



"I was recently diagnosed with Celiac Disease, which means I have to remain for life on a "gluten-free" diet. I can't even eat a crumb of wheat, oats, rye, barley and many other processed foods without getting very, very ill. I lost a lot of weight before I was diagnosed, and people started being mean to me, telling me that I was faking being sick, it was just in "my head", and that I must be anorexic. Even now, if someone tries to give me a donut and I say no thank-you or that I can't, they tell me, "Oh, it's low fat if that's what you're worried about!" I hate being judged like that. I never chose to be on this diet!"

## Do's and Don'ts

When you meet someone who has a disability, say 'Hello'. **Make eye contact** and give yourself time to get to know that person like you would with any new acquaintance.

- **DO** use person-first language, especially in print.
- **DON'T** mention a disability if it is not relevant.
- **DO** use specific terminology.
- **DON'T** make someone a hero for an ordinary feat.
- **DO** greet people at their eye level.
- **DON'T** worry about common phrases.
- **DO** respect personal space.
- **DON'T** always assume that tone of voice, laughter, and facial expression are accurate.



- ## Some Interesting Things To Consider
- In an instant we could be a person with a disability
  - If we had a son or daughter with a disability how would we want them to be treated
  - We have so much to gain by being an institution that values our students with disabilities and values diversity in general
  - What would we gain if we were nationally recognized for the way we value diversity



## Interesting Considerations Continued...

- Have you ever made an assumption about a person with a disability that you realized was incorrect?
- Attitudinal barriers are far and away the worst kind
- They create the most pain and hardship for our students and staff with disabilities
- It's partly about changing policies and structures but it's mostly about changing hearts

- Hearing
- Vision
- Learning Disabilities
- Medical Conditions
- Mental Health
- Brain Injuries

Many Disabilities are Invisible



## What is a Learning Disability?

- Neurologically-based information processing difficulties
- Occur in individuals with average to above average intelligence
- Typically cause a discrepancy between the individual's potential and achievement
- Life-long conditions manageable with appropriate support and direction
- Diagnosed by a registered psychologist

- Note-takers
  - ASL Interpreters
  - Alternate-Format Print Material
  - Assistive Technology Training
  - Elevators, Ramps
- Accommodations**



## The Basics

- Ask before you help
- Be sensitive about physical contact
- Avoid personal questions
- Think before you speak
- Be considerate about the extra time it might take for a personal with a disability to say or do something
- Don't make assumptions
- Respond graciously to requests

- A handshake is not a standard greeting for everyone. A smile and spoken greeting is always appropriate
- Speak to the person not their attendant
- Treat adults as adults
- Be patient and listen. Don't pretend to understand
- It's ok to use common expressions
- Relax and have a sense of humour

## When Meeting a Person With a Disability...



## When Assisting a Person Who is Deaf or Has a Hearing Impairment

- Let the person establish the communication mode – lip reading, sign language, writing notes
- Talk directly to the person even when an Interpreter is being used
- If the person lip reads, speak clearly with a moderate pace

- ## When Meeting With a Person With a Disability That Affects Speech
- Be patient, listen closely. Do not finish a sentence for the person
  - Ask the person to repeat what they said if you don't understand it.



## When Interacting with a person with a visual impairment...

- When greeting identify yourself and the others who may be present
- Don't leave without excusing yourself first
- When asked to guide someone never push or pull them. Let them take your arm and then walk slightly ahead.
- As you enter a room describe the layout

- ### When assisting a person who uses a wheelchair
- Do not push, lean or hold on to the wheelchair. The wheelchair is part of their personal space.
  - Try to put yourself at eye level
  - Be prepared to offer assistance with reaching for, grasping, lifting, opening doors etc.



### When assisting a person who has a mental illness...

- Remember they do not have lower intelligences
- Remember they may have difficulty processing or expressing emotions
- Be understanding of the fact that some people with mental illness may overreact to topics or conversations

- ## When assisting a person who has a Learning Disability
- Remember that some information processing problems may impact social skills
  - Discuss openly the preferred way to communicate



## When assisting a person who has an intellectual disability....

- Interact with the person first
- Break down information into small easy to understand chunks
- If necessary involve an advocate
- Provide information in writing



## It's About Being Human

- It is in interacting with people who are different from us that we grow as humans. People who learn differently, people who see things differently, people whose values are different... help us to grow.

