



National Easter Seal Society
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A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

Myths & Facts

About People Without Disabilities



Much has been written about the negative, stereotyping attitudes that obstruct independent, dignified lifestyles for people who have disabilities. Efforts are continually being made by organizations like the National Easter Seal Society to eliminate these misconceptions and to improve communications between people with and without disabilities.

Equally important, but far less publicized, are the similar negative, stereotyping attitudes that some individuals with disabilities have toward people who are not disabled. These attitudinal barriers block positive communication as much as those held by people without disabilities. The following myths and facts will help eliminate some misconceptions about people who are not disabled.



Myth 1: People without disabilities don't want to meet or be around persons who have disabilities.

Fact: Lack of experience can make people uncomfortable. Reach out, introduce yourself and help put others at ease.

Myth 2: When you have a disability, people offer help out of pity.

Fact: An offer of help might well be interpreted as nothing more than a proper act of courtesy. Accept or decline an offer of assistance in a polite manner leaving avenues of communication open.

Myth 3: People who offer help to persons with disabilities usually know how to give the help needed.

Fact: Good intentions and skill aren't necessarily the same. If you accept assistance, give specific instructions on what kind of help would be useful and how to provide it.

Myth 4: People always offer assistance when they see someone who might need it.

Fact: Hesitation to get involved, fear of the unknown, previous bad experience, and apathetic attitude are among reasons why some people neglect to offer help that is obviously needed. Ask, and you will probably receive all the assistance you need.

Myth 5: Persons without disabilities are obligated to provide a wide range of special services and treatment for people who have disabilities.

Fact: While certain accommodations have a legal and moral foundation, people without disabilities are not obligated to eliminate all the injustices people with disabilities may encounter as they participate in life. The presence of a disability weighs little toward a person's ability to handle certain daily problems.

Myth 6: Most people know little about the lifestyles of their neighbors who have disabilities and really don't want to know more.

Fact: Not knowing about something is not the same as not caring. Most people have little reason to think about disability related rights and needs. Share yourself and give the unaware new food for thought.

Myth 7: It's okay to label people without disabilities as "A.B.s," "T.A.B.s," and "normal."

Fact: Labeling people is never acceptable. Able-bodied (A.B.) and temporarily able-bodied (T.A.B.) are relative, judgmental terms. "Normal" is acceptable when applied to statistical norms and averages only.

Myth 8: Because people without disabilities can never truly understand the ramifications of disability related problems they should never represent people who have disabilities on boards or in organizations concerned with disability issues.

Fact: Exclusion of this kind is a form of reverse discrimination. Involvement by people without disabilities in "disability activities" can enlighten and enhance a group's collective intelligence and ability.

Myth 9: People without disabilities assume that people who have certain disabilities must also have a given set of concurrent limitations.

Fact: While certain disabilities do create limitations, these limitations vary from person to person based on the individual's ability to adapt disability to a desired lifestyle.

Myth 10: People without disabilities commonly think that persons who have disabilities are asexual beings.

Fact: While certain individuals may think this, it is to your advantage to set such misguided thinking straight.

