Tools for Life: Exploring Your Assistive Technology Program, Strategies and Solutions in Georgia
Agenda

- Introduction to AMAC Accessibility and Tools for Life at Georgia Tech
- Guiding Principles
- Assistive Technology Strategies
- Funding Solutions and Resources
- What's New in AT Solutions and Trends in the Workplace
- Exploring Disability Awareness and Culture
- People First Language
- Communication and Etiquette
- Ask It Basket/Q&A
What are your questions?
Here is your opportunity!
AMAC creates practical solutions that work, with a focus on utility, ease of use, and high quality.

- **Accessibility Consulting** focuses on organizational accessibility needs with evaluation, technical assistance, customer support, and website accessibility solutions.

- **Braille Services** produces customized projects from both print materials and electronic text including partial books and chapters or graphics only using cutting-edge technology.

- **Captioning Services** makes classrooms, meetings, labs and other audio environments fully accessible for deaf or hard-of-hearing.

- **Professional E-Text Producers** provide high-quality e-text in many formats such as PDF, DOC, DAISY, and HTML.

- **Certified Assistive Technology team** provides on-site and remote assessments, demonstrations, training and technical assistance for education, work, and daily living environments.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.amacusg.org](http://www.amacusg.org)
Tools for Life (TFL), Georgia’s Assistive Technology Act Program, provides Georgians of all ages and disabilities the opportunity to gain access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services so they can live, learn, work, and play independently in the communities of their choice.
As the Assistive Technology Program in Georgia, we are charged with core activities:

1. Information & Assistance
2. AT Assessments
3. AT Demonstrations
4. AT Equipment Lending
5. Training (Individuals & Groups)
6. Funding Education & Solutions
7. AT Reuse
Assistive Technology Services are any services that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. These services include:

- Evaluating
- Providing devices
- Selecting, Designing, Customizing
- Maintaining, Repairing
- Coordinating
- Training/Technical Assistance – student, family, and school service providers

Public Law 105-394 [29 USC 2201]
Welcome to Tools for Life

Tools for Life, Georgia Tech's Assistive Technology Act Program, is dedicated to increasing access to and adoption of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for Georgians with disabilities as they can live, learn, work, and play independently and with greater freedom in communities of their choice.

Tools for Life Website

Georgia Tech
Your TFL AppFinder

Search by:
- App Name
- Categories
  - Books/Reading
  - Education
  - Environmental Adaptations
  - Hearing
  - Vision
  - Navigation
  - Cognition, Learning, and Development
  - Personal Care and Safety
  - Productivity
  - Communication
  - Therapeutic Aids
Guiding Principles

• We, collectively, are brilliant and can find innovative paths and create brighter futures.

• We must think, live, and act from a place of abundance. We do have enough time, money and resources.

• We must focus on abilities.
Who are We Serving

Over 54,000,000 individuals in the United States have disabilities that affect their ability to:

• see
• hear
• communicate
• reason
• walk
• perform other basic life functions
People with disabilities are the largest minority group in America.

This group cuts across racial, ethnic, religious, gender and age boundaries.

Anyone can become a member of this minority group at any time.
May 2018 Disability Employment Statistics
Ages 16 years and over

Labor Force Participation
• People with disabilities: 20.1%
• People without disabilities: 68.6%

Unemployment Rate
• People with disabilities: 7.0%
• People without disabilities: 3.4%

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)
Statistics to Digest

• 14% of People with disAbilities are fully employed. PayDay!

• 16% of People with disAbilities are underemployed. Snickers!

• 70% are unemployed or out of the work force entirely. Kisses!

• Adults with disabilities work fewer hours, command lower wages, and earn less annually.
Guiding Principle and Public Law

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to:

• (A) live independently;
• (B) enjoy self-determination and make choices;
• (C) benefit from an education;
• (D) pursue meaningful careers; and
• (E) enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society in the United States.

Public Law 108-364
Why Assistive Technology?

• For a person without a disability, assistive technology makes life easier.

