

Ten Things to Avoid When Working with the Physically Disabled

- Avoid stereotyping people based on their disability. Each person is unique.
- Do not talk to a physically disabled person as if they need things to be simplified. Intelligence and physical ability are generally unrelated. Treat adults as adults.
- Do not make assumptions about a person's level of ability based on looks; disability can often be invisible.
- Avoid using insensitive and politically incorrect terminology such as "cripple," "lame," "dumb", or "handicapped." These terms can be perceived as offensive and ignorant.
- Avoid expressing sympathy to a person with a disability. Most people not only do not appreciate it, but consider it unwarranted and rude.
- Do not stare. It can be very offensive. Many people would rather be approached openly and answer questions about their disability than be stared at.
- Avoid addressing a physically disabled person's companion rather than the individual himself. Most times, this person will be capable of speaking for himself.
- Do not raise your voice to speak to someone with a physical disability unrelated to their hearing. If you know that a person has hearing impairment, find out whether they need for you to raise your voice when speaking to them before doing so.
- Avoid openly expressing admiration and/or praise of a physically disabled person's courage. Most people do not see themselves as courageous, but instead as regular people.
- Do not assume help is needed. If you offer assistance, wait for a reply, and be prepared for your offer to be refused.