

Disability is diversity

*FOSTER **EQUALITY**
EMBRACE **DIVERSITY***




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UAN: 111-116-878



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A person is shown from the side, sitting in a wheelchair. The person's hand is resting on the back of the wheelchair. The background is a blurred hallway with warm lighting and circular light fixtures on the ceiling. The overall tone is soft and contemplative.

***“Disability is not a brave
struggle or courage in the
face of adversity.
Disability is an art, it's an
ingenious way to live”***

-Neil Marcus
Disability Artist & Activist

Person First; Disability Second

The only disability in life is bad attitude.

(Scott Hamilton)

Disability awareness is considered to be a set of guidelines covering how to approach and speak with persons with disabilities. In addition, it refers to educating individuals on how to interact with a person with disability, as it is the biggest barrier they face while interacting with others. Language plays a critical role in shaping and reflecting our thoughts, beliefs and feelings. The way we refer to people can affect the way they are seen by others and the way in which they feel about themselves. Persons with Disabilities should not be labelled for their disability, instead should be treated as one of us with different abilities.

Types of Disabilities

- Visual
- Auditory
- Learning
- Physical
- Psychological and psychiatric conditions
- Medical conditions

Over 3 million people in Pakistan are suffering from a disability and a very small portion of them end up joining professional education at university level. Through this publication, you will be acquainted with the guiding principles for interacting with students with disabilities. This is an effort to provide them with adequate space and conducive environment to grow and polish their skills and abilities.

General Rules for Engaging Students with Disabilities

The words we use about people influence our attitude and the attitude of others towards persons with disability. Following discriminatory attitude should be avoided in classrooms and social settings:

- Stereotyping
- Dehumanising or impersonal referencing
- Derogatory labelling
- Imposed labelling such as using words “handicapped;” “retarded;” “physically challenged;” “victim;” “sufferer;” “wheelchair-bound.”

Guidelines for Appropriate Behaviour with Students with Disabilities

- Acknowledge students with disabilities as persons equal in respect and dignity as everyone
- Acknowledge, through action, that students with disabilities are in control of their lives and can make decisions and do not need pity
- Recognise each student as an individual and focus on the student rather than the disability
- Engage with them as you would with anybody. Use your regular lip movements, pitch, volume and body language. Where need be, for example when engaging with a person with a hearing impairment, modify your engagement by speaking slower



- Consult with the students with disabilities about issues that affect them to foster participation and inclusion
- Enable the same, not more or less personal space
- Consider wheelchairs part of the person
- Be perceptive about disabilities but do not make assumptions
- Ask if there is any way you can assist them
- Respect rights and confidentiality
- Encourage services and systems that are adapted to enable access for persons with disabilities. If the services and system do not fit their requirements, campaign to adapt them to meet individual needs

General Communication Guidelines with Students with Disabilities

- Be friendly, smile and make eye contact
- Speak directly to the persons rather than talking to them through their companion
- Use appropriate, politically-correct language
- Ask if any assistance is required. Generally, persons with disabilities have quite different capabilities and like to be as independent as possible
- Provide up-to-date and accurate information when asked about accessible facilities such as parking, elevators and toilets



Examples of Inappropriate Behaviour

- Talking down and ignoring students with disabilities
- Assuming persons with disabilities lack intelligence
- Treating persons with disabilities as children or victims
- Assuming persons with disabilities want or need charity
- Using over-emphasised or loud speech
- Making little eye contact or staring
- Giving too little or too much personal space
- Assuming you know what persons with disabilities need without asking
- Not allowing enough time for persons with disabilities to communicate their needs and expectations



***“Once you choose hope,
anything's possible”***

Christopher Reeve





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