



Disability Sensitivity Training

“Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.” –Helen Keller

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Defining Disability

The term "disability" means: a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities, for example, walking, thinking, seeing, speaking or hearing.



Defining Disability

- Approximately 54 million people in the United States have some type of disability*.
- Whether a disability comes about from birth or by accident not all disabilities can be seen with the naked eye.
- Some people may feel uneasy being around a person with a disability, however people with disabilities are simply people and need to be treated as such.



Visible vs. Invisible Disabilities

Visible

- People who are paralyzed and need some type of aid to move around
- Severe developmental disability
- A physical difference
- Missing limbs
- Motor impairments

Invisible

- People with hearing disorders
- Speech impediments may not be immediately apparent.
- People who are blind can appear to be sighted, if you do not notice the aid they require to move around
- A learning disability may be misinterpreted as lack of intelligence or carelessness



Learning Disabilities

A learning disability has to do with the way the brain is wired. People who are LD have normal or above normal intelligence, cannot be cured, but use different ways to learn and function.

Dyslexia – trouble understanding written words.

Dyscalculia – difficulty solving math problems and grasping concepts.

Dysgraphia – difficulty forming letters or writing within a defined space.

Auditory and Visual Processing Disorder – difficulty understanding language despite normal hearing and vision, short term memory problems.


Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities – a neurological disorder causing problems with visual-spatial, intuitive, organizational, evaluative and holistic processing functions.

ADHD – Difficulty concentrating, cannot tolerate noise or commotion.



All People Are Different

- What is important to remember is that we are all different and need to be recognized for that which we are capable of doing, not for what we may require aid to accomplish.
- “The best way to help everyone, is for people to learn, understand and respect all people, whether they are the same or different.”*



Unfortunately, and inaccurately, people with disabilities are often viewed as:

- Victims, or objects of pity
- Burdens, either on society or on their families and careers
- A 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.



We may fear what we do not know

- Employers and fellow employees may be afraid of the unfamiliar. People who have never had contact with a person with a disability may have numerous questions.
- Curiosity is natural, however, you may be afraid to ask those questions for fear of violating the provisions of the ADA, or being rude.



Overcoming those fears

- Remember that people with disabilities are people first, who happen to have a disability.
- We are all just temporarily abled. You could think, 'I might face a disability someday, and here's a person who could help me live with it!'



The Law

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), PL 101-336 states, "No covered entity shall discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability because of the disability of such individual in regard to job application procedures; the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees; employee compensation; job training; and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment."



Reasonable Accommodations in the Work Place

According to the Department of Justice government-wide regulations, section 41.53, *Reasonable Accommodation:*

"A recipient shall make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of an otherwise qualified handicapped applicant or employee unless the recipient can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of its program."



Enforcement

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Federal agency that regulates and enforces other employment discrimination laws, and is responsible for enforcing ADA employment provisions.



Education

- As with all areas of life education is the key to helping people understand each other.
- Equal treatment is essential to the integration of people with disabilities into the workplace.
- In order to maintain a proper work environment all coworkers need to be treated with the respect they deserve.



Awareness & Etiquette

Focus on the person, not on his or her disability.



People Who Use Aids To Move

- Always ask the person who uses a wheelchair if he or she would like assistance before you jump in to help. Your help may not be needed or wanted.*
- Don't hang or lean on a person's wheelchair.*
- Take steps to insure that all office materials that may be needed are within the reach of someone that utilizes a wheelchair.
- If your conversation lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting down, to get yourself on the same eye-level.*



Persons Who Are Hearing Impaired

- Always make eye contact with the person you are speaking to.
- A gentle tap on the shoulder will help you announce your presence.
- Face the person you are speaking to and speak slowly and clearly, do not raise your voice.
- If there is a break down in communication put pencil to paper and write down what you are attempting to convey.
- Speak to the person not their interpreter if there is one present.



People With Cognitive Disabilities

- If the person who you are working with is having trouble understanding you, repeat yourself, using different words, without getting frustrated.
- Patience is a virtue.
- Break up your ideas into small manageable bits that can be easily remembered. “Keep it simple.”
- Be considerate without be patronizing. Keep all conversations at an adult to adult level.



People With Vision Impairments

- Always make your presents known. Greet the person who may not know you are there.
- Don't pet guide dogs or other service animals while they are working. Ask before interacting with the dog.;
- Talk directly to a person who is blind, not through their companion. Use the person's name to whom you are speaking so they are aware you are speaking to them.
- Pulling or steering a person is awkward and confusing. Avoid grabbing their arm or their dog's harness unless asked for assistance.



People With Speech Impediments

- Do not finish their sentences for them. Allow them the time to say everything they wish to say.
- Once again, patience is a virtue.
- Do not mimic them or mock them for their speech.
- Never pretend to know what a person is saying. Ask the person to repeat or rephrase, or offer him or her a pen and paper.



People with Learning Disabilities

- Put instructions and important information in writing if the person has auditory and/or short term memory difficulties
- Use hands on training
- Break down complicated tasks into line items with check boxes
- Supply notebooks, file cabinet and other organizing and note taking aids
- Provide a quiet work environment
- Text to speech software if needed
- Remember that this person has normal or above normal intelligence



General Tips

- Keep all walkways clear of debris.
- Make sure everything that is needed for work related task can be found easily.
- Work *with* people with disabilities to discover what needs to be done in your workplace.
- Create effective advocacy tools for accessibility in your workplace.



General Tips

- Do not refer to a person's disability unless it is relevant.
- Avoid asking personal questions about someone's disability. Let them mention their disability first. If you must ask, be sensitive and show respect.
- Avoid negative or sensational descriptions of a person's disability with anyone.
- Use "people first" language when addressing a person with a disability. i.e. It is better to say "person with a disability" rather than "a disabled person."



Language

Do's

- Person with a disability - has a disability
- People with disabilities - have disabilities or disabled person
- People without disabilities typical person
- Wheelchair user - uses a wheelchair

Don'ts

- The disabled, the handicapped, invalids, patients, crippled, deformed, defective
- Normal, healthy, able-bodied
- Wheelchair-bound - confined to a wheelchair



Interview Examples

INAPPROPRIATE: “I notice that you are in a wheelchair and I wonder how you will be able to do this job?”

APPROPRIATE: “As you can see from the job description, this position requires some lifting and moving. Do you foresee any difficulty in performing the required tasks? If so, do you have any suggestions how these tasks can be performed?”



Disaster Preparedness

- Preparing for disasters is a task that should NOT be postponed.
- Accommodations for people with disabilities must be part of any disaster plan and be clearly posted.
- It is imperative to include disability planning as part of disaster planning, and how to consider the needs of all employees, as well as the needs of the business, in recovering from disasters, both natural and man made.



Recruiting People With Disabilities

- There are many government and private facilities that specialize in helping people with disabilities return to the workforce; please contact them for further information.
- The Department of Human Services, <http://hnp.dhs.vic.gov.au/wps/portal>
- People Resources, <http://www.PeopleResources.org>
- Earn Work, <http://www.earnworks.com>
- Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities, <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/brochures/wrp1.html>
- American Association of People with Disabilities, <http://www.aapd-dc.org>
- eSight <http://www.esight.org>
- Job Accommodation Network <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/> for help and advice on accommodations.