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illuminating the possibilities in disabilities

# Disability Awareness Training

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# Disability Awareness Defined

- + It is the understanding that people with disabilities are people *first* who just happen to have a disability.
- + It is also the recognition that each individual – with or without a disability – faces challenges. Individuals with disabilities face some unique challenges related to their disabilities, which can be accommodated.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False:*

People who are deaf or have hearing loss cannot speak.

**False.** Some people make a conscious choice not to use their voices while others choose to speak. The type and degree of hearing loss as well as the age of the individual when he or she becomes deaf can also influence speech.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False:*

People who are blind acquire a “6<sup>th</sup> sense” for directing themselves.

**False.** Although many people who are blind develop their remaining senses more fully, they do not have a “6<sup>th</sup> sense.”



# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False:*

Cancer, diabetes, AIDS, epilepsy, dyslexia and mental illness are examples of “hidden” disabilities which are covered by the Americans With Disabilities Act.

**True.** However, things like sexual behavior disorders, illegal drug use and compulsive gambling are not covered.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False:*

If someone has a disability and appears to need help, it is polite to provide assistance before you've been asked.

**False.** Simply ask the person to let you know if they require assistance.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False:*

It's appropriate to sit down when you're speaking to someone in a wheelchair.

**True.** Try to sit down in order to share the same eye level. If seating is not available, give the person some space. Standing too close while you talk can create an uncomfortable viewing angle.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False:*

If you're assisting a person who uses a seeing-eye dog, petting the dog is okay.

**False.** For safety reasons, a dog needs to be alert and undistracted while working. Avoid treating the dog like you would a pet.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False.*

Most people who have cerebral palsy (CP) are mentally disabled.

**False.** This is a common misconception. There is a wide range of abilities among people who have cerebral palsy and most are *not* mentally disabled.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False.*

If a person is having a seizure, it is appropriate to put something in his/her mouth to prevent him/her from swallowing his/her tongue.

**False.** If you do that, there is a risk that the person will choke on whatever you put in his/her mouth.

# Myths, Misconceptions and Realities of Disabilities

*True or False.* Considerable expense is required to accommodate employees with disabilities.

**False.** Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many people believe. A 1999 survey by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) showed that 20% of the accommodations cost nothing and 51% of the accommodations cost between \$1 and \$500.

# Important Points To Remember

- 01** **The key** to creating an accepting work environment is to treat each individual with respect and equality!
- 02** **Do not be** overly friendly or condescending toward individuals with disabilities.
- 03** **Emphasize** “person first” terminology (e.g., *person who is blind*)
- 04** **Avoid** words with negative connotations like: “afflicted”, “handicapped”, “crippled”, “victim”, “sufferer” etc.
- 05** **Do not refer** to individuals by their disability. A person is not a condition.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

# People with Visual Impairments

- 01 The definition of legally blind is 20/200 vision with best correction. However, many people who are considered blind do have some sight.
- 02 Introduce yourself and explain what your job role is. Speak in a normal tone of voice. There is no need to shout.
- 03 When you move around, let the person who is blind know so that he/she won't be talking to "empty air."



## IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

# People with Hearing Loss

- 01** American Sign Language (ASL) is not another form of English. It is an official language with its own grammar, context and rules.
- 02** Lip-reading is only 30 – 50% effective and can be tiring during long conversations.
- 03** Get the attention of the deaf person before starting a conversation. Be patient if you are asked to repeat yourself.
- 04** If needed, use a paper and pencil to communicate.
- 05** If the person uses a sign language interpreter, address the person, not the interpreter.



IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

# People who use Wheelchairs

- 01 Make sure the person is ready before you start pushing the wheelchair.
- 02 There is a wide range of physical ability among people who use wheelchairs and people who use them will likely require different degrees of assistance.
- 03 Sometimes people are told a place is accessible when it is not. Consider distance, weather and obstacles such as stairs, curbs or hills when you give directions.



## IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

# People who have Seizures

- 01 Grand Mal Seizures:** Person will generally fall to the ground and lose consciousness. Usually last 1-5 minutes.
- 02 Petit Mal Seizures:** Person usually stares into space and may blink eyes rapidly. Usually lasts a few seconds.
- 03** Both types MAY be controlled by medications.
- 04 If a person has a seizure:**
  - » Remain calm at all times.
  - » Do not attempt to move the person.
  - » Turn the person on his/her side to clear the airway and avoid choking.
  - » Remain with the person throughout the seizure. Call 911 if the seizure exceeds 10 minutes or if a serious injury occurs.



IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER:

# People with Mental Illness

- 01 It is a myth that people with mental illness are more likely to be violent than people without mental illness.
- 02 Do not assume that people with mental illness are less intelligent than the general population.
- 03 If someone with a mental illness becomes upset, ask calmly if there is anything that you can do and respect their wishes. If you believe harm may be done to the person or to someone else, call 911.



Any  
Questions??



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*“I have too little time to ponder about all the good things I've been given in this life to worry much over what I've been denied.”*

— HELEN KELLER

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