



Disability Etiquette

Respecting People with Disabilities

HOW TO INTERACT WITH PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL

Intellectual Disabilities (ID)

Persons with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit their ability to learn, communicate, socialize, and take care of their everyday needs. In this article we will be looking at how to interact with persons with intellectual disabilities:

Don't assume what a person with ID can or cannot do. Sometimes they might not need help, or they want to do it themselves. It's also possible you might be misunderstanding what they are trying to do. Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not "over-assist" or be patronizing.

Persons with ID may do things that society considers unusual: making sounds, flopping to the ground when frustrated, flapping their hands, running in circles, echoing phrases, pacing constantly, and more. This behaviour serves a purpose—calming themselves down, communicating their needs, expressing feelings, or simply having fun. Recognize that it's okay to be different, and that there's no need to worry about behaviour that doesn't hurt anyone.

Speak clearly and calmly to them if they're doing something that bothers you. Due to social uncertainty, past mistreatment, or anxiety issues, some persons with ID may feel scared and confused if you are angry or hostile towards them.

Tips for communicating with a person with ID:

People with ID may respond slowly in conversation. Be patient, flexible and supportive.

Speak to the person in clear sentences, using simple words and concrete concepts. Speak calmly, and with a moderate volume. Speaking louder doesn't make you more understandable.

Rephrase comments or questions for better clarity. Allow time for the information to be fully understood. Most persons with ID may have trouble processing fast-paced or

complicated speech. Depending on the person's unique needs, it may be helpful to slow down and be a little clearer. Be willing to explain something again, if needed

Stay focused on the person as he/she responds to you and be patient.

To confirm if the person understands what you have said, consider asking them to repeat the message back to you in his/her own words.

Provide one piece of information at a time.

Speak directly to the person and not to their companion or support person. Respect their expressed preferences as to choices or decisions.

Some people with cognitive impairments may be easily distracted. Try to redirect them politely. For some individuals, if you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet location.

Those who experience "sensory overload" may become disorientated or confused if there is too much to absorb at once. Provide information gradually and clearly.

Let the pace slow down as needed. If their speech is halting or laboured, it may take them more time to get through a sentence. Give them utter patience, and don't rush them to finish what they're saying. This takes the pressure off and makes them feel more at ease.

Take time to listen closely to them. Sometimes, people with disabilities get sidelined and ignored, even with friends or family. This can be very isolating. Make time to include and listen to them, so they know someone cares about what they have to say.

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Source: Karen Reyes MD/MPH UC Berkeley School of Public Health, The United Nations Disability-
,www.wikihow.com/Talk-to-Someone-with-an-Intellectual-Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines