



Talking about Living Safely with Disabilities

What do you want your community to know about people with disabilities?

Be Respectful.

We are really not trying to hurt anybody. Just trying to play a role in society. I'd ask them to be a little bit more respectful of you. That's all. (John Laudise, Opportunity Project Clubhouse)

Ask me questions.

I'd let them know if they have any questions, feel free to ask because they don't know most of the time why you can't do it and what you can do. So, I always let it out. You know, it's ok. I can do it but if you have any doubt, feel free to ask me. (Porfiro "Porfi" Garcia, Opportunity Project Clubhouse)

Be patient and allow me more time to respond.

Be patient with the person that's disabled because they're not going to snap right away. They're going to take time to respond. So you have to be patient to get along with them well. Speak up. Let them know what they're doing is not acceptable. Your difficulty in mobility, your difficulty in getting around and your response time definitely warrants more consideration when out. (Robert "Bob" Eodice, Opportunity Project Clubhouse)

I may need more space and may be challenged to keep up in a crowd.

Well, opening doors, it takes me a wider space than the average person that can move around things. And I need to take that into account whenever I see a crowd and be pretty cautious with how fast they're going so I don't try to merge in it if they're going too fast. Be conscious of my setbacks in not trying to delay or inhibit other people. That's all. (John)

Reach out to me.

I just think they need to be more careful of people that are disabled. Reach out to them more and help out a little bit better. Make sure they have a clear path to where they've got to go, opening and closing doors behind them and not cutting in front of them. Yelling at you. They

got to really be taking their time and be careful when you're talking to a handicapped person. Because you never know how they are going to react to you. (Bob)

I would definitely say my disability, my left side is weak let's say. But, besides that there might be other cognitive issues in my brain that you cannot see. (Porfi)

Please ask before assuming I need help.

Once I get to a certain point where I don't need help for certain things in life, some people want help you but you know you can do it yourself. And when you tell them "I can do it myself" some people get upset because you don't want their help. That's the way it is with me. If I'm able to do it myself, I will do it myself. If I need your help, I'll ask you. (Bob)

Ask them what they need. They'll tell you. (Karma Bailey, Opportunity Project Clubhouse)

"How can I help you?" rather than just doing it. You're right. (John)

You've got to tell them what you do and don't need. Some people won't help you at all, but some people want to help you like you are two years old. (Bob)

If I don't ask for help, don't label me as ungrateful.

If I don't ask for help, don't label me as ungrateful. (Karma)

Don't jump in front of me.

When I'm in the wheelchair, people think they can jump in front of me. They don't know that if I'm in the power chair, I go as slow as possible because if it was faster, I could really hurt them if they jumped in front of me. (Karma)

I many need accessible parking for an invisible disability.

Most beneficial thing for me is handicapped parking so when I park my car. That is very useful for me. And also sometimes I don't walk over things as good as the next person so I have to slow down a little bit. That's my concerns. That's all. (John)

Talk to me directly, not just the person I'm with.

When I go to the doctor let's say, in her discretion sometimes they don't ask me, they ask my partner. (Porfi)

Don't underestimate me.

Knowing the potential of the person is important. Make sure you don't belittle them or anything like that. That's all. (John)

Mine is kind of obvious. But I do have ID that says disabled and some of the characteristics because I was, come to think of it stuck...because of the way I talk. Sometimes they tend to handle you with kid gloves because they think you can't do certain things. They treat you more like a child. (Karma)

Safety tips from disabled people to other disabled people:

Carry an ID in case of an emergency.

I don't mind an ID but, let's say in my case, I'm quite aware so if people are questioning my answer so. And if I travel far from home, I carry some kind of ID with me in case of emergency. (Porfi)

Explain what you need.

Some people don't like to give out their information. I have no problems telling people I'm disabled. They know I'm in a wheelchair or sometimes I'm in a walker but they know I'm disabled. Most people know I'm disabled. But people who don't really follow along, you have to explain to them what you need and what you don't need. (Bob)

I don't have a problem either with telling people.

It is what it is. For me it's obvious. It's kind of there. My left weakness. And I don't mind. Honest, if that would help somebody that would be great you know. (Porfi)

Sometimes you need to be more cautious than we really think we can. For instance, like me I really shouldn't carry 2 bags of groceries up the stairs. One will say, "John, just carry one bag" which is a little disheartening but she's right. But just remembering little things like that is good for me. That's all. (John)

Talking slower and enunciating carefully can help others better understand you.

I've learned that if I talk slower and enunciate, they understand me a little better. (Karma)

Carry a horn to signal people to move.

If someone is pushing my wheelchair let's say, I carry my horn and if people are not aware that I'm behind them or if they are coming towards me, I blow the horn and they're kind of laughing or whatever, but it prevents them from walking right into me. (Porfi)

Being polite helps prevent trouble.

I try to be very polite in everything that I interact with people. I always find that that helps me. It's usually a positive interaction let's say. (Porfi)

Get names of people who can help you in case of an emergency.

I have a whole list of numbers that I can use. I have neighbors' numbers that are willing to help me out. Family members that are willing to help me. And if all else fails, I can dial 911. Not every car can take me home if I get stuck. There's only 2 people who can help me if I get stuck and need a ride home. (Bob)

Create a go bag to use in case of emergency.

I have a go bag, so I just grab it and go. My medicine, some water, a change of clothes, some dry food. What else is in there? A mask, some gloves. In the corner of my room, under my window. (Karma)

My wallet, my medicine, my personal stuff, like ID and stuff. It's all together. Porfi)

Well, I keep my necessities in the same spot every night when I go to bed. I guess that's important. (John)

What do you want first responders to know about people with disabilities?

Respect me.

Some of them just don't respect you whatsoever no matter what you do. (Karma)

Be understanding.

I think they would be more understanding if they were disabled. But, I'm disabled, a woman, and my race comes into a factor. (Karma)

Use simple language without talking down to me.

Use simple language for anybody who is disabled. (Karma)

Bend down to talk to people in wheelchairs.

Usually, in a wheelchair, bend down to my level so I don't have to look up all the time. (Karma)

Don't talk to me like I'm a child.

Don't talk to me like I'm a child. (Karma)

I may move more slowly and need more time to respond.

I think they should know you may be slower than the next guy. There may be some circumstances where you really couldn't help yourself. Um, like you said, they probably shouldn't be concerned about you before people who have full capacity. I'm not armed. I think you have to be respectful, like we said, your response time. And sometimes it takes me longer to think things out. So "officer, look at my hands, I'm unarmed, I'm not going to point this at you". I won't say that but be respectful of the police officer. He has to know where your hands are all the time. Tell him, my response time may not as great. I had a TBI back a long time ago and it still affects me very dearly. I'm doing my best officer. And what do you think I should do? (John)

I'm trying my best.

Let them know that you are not meaning to cause any trouble at all. And just ask if he can help you. Tell him about your history and what happened to you and know the circumstances. That's all. (john)

I may need you to repeat something.

You may need to repeat yourself with some of the questions. I got pulled over by a police officer for going too fast in a school zone. He said, "You know you are going 5 miles over the speed limit". "Oh, I'm sorry officer". And he saw I had a conversion pedal on the car and he said, "Oh you have a handicap. What happened to you?" And I told him what happened to me. And he said, "OK. Just be very careful and conscious of it." So every time I go through that area, I make sure I go well below the speed limit. But, they should be conscious if you had a setback, I think. That's very important for us. (John)

Having a window sticker to help locate someone who may need help in a fire. I really think for the fire departments in the towns and maybe the state to put a handicapped or disabled label on your window. They have Tot Finders for the fire department. They can put a disabled sticker on the window so they know there is a disabled person in the house. Like right next door. They know how to take care of them better. Because if the house is on fire, they're going to break into the house and go first to help the person that's disabled because they can't get out of the house like the rest of the house can. They are not mobile like the rest of the house. So, a fireman can help them first because they're going to be the last person to get out. So help them first then help the other people. (Bob)

First responders and people with disabilities need to work together to help plan for safety.

First, I would tell the cop right off the bat that I have a disability and tell him my problem. (Karma)

All the officers in my town know I'm disabled and know how to handle my situation. Have the person with the disability or the person assisting the disabled person go down to the police department in a wheelchair or walker or whatever, and have a meeting with somebody in the police department. Most possibly the police department will do that for you. They'll sit with you in the room and listen to what you have to say and you tell them about your disability and what you would need in case of emergency. And tell them what parts of the house it is best to enter. You can go over everything with the police department. My town once a year has a police officer and Neighbor Night where your neighbors all go to a local police department and they can talk about any issues that happened in town and they can tell the police anything that will help me. They have that once a year in the police department. (Bob)

Let's live safely together.

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