

Communicating with a Person Who is Deaf

People who are deaf communicate in many ways. Find out which combination of techniques works best with each deaf person. Keep in mind that it is not HOW you exchange ideas, but that you DO

General Guidelines

Don't shout or over-pronounce words.

Face the deaf person Seeing facial expressions makes communication more accurate. Match facial expression and body language to what you are say. If you are angry, show the anger in your face.

Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking. Don't turn away, or cover your mouth. People who are deaf use many visual cues to understand conversation. They use gestures and facial expressions to convey and understand ideas.

Only one person should speak at a time.

Pantomime and body language also clarify communication.

When an interpreter is present

Look directly at the deaf person, not the interpreter. Use good eye contact.

Speak directly to the deaf person, not the interpreter. Don't say, "Tell her," or "Tell him."

Allow time for an interpreter to finish a statement.

Study Guide

*dis*ABILITY AWARENESS

Louise Welsh Schrank



**LEARNING
S · E · E · D**

© 1999 Learning Seed
Voice 800.634.4941 Fax 800.998.0854

www.learningseed.com

Contents

DisABILITY AWARENESS contains a close captioned 19 minute program and this guide which owners may duplicate for classroom use only. The video is close captioned. Catalog No. 234. ISBN 0-917159-97-8.

Overview

When you see someone who is paralyzed, unable to hear or speak, or unable to see, how do you react? Pity? Discomfort? Your reactions influence your ability to communicate.

A Harris poll for the National Organization on Disability indicated that 74% of those surveyed react to people with disabilities with pity. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents admitted feeling awkward or embarrassed because they didn't know how to behave when communicating with someone with a disability.

Today Americans who live with some form of disability make up the largest minority group in the country. It's easy to see how students with disabilities benefit from inclusion, but this video shows how all students benefit from living and working side by side. This is not a program ABOUT people with disabilities, it is about communicating with and relating to people with and relating to people.

Watch a person who is blind give guidelines to help sighted people communicate better with people without sight.

❑ **Walking Together**

When walking together, offer your arm so the person who is blind can hold on just below the elbow.

"I'll keep a half step behind, so I can anticipate steps and curbs." You will then be walking a step ahead, and the movements of your body will indicate when to change direction, when to stop and start.

Hesitate but do not stop before stepping up or down. You can say "curb" or "step down."

Give directions with the person who is blind as the reference point, not yourself. You are facing Andover Road and you will have to cross it and turn to your left to go east on Exeter Street.

❑ **Locating Items**

Be specific. "Walk straight ahead ten feet, then go up three steps."

When directing a blind person to a seat, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the chair and say, "Your hand is on the left arm of the chair."

❑ **In a restaurant**

Read menu, including prices. Help person locate food on plate using a clock system." Your carrots are at 12:00. Your meat is at 10:00."

❑ **Guide Dogs**

Get permission before interacting with a guide dog. Commands by a person other than the master can confuse an animal. They are working animals, not pets. Don't touch a guide dog without the owner's permission.

Communicating with a Person Who is Blind

❑ Speaking

Speak when you enter a room. Identify who you are and what your job or role is. It may take several introductions for a person who is blind to recognize your voice.

"Melissa Brown is on my left. Jason Anderson is on my right."

When talking in a group, say the name of the person to whom you are speaking. This gives a vocal cue to the person who is blind.

Speak in a normal tone of voice; don't shout.

When you move, let the person who is blind know where you are, so you don't leave her talking in the wrong direction.

Indicate when you leave the room.

❑ Familiar Environments

When in an environment familiar to a person who is blind, don't move things. If you do move things, put them back exactly as you found them.

❑ Doors

Leave closed doors closed, and open doors open. Never leave doors half opened.

❑ Offering Assistance

If a person who is blind seems to need help, say, "May I help you?"

Indicate that you are willing to assist, but also indicate your confidence in his ability to function independently.

Watch a dramatized illustration of how NOT to communicate with a person who is deaf when an interpreter is present. We also show how to get it right.

Learn how to communicate with someone who does not speak or read lips.

Listen to a person in a wheelchair explain when to offer help. Consider the chair a part of the person.

Hear students with disabilities and their classmates describe their experiences with mainstreaming and coaching.

