protest in Lahore

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# Deaf and mute people protest in Lahore

**1** SHARES

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*LAHORE: Deaf and mute people from across Punjab are protesting at Mall Road seeking more rights.*

*The protesters are demanding quote for government jobs, exemption from taxes and the right to be issued driving licenses.*

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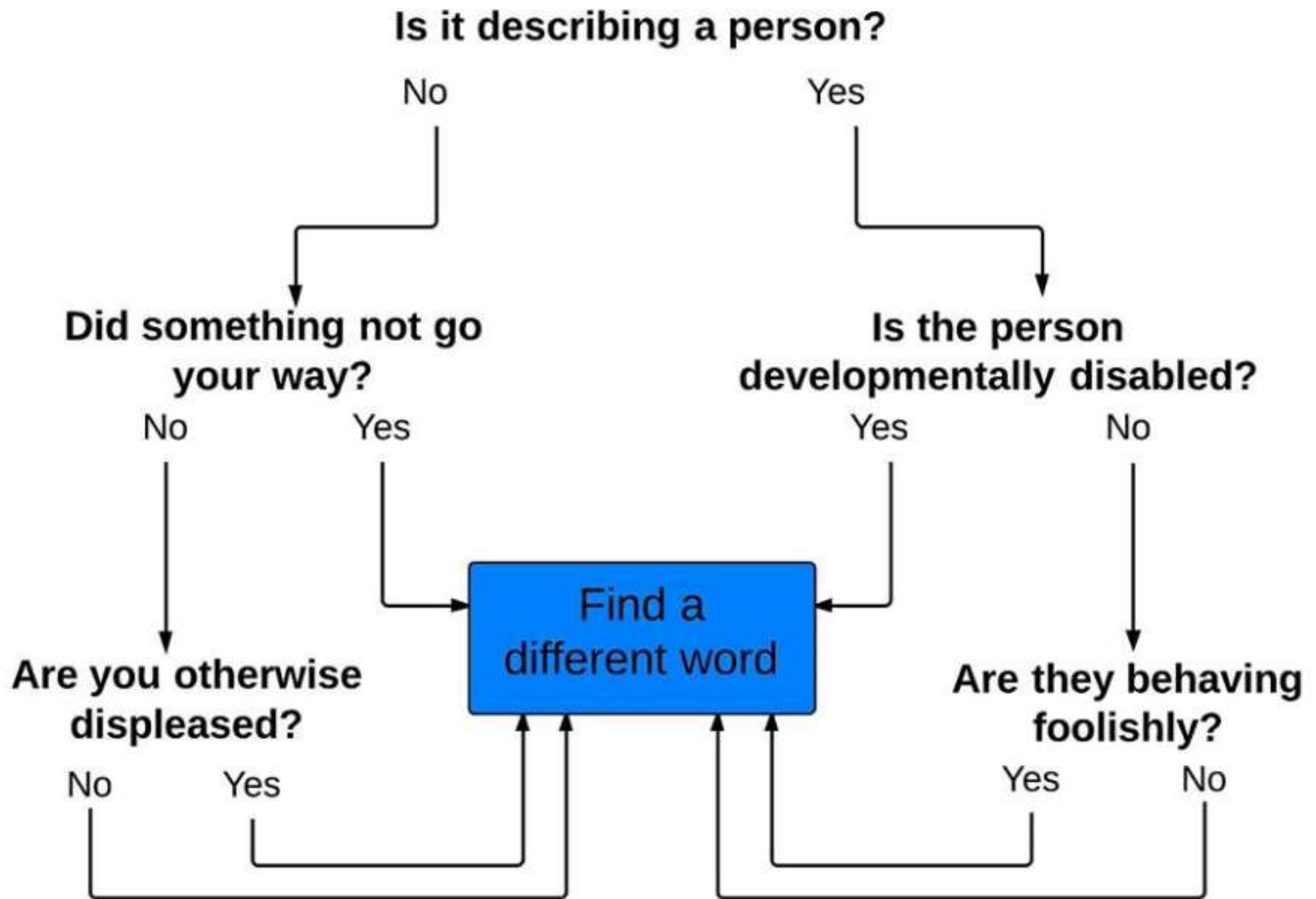What does the word "handicapped" mean?

# Understand

- "Handicapped" is an archaic term (it's no longer used in any federal legislation) that evokes negative images of pity, fear, and more.

- A legendary origin of the "H-word" refers to a person with a disability begging with his "cap in his hand."

# Value-Laden Language: Example #1

- **disAbility-Negative**

  – the disabled, the blind, the deaf

  – crippled, suffers from, afflicted with, stricken with, victim of, invalid

  – impaired, impairment

  – normal person, healthy, whole, wheelchair bound

- **disAbility-Neutral**

  – people with disabilities, the disability community ("disabled" is an adjective, so must be accompanied by a noun.), the blind community, the Deaf community

  – has a disability, is a person with a disability, physically disabled, walks with a cane, uses leg braces

  – has a disability

  – non-disabled, person without disabilities, uses a wheelchair

# Value-Laden Language : Example #2

- **disAbility-Negative**

    – The disabled
    – The handicapped

    – Disabled parking
    – Handicapped entrance

    – Confined to a wheelchair
    – Wheelchair bound

- **disAbility-Neutral**

    – People with disAbilities

    – Accessible parking
    – Accessible entrance

    – Person who uses a wheelchair
    – Wheelchair user

- **disAbility-Negative**

    - hearing impaired, hearing impairment

    - visually impaired, visual impairment

    - dumb, mute

    - stutterer, tongue-tied
    - CP victim, spastic
    - epileptic
    - fit, attack

- **disAbility-Neutral**

    - deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind

    - low vision, blind

    - person who has a speech or communication disability
    - person with cerebral palsy
    - person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder
    - seizure, epileptic episode

- **disAbility-Neutral**

  – people with mental health issues, mental illness, mental disability, psychiatric disability

  – developmentally disabled, developmentally delayed, person with mental retardation, person with Down syndrome

  – has a learning disability, person with specific learning disability

  – person of small stature, short stature; little person

- **disAbility-Negative**

  - crazy, lunatic, insane, nuts, deranged, psycho

  - retard, mentally defective, moron, idiot, imbecile, Down's person, mongoloid

  - slow learner, retarded

  - dwarf, midget

- **disAbility-Negative**

  - paraplegic, quadriplegic

  - birth defect

  - post-polio, suffered from polio

  - homebound

- **disAbility-Neutral**

  - man with paraplegia, woman who is paralyzed, person with spinal cord injury
  - congenital disability, person with a disability from birth

  - person who had polio

  - stay-at-home, hard for the person to get out

# Using People First Language is Crucial

People First Language puts the person before the disAbility, and it describes who a person is not what a person has.

# Person First Language

- Designed to stress personhood
- "person with _____" or "person who _____"
- More common approach, frequently preferred by most schools, parents, and relatively neutral organizations and groups

# Identity First Language

- Disability is part of a person's identity
- Modeled after how we talk about other traits of people
- Frequently preferred by people actively involved in disability culture, pride and advocacy.

# Language Do's

- If a person says they prefer a certain type of language, use that when talking to or about them, regardless of your own preference

- Speak directly to the person to whom you are referring, never their parent, friend, caretaker, interpreter or other person they are with

# Language Don'ts

- Using derogatory slurs and terms, even as a "joke"
- Using language which is negative or stresses pity or tragedy
- Using language which is patronizing or condescending

# Individual Pledge

I pledge to respect all people. I will do this by using respectful language and refrain from disrespectful, mean, discriminatory, or unjust language or actions. I will try to form meaningful, respectful relationships with people who are different from me. I will make an effort to speak out against language, actions, and situations that I see which may discriminate against or unjustly exclude certain people. I will do my best to be a force for positive change, respect, and inclusion in my community.

# Making the Connection

**A change in Language and Attitude can change everything!**

Our Language & Attitude → Our Actions → Our Work Culture & Environment → Our Language & Attitude

# Communication Tips

- Don't be afraid to make a mistake.

- Always BE RESPECTFUL.

- Don't make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Ask before giving assistance. If you offer help and the person says "no," don't insist.  If the answer is "yes," ask how you can best help, and follow directions.

- If someone with a disability is accompanied by another individual, address the person with a disability directly rather than speaking through the other person.

- Treat adults as adults.

- Expect diversity of preferences and opinions.

# Communication Tips: Physical Disabilities

- Do not make assumptions about what a person can and cannot do.

- Respect the individual's personal space: personal space includes a person's wheelchair, crutches, or other mobility aid. Never move someone's crutches, walker, cane, or other mobility aid without permission

- Do not push a person's wheelchair or grab the arm of someone walking with difficulty without first asking if you can help.

- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a person using a wheelchair, try to find a seat for yourself so that the two of you are at eye level.

# Communication Tips: Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- Ask the person how he or she prefers to communicate.

- Before you start to speak, make sure you have the person's attention. A wave, a light touch on the shoulder, or other visual or tactile signals are appropriate ways to get their attention.

- Speak in a clear, expressive manner. Do not over enunciate or exaggerate words.

- Unless asked, do not raise your voice. Speak in a normal tone.

- Talk directly to the person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, not to the interpreter.

- If you are speaking through an interpreter, remember that the interpreter may lag a few words behind. Pause occasionally.

# Tips: Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- To facilitate speech reading: face into the light, and keep your hands and other objects away from your mouth. Face the person directly and maintain eye contact. Don't turn your back or walk around while talking. If you look away, the person might assume the conversation is over.

- While you are writing a message for someone who is Deaf or hard of hearing, don't talk, since the person cannot read your note and your lips at the same time.

- If you don't understand something, ask the person to repeat it or write it down. The goal is communication; don't pretend to understand if you did not.

# Communication Tips: Cognitive Disabilities

- Treat adults with cognitive disabilities as adults.

- When speaking to someone who has a cognitive disability, try to be alert to his or her responses so that you can adjust your method of communication if necessary.

- For example, some people may benefit from simple, direct sentences or from supplementary visual forms of communication, such gestures, diagrams, or demonstrations.

- Use language that is concrete rather than abstract.

- People with brain injuries may have short-term memory deficits and may repeat themselves or require information to be repeated.

# Tips: Cognitive Disabilities

- People with auditory perceptual problems may need to have direction repeated and may take notes to help them remember direction or the sequence of tasks.  They may benefit from watching a task demonstrated.

- People with perceptual or "sensory overload" problems may become disoriented or confused if there is too much to absorb at once.  Provide information gradually and clearly. Reduce background noise if possible.

- Don't pretend to understand if you do not.  Ask the person to repeat what was said.

- In conversation, people with cognitive disabilities may respond slowly, so give them time.

# Myth

- It's inappropriate to touch a person's arm lightly to let them know you're speaking to them.

# Communication Tips: Vision Impairments

- **It is appropriate to touch the person's arm lightly when you speak so that he or she knows you are speaking to him or her.**

- Speak directly to the visually impaired person, not through a companion or third party. Visually impaired people can hear and respond for themselves.

- Identify yourself when you approach a person who is blind. If a new person approaches, introduce him or her. Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them.

- Don't shout. Most blind people have normal hearing. Speak clearly and strongly if you know that an older visually impaired person also has a hearing problem.

- Identify yourself when entering a room and let the blind person know when you are leaving. Don't leave a blind person talking to an empty room, or standing alone in empty space.

# Tips: Vision Impairments

- Face the person and speak directly to him or her.  Use a normal tone of voice.

- Don't assume that help is needed. Always ask before providing assistance.

- Never push, pull, or grab a blind person. This can be frightening and it's often embarrassing

- If you are offering direction, be as specific as possible, and point out obstacles in the path of travel.

- Alert people who are blind or visually impaired to posted information.

- Never pet, talk to or otherwise distract a service dog unless the owner has given you permission.

- Don't hesitate to use words like "see" and "look."

- Don't use hand signals or gestures.

# Communication Tips: Communication Disabilities

- If you are having trouble understanding what is being said, **ask the person to repeat** rather than pretend you understand. The former is respectful and leads to accurate communication; the latter is belittling and leads to embarrassment.

- In conversation, people may respond slowly, so give them time.

- Don't try to finish sentences or guess what the person is saying.

# What do you Think?

- It's best not to shake or grasp someone's hand.

# More Communication Tips

- **Shake hands or hand over business cards. If the person cannot shake your hand or grasp your card, they will tell you. Do not be ashamed of your attempt, however.**

- It is okay to feel nervous or uncomfortable around people with disabilities, and it's okay to admit that. It is human to feel that way at first. When you encounter these situations, **think "person" first instead of disability; you will eventually relax.**

# Is this True?

- People with disabilities always need help.

# Fact

- Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help as well as receiving it.

- AT Helps!

# AT Helps!

- Assistive Technology strategies and solutions can help support individuals with a variety of disabilities in the workplace. AT helps to bridge the gap and provide solutions to problems with:

    - speaking
    - hearing
    - seeing
    - moving around
    - getting places
    - memory
    - cognition (thought processes and understanding)
    - daily living activities, such as dressing and preparing meals
    - socializing

# Action Steps!

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

*Anne Lamott*

Our Question to You:
What have You Learned today?

# Keep the Conversation Going



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