



# Common Sense Approaches *for Interaction with Disabled Persons*

From Opening Doors To People with Disabilities, Volume 1, pg. 13-14

- Treat the person as you would anyone else. Relax when communicating, relying on natural courtesy, consideration and common sense. Avoid getting flustered or irritated if misunderstandings arise. Repeat yourself if you sense misunderstanding, or ask the person to repeat if you do not comprehend.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions about a person's disability.
- Encourage use of initiative and ability, and expression of ideas. Allow people to do things for themselves, even if it takes longer or results in mistakes. Do not always "do for" the person.
- Treat adults with disabilities as adults, rather than as children, regardless of the disability.
- Speak at a normal rate, without exaggeration or overemphasis.
- Respect the individual's personal space and auxiliary aides. Do not:
  - lean against or push a wheelchair;
  - pet a service animal in harness;
  - grab an arm or hand when attempting to guide; [or]
  - move wheelchairs, crutches, white canes or other assistive devices out of reach of a person who uses them.
- Be patient and flexible.
- Encourage participation, welcoming the contributions that each person has to offer.
- Offer assistance, but do not impose if help is not desired.
- Address the individual, not an assistant, interpreter or family member.
- To facilitate communication, have on hand paper and pen and familiarize yourself with other aids such as communication boards and synthesized speech.
- During gatherings or meetings, allow time to attend to personal needs and rest.