Objectives

- ◆ Strengthen comfort level when communicating with individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ Suggest how viewers can use language in a way that does not denigrate individuals with disabilities.
- ◆ Present disabilities as a common part of life.
- ◆ Help viewers see people with disabilities in a positive way.
- ◆ Avoid the development of or eliminate existing negative attitudes toward people with disabilities.
- ◆ Understand the benefits of inclusion both to individuals with disabilities and the regular education student.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your feelings when you are near a person with a disability?
Do you ever feel pity? (Pity is a feeling by a superior toward an inferior.)
Do people who have never been around a person with a disability feel uncomfortable, act overly protective, or artificially kind?
2. Discuss: We judge the world according to ourselves and what we have seen. When we face people who look or act in ways we aren't accustomed to, we feel uncomfortable or frightened. We don't know what to do.
3. Do you agree that students are cruel to students with disabilities? Why? (*Barrett says cruelty happens when people want to feel powerful and in control.*)
4. Discuss: Consider a student who appears to have no disability, but does have some disability that interferes with his ability to function-- a behavior problem, an attitude, even a significant learning problem. Why are people sometimes very quick to judge them, and say, "The only reason they are doing poorly is that they're lazy?"
5. Are students with disabilities mainstreamed at your school? What are the advantages of mainstreaming and inclusion for the student with a disability? Do you see any disadvantages to mainstreaming? What are advantages of mainstreaming to the regular education student?
6. Does your school or workplace allow opportunities for children with disabilities to interact with peers without

Taking Action

Discuss your biggest concerns about disabilities. Examples include: *Our school doesn't have wheelchair ramps or lifts. People treat me like I'm stupid because I'm in special ed.*

Take action on those concerns. Here are some forms that action can take.

- Volunteer with a group that works on your concern.
- Speak up for anyone who faces discrimination because of a disability.
- Form an after-school discussion/action group.
- Watch and discuss a relevant movie, video, or play.
- Develop and perform a play.
- Write a local newspaper or call a radio station.
- Boycott businesses that violate your concerns.
- Meet as a group with school administrators.
- Hold a student-run school assembly.
- Develop a display or exhibit at school.
- Schedule a guest speaker on disability.

Shuffle the labels and place them face down. Each participant has a label taped to his or her back so he/she cannot see it. No one should tell another person what label he/she wears. Participants then mingle for 10 to 20 minutes, conversing with as many people as they can. These conversations may give clues to the labels the other person wears. After the conversations, ask participants to remove and read their labels.

Discussion questions for the entire group

- ◆ What label did you have the most difficulty responding to?
- ◆ What label did you feel the most comfortable with?
- ◆ How did you feel about the way people responded to you?
- ◆ What did you feel when you learned what label you wore?

disabilities? What have you gained from contact with a person with a disability?

7. Does your school or workplace allow opportunities to coach a person with a disability? Do you think you would try volunteering to be a "coach?" Discuss the ceramics instructor's comment, *"The highest accolade you can pay to yourself or somebody else is teaching somebody else. It means you really have to know the information. You have to be able to assimilate that information, digest it, "... and then explain it in your own words."*

8. Do you think you could develop a true friendship with a person with a disability?

How do people with significant disabilities develop friendships with their non-disabled peers?

Discuss these statements:

Friendships usually develop when people see similarities among themselves. Children who have obvious differences may find it harder to see their common interests and needs.

Some teachers report that children with severe disabilities are more accepted by classmates than more typical children who have a few unusual behaviors.

Severely disabled kids can be treated as class "pets". This treatment focuses on their dependency needs, rather than encouraging independence.

Friendships form when people have the opportunity to be together and get to know one another.

When people provide physical help and it cannot be returned, the relationship is not a friendship.

Research Projects/ Activities

1. Pretend to have a disability.

Find someone who really lives with the disability which you pretend to have. For example, a blindfolded person could talk to a person who has been blind since birth. Describe what you felt and what was most difficult. Ask the person whether or not that is a common experience.

2. Research and present a report on a person with a disability who has made a lasting contribution to society.

Superstars include:

- ◆ Homer, the greatest poet of ancient Greece was blind.
- ◆ Ludwig van Beethoven was deaf when he composed the *Ninth Symphony*.
- ◆ U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had polio and used a wheelchair.
- ◆ Louis Pasteur did some of his most important work, including the discovery of a cure for rabies, after his left leg and arm were paralyzed.
- ◆ Violinist Itzhak Perlman, paralyzed since age four, walks with crutches. He gives concerts throughout the world while seated.
- ◆ Wilma Rudolph limped due to nerve damage which she suffered as a child. She became the star woman athlete from America in the 1960 Olympics.
- ◆ Actor Marlee Matlin, who is deaf, won an Oscar for her performance in *Children of a Lesser God*.

3. Study images of people with disabilities in advertising. What companies regularly present people with disabilities in their promotions? Write and commend these companies.

What television series include a person with a disability as a regular character?

What recent movies include people with disabilities in leading roles?

4. Research and present a report on the Americans with Disabilities Act.

5. Research the current census data to find out how many persons have some form of disability. Do people with disabilities form the largest and most diverse minority in society?

"Labels" Group Exercise

This exercise helps people examine how both wearing a label and being aware of the labels given to others influences behavior.

Before Class: Cut construction paper into pieces large enough to be seen throughout the classroom. Select from the list below and make three labels each so there is one label for each student in the class.

Person who is blind

Person who is deaf

Person who uses a wheelchair

Person with Down Syndrome

Person who stutters

Person with significant learning disability

Person with Aids

Person with Diabetes

Person who is greatly overweight