• For a person with a disability, assistive technology makes life possible.

Tip: USE AT! We have yet to meet a successful person who doesn’t use any AT.
Assistive Technology Services and Strategies

Martha Rust
AT Direct Services Team Manager
What is Assistive Technology?

- Assistive Technology (AT) is any item or piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life, including at school, at work, at home, and in the community.

- Assistive Technology ranges from no/low/light tech to high tech devices or equipment.
Assistive Technology Continuum

Observations and “Hanging out with Intent”

Assistive Technology is a continuum of tools, strategies, and services that match a person’s needs, abilities, and tasks.

Low/No-tech
- pencil grip
- adapted books
- slant board
- highlighters, tape
- magnifiers
- color coding
- read to out loud
- picture schedule
- strategies for memory
- colored transparencies
- proof readers
- note taker

Mid-Tech
- word prediction
- text to speech
- speech to text
- spell checkers
- talking calculators
- digital recorders
- organizers
- e-books
- adapted keyboard
- adapted mouse
- adapted toys
- CCTV
- apps under $100

High-Tech
- computer/laptops
- tablets/phablets
- smartphones
- smart pens
- OCR scanner/software
- magnification software
- speech output devices
- switch, joystick access
- scanning access
- voice recognition
- environmental control devices
- apps over $100
Team Approach

1. The Person with the disAbility

- Circle of Support – Family of Choice
- Teachers
- Case Managers
- Technologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech & Language Pathologist
- Physical Therapist
- Engineer
The “FAST” Track

Frustration
Anxiety
Stress
Tension
AT Assessments

• Offer comprehensive AT Assessment
• Certified AT Team!
• $125/hour
  • Written report and recommendations

• Area:
  • Workplace
  • Ergonomics
  • Hardware/Software
  • Strategies
Workstations

- Many options
- Stature considerations
- Task considerations
- Needs based on injury or disability
TFL AT Demo Lab

• Tablets
• Vision Items
• DME
• Communication
• Games
• Software
• Switches
• Keyboards
AT Loans

- Try before you Buy!
- Loans usually 3 - 4 weeks
- Train on items before borrowed if needed
- Contact Asha Kumar
  Asha.kumar@gatfl.gatech.edu
Funding Solutions, Strategies and Resources

Danny Housley
AT Acquisition Manager
Credit-Able

- Georgia’s alternative financing program for assistive technology
- Thanks to a partnership between Center for Financial Independence and Innovation and Tools for Life
Alternative Financing Programs

AFPs are here to serve communities that don’t have access to traditional financing

Some are CDFIs

Narrow focus (tribes, people with disabilities, locations, etc.)
AT Loan Details

• **Range**: $250-$10,000

• **Length**: 6 months-8 years

• **Interest**: 3%-8%
First $TEP Program

- For Georgians with disabilities
- Small low interest loans to establish/repair credit
- Can be used for anything
- 4% interest
- $1,000 max
- 18 months max term
Eligibility Criteria

Be a resident of Georgia

A person with a disability

AND

A family member/guardian of a person with a disability

or

Able to pay back the loan

AND

An employer of a person with a disability

or

Using the loan for AT

AND

Able to pay back the loan
How to Prepare for Your Credit-Able Loan
Know Your Finances

**INCOME**

Earned Income
- Received from work

Unearned Income
- Pensions, SSI, etc

Gross Earning
- Income *before* taxes

Net Earnings
- Income *after* taxes

**EXPENSES**

Fixed Expenses
- Do not change monthly
  - Rent, mortgage, insurance

Flexible Expenses
- Can change monthly
  - Utilities, groceries, etc

Discretionary Expenses
- Items not necessary
  - Eating out, movies, etc
What Can I Afford?

- Determine how much you need to cover all necessary expenses
- Subtract from NET (after taxes) income

Net Income
- Fixed Expenses
  - Flexible Expenses
  = Money available for loan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Expenses</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Expenses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Rent/Mortgage</td>
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<td>2. Insurance Payment</td>
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<td>3. Other Loan Payments</td>
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<td>ETC.</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL #2</strong></td>
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<td>Flexible Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Groceries</td>
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<td>2. Heating Bill</td>
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<td>3. Electric Bill</td>
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<td>4. Savings Deposit</td>
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<td>ETC.</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL #3</strong></td>
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What's New in AT Solutions and Trends in the Workplace

Ben Jacobs
Accommodations Specialist and Special Projects
Accommodations Specialist and Special Projects

- Emerging and Cutting Edge Technologies
- Consumer Tech
  - Affordable
  - Easily acquired
  - Effective
- How can this tech be used by people with disabilities?
Bring Your Best Self to Work

• Stress
  • FAST Track
  • Lack of Sleep
  • Insufficient self care
  • Lack of independence
  • Lack of social outlet
  • Lack of recreational outlet
Smart Home Technologies

- Smart Speakers
  - Google Home
  - Amazon Echo
  - Apple Homepod

- IoT Devices (Internet of Things)
  - Lights
  - Security
  - TV
  - Other
Gaming Accessibility

- Social and Recreational outlet
- Achievements
- Benefits
  - Cognitive
  - Motor Control
  - Decision Making
  - Sense of belonging
3d Printed Technologies

- Inexpensive
  - Free to download
  - Printing Services
- Complex mechanisms
- Quick Prototyping
- www.thingiverse.com
Exploring Disability Awareness and Culture

Carolyn Phillips, Director and PI
Liz Persaud, Program and Outreach Manager
The Importance of Disability Awareness

• There are more than one billion people with disabilities in the world who must overcome challenges every day – including stigmatization. As a society, we are all different and must recognize the importance of acceptance.

• Disability awareness is important when it comes to breaking stereotypes and overcoming preconceptions regarding disabilities.

• Learning about disabilities, the ADA, and taking part in awareness activities and events is a step towards breaking these barriers and promoting change.
Carolyn - Why Am I Here Today?

Master Our Skills!
Expand Our Knowledge and
Build Stronger Schools to Create an
amazing, Inclusive and United
Community!
Liz - Why Am I Here Today?
disability is often a consequence of the environment
One Definition

What is Disability Culture?

“People with disabilities have forged a group identity. We share a common history of oppression and a common bond of resilience. We generate art, music, literature, and other expressions of our lives and our culture, infused from our experience of disability. Most importantly, we are proud of ourselves as people with disabilities. We claim our disabilities with pride as part of our identity. We are who we are: we are people with disabilities.”

Steven E. Brown, Ph.D., Co-Founder, Institute on disability Culture, Published in a 1996 issue of MAINSTREAM Magazine
Medical Model

- Under the medical model, impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness.

- People with disabilities are to be adapted to fit into the world as it is.

- The emphasis is on dependence.

- Focus is on the impairment, rather than the needs of the person.

- Often, institution is the norm where basic needs can be met.

- Environmental and design barriers make it difficult to have a successful future whether it is in work, school, leisure and entertainment facilities, transport, training, higher education, housing or in personal, family and social life.
Social Model

- Disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment or difference.

- Views that the position of disabled people and the discrimination against us are socially created and has little to do with our impairments.

- Explores ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people.

- When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

- Traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.

- Encourages people with disabilities to redefine what "disability" means to them.

- Perpetuates confidence and self-esteem.
Common Ways People with Disabilities are viewed and treated:

Unfortunately, and inaccurately, people with disabilities are often viewed as:

- victims, or objects of pity
- horrible or grotesque
- burdens, either on society or on their families and careers
- evil, or some threat to the comfort and safety of others
- unable, or assumed to be unable, to do things
- having multiple disabilities (such as assuming that a person who uses a wheelchair also has an intellectual disability)
- childlike
- "special"

Such misconceptions are based on insufficient or inaccurate information about people with disabilities and can perpetuate inappropriate interactions.
Understanding Attitudinal Barriers

People with disabilities face many barriers every day—from physical obstacles in buildings to systemic barriers in employment and civic programs.

Often, the most difficult barriers to overcome are attitudes other people carry regarding people with disabilities.

Whether born from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding or hate, these attitudes keep people from appreciating—and experiencing—the full potential a person with a disability can achieve.
Types of Attitudinal Barriers

• **Inferiority** - Because a person may be impaired in one of life's major functions, some people believe that individual is a "second-class citizen." However, most people with disabilities have skills that make the impairment moot in the workplace.

• **Pity** - People feel sorry for the person with a disability, which tends to lead to patronizing attitudes. People with disabilities generally don't want pity and charity, just equal opportunity to earn their own way and live independently.

• **Hero worship** - People consider someone with a disability who lives independently or pursues a profession to be brave or "special" for overcoming a disability. But most people with disabilities do not want accolades for performing day-to-day tasks. The disability is there; the individual has simply learned to adapt by using his or her skills and knowledge, just as everybody adapts to being tall, short, strong, fast, easy-going, bald, blonde, etc.
More Types of Attitudinal Barriers

Ignorance - People with disabilities are often dismissed as incapable of accomplishing a task without the opportunity to display their skills. In fact, people with quadriplegia can drive cars and have children. People who are blind can tell time on a watch and visit museums. People who are deaf can play baseball and enjoy music. People with developmental disabilities can be creative and maintain strong work ethics.

The Spread Effect - People assume that an individual's disability negatively affects other senses, abilities or personality traits, or that the total person is impaired. For example, many people shout at people who are blind or don't expect people using wheelchairs to have the intelligence to speak for themselves. Focusing on the person's abilities rather than his or her disability counters this type of prejudice.
**Even More Types of Attitudinal Barriers**

**Stereotypes** - The other side of the spread effect is the positive and negative generalizations people form about disabilities. For example, many believe that all people who are blind are great musicians or have a keener sense of smell and hearing, that all people who use wheelchairs are docile or compete in Paralympics, that all people with developmental disabilities are innocent and sweet-natured, that all people with disabilities are sad and bitter. Aside from diminishing the individual and his or her abilities, such prejudice can set too high or too low a standard for individuals who are merely human.

**Backlash** - Many people believe individuals with disabilities are given unfair advantages, such as easier work requirements. Employers need to hold people with disabilities to the same job standards as co-workers, though the means of accomplishing the tasks may differ from person to person. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require special privileges for people with disabilities, just equal opportunities.
Denial - Many disabilities are "hidden," such as learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, epilepsy, cancer, arthritis and heart conditions. People tend to believe these are not bona fide disabilities needing accommodation. The ADA defines "disability" as an impairment that "substantially limits one or more of the major life activities." Accommodating "hidden" disabilities which meet the above definition can keep valued employees on the job and open doors for new employees.

Fear - Many people are afraid that they will "do or say the wrong thing" around someone with a disability. They therefore avert their own discomfort by avoiding the individual with a disability. As with meeting a person from a different culture, frequent encounters can raise the comfort level.
Values Continuum Activity

A values continuum is a means of physically expressing the values of a number of people toward a specific issue.

We will read questions/statements.

• Move to one side if you: “Strongly Agree” or “True”
• Move to the other side if you: “Strongly Disagree” or “False”

Move to indicate how strongly you feel and where you “stand” on the issue.
Values Continuum Statement #1

There are special requirements and skills involved in interviewing people with disabilities for a job.
The interview would be conducted the same way for every applicant. If you want to know about the disability and how it might affect job performance, just ask.
People with mental illnesses cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job.
All jobs can be stressful to some extent. Productivity is maximized when there is a good match between the employee’s needs and working conditions, whether or not the individual has mental health needs.
It will be difficult to supervise employees with disabilities.
A Harris poll found that 82% of managers said employees with disabilities were no harder to supervise than employees without disabilities. Employees with disabilities should be held accountable to the same job standards as any other employee. Managers should be confident that their supervisory skills will work equally well with employees with disabilities.
People with disabilities always need help.
Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help and support as well as receiving it.

AT Helps!
AT Helps!

Assistive Technology strategies and solutions can help support individuals with a variety of disabilities in the workplace. AT helps to bridge the gap and provide solutions to problems with:

- speaking
- hearing
- seeing
- moving around
- getting places
- memory
- cognition (thought processes and understanding)
- daily living activities, such as dressing and preparing meals
- socializing
The Power of Language
Value Laden
People First Language
Helpful Tips
The Power of Language

• Language is continually evolving, and that includes language related to people with disabilities.

• Staying current is important, not to show that you are "politically correct" but to communicate effectively and with respect.
“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

Mark Twain
What is Value-Laden Language?

What you say and write may enhance the dignity of people with disabilities or inadvertently reflect stereotypes and negative attitudes.

Some words and phrases don’t recognize the broad range of capabilities of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities don’t need or want to be pitied, nor should they be deemed "courageous" or "special" as they accomplish daily activities or work.
“She won’t and can’t be successful.”

My Parents were advised to put me in a school for individuals with developmental disabilities. They took me out the next day…they realized that “system” was not designed for me. There were many times they were told I wouldn’t “go far” in life.
Value-Laden Language

Promotes
• Distance
• Stereotypes
• Pigeon-holes

Reduces sense of:
• Self-worth
• Power
• Self-direction
Value-Laden Language: Creates Categories

- We vs. They
- Good vs. Bad
- Strong vs. Weak
- High vs. Low (expectation)
- Sick vs. Well
- Superior vs. Inferior
Value-Laden Language: Promotes Distance

- Abnormal
- Afflicted
- Burdened
- Defect
- Deformity
- Mute (Deaf and Mute)
- Palsied
- Spastic
- Stricken with
- Sufferer
- Victim
- Invalid
Consider

What does the word "handicapped" mean?
"Handicapped" is an archaic term (it's no longer used in any federal legislation) that evokes negative images of pity, fear, and more.

A legendary origin of the "H-word" refers to a person with a disability begging with his "cap in his hand."
Value-Laden Language: Example #1

**disability-Negative**

- the disabled, the blind, the deaf
- crippled, suffers from, afflicted with, stricken with, victim of, invalid
- impaired, impairment
- normal person, healthy, whole, wheelchair bound

**disability-Neutral**

- people with disabilities, the disability community ("disabled" is an adjective, so must be accompanied by a noun.), the blind community, the Deaf community
- has a disability, is a person with a disability, happens to be physically disabled, walks with a cane, uses leg braces
- has a disability
- non-disabled, person without disabilities, uses a wheelchair
Value-Laden Language : Example #2

disability-Negative

- The disabled
- The handicapped
- Disabled parking
- Handicapped entrance
- Confined to a wheelchair
- Wheelchair bound

disability-Neutral

- People with disAbilities
- Accessible parking
- Accessible entrance
- Person who uses a wheelchair
- Wheelchair user
**Value-Laden Language: Example #3**

**disability-Negative**
- hearing impaired, hearing impairment
- visually impaired, visual impairment
- dumb, mute
- stutterer, tongue-tied
- CP victim, spastic
- epileptic
- fit, attack

**disability-Neutral**
- deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind
- low vision, blind
- person who has a speech or communication disability
- person with cerebral palsy
- person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder
- seizure, epileptic episode
disability-Negative

- crazy, lunatic, insane, nuts, deranged, psycho
- retard, mentally defective, moron, idiot, imbecile, Down’s person, mongoloid
- slow learner, retarded
- dwarf, midget

disability-Neutral

- people with mental health issues, mental illness, mental disability, psychiatric disability
- Has a developmental disability, person with Down syndrome
- has a learning disability, person with specific learning disability
- person of small stature, short stature; little person
Value-Laden Language: Example #5

**disability-Negative**

- paraplegic, quadriplegic
- birth defect
- post-polio, suffered from polio
- homebound

**disability-Neutral**

- man with paraplegia, woman who is paralyzed, person with spinal cord injury
- congenital disability, person with a disability from birth
- person who had polio
- stay-at-home, hard for the person to get out
People First Language puts the person before the disability, and it describes who a person is not what a person has.
Person First Language

Designed to stress personhood
“person with ____” or “person who ____”
More common approach, frequently preferred by most schools, parents, and relatively neutral organizations and groups
Identity First Language

• Disability is part of a person’s identity.

• Modeled after how we talk about other traits of people.

• Frequently preferred by people actively involved in disability culture, pride and advocacy.
Language Do’s

• If a person says they prefer a certain type of language, use that when talking to or about them, regardless of your own preference.

• Speak directly to the person to whom you are referring, never their parent, friend, caretaker, interpreter or other person they are with.
Individual Pledge

I pledge to respect all people. I will do this by using respectful language and refrain from disrespectful, mean, discriminatory, or unjust language or actions. I will try to form meaningful, respectful relationships with people who are different from me. I will make an effort to speak out against language, actions, and situations that I see which may discriminate against or unjustly exclude certain people. I will do my best to be a force for positive change, respect, and inclusion in my community.
“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.”

William James
Communication Tips
Physical Disabilities
Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Cognitive
Blind and Low Vision
Communication / AAC
General Communication Tips

• Don’t be afraid to make a mistake.
• Always BE RESPECTFUL.
• Don’t make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Ask before giving assistance. If you offer help and the person says “no,” don’t insist. If the answer is “yes,” ask how you can best help, and follow directions.
• If someone with a disability is accompanied by another individual, address the person with a disability directly rather than speaking through the other person.
• Treat adults as adults.
• Expect diversity of preferences and opinions.
Communication Tips: Physical Disabilities

• Do not make assumptions about what a person can and cannot do.
• Respect the individual’s personal space: personal space includes a person’s wheelchair, crutches, or other mobility aid. Never move someone’s crutches, walker, cane, or other mobility aid without permission.
• Do not push a person’s wheelchair or grab the arm of someone walking with difficulty without first asking if you can help.
• When speaking for more than a few minutes to a person using a wheelchair, try to find a seat for yourself so that the two of you are at eye level.
Communication Tips: Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- Ask the person how he or she prefers to communicate.
- Before you start to speak, make sure you have the person’s attention. A wave, a light touch on the shoulder, or other visual or tactile signals are appropriate ways to get their attention.
- Speak in a clear, expressive manner. Do not over enunciate or exaggerate words.
- Unless asked, do not raise your voice. Speak in a normal tone.
- Talk directly to the person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, not to the interpreter.
- If you are speaking through an interpreter, remember that the interpreter may lag a few words behind. Pause occasionally.
Tips: Deaf/Hard of Hearing

• To facilitate speech reading: face into the light, and keep your hands and other objects away from your mouth. Face the person directly and maintain eye contact. Don’t turn your back or walk around while talking. If you look away, the person might assume the conversation is over.

• While you are writing a message for someone who is Deaf or hard of hearing, don’t talk, since the person cannot read your note and your lips at the same time.

• If you don’t understand something, ask the person to repeat it or write it down. The goal is communication; don’t pretend to understand if you did not.
Communication Tips: Cognitive Disabilities

• Treat adults with cognitive disabilities as adults.
• When speaking to someone who has a cognitive disability, try to be alert to his or her responses so that you can adjust your method of communication if necessary.
• For example, some people may benefit from simple, direct sentences or from supplementary visual forms of communication, such as gestures, diagrams, or demonstrations.
• Use language that is concrete rather than abstract.
• People with brain injuries may have short-term memory deficits and may repeat themselves or require information to be repeated.
Tips: Cognitive Disabilities

- People with auditory perceptual problems may need to have direction repeated and may take notes to help them remember direction or the sequence of tasks. They may benefit from watching a task demonstrated.
- People with perceptual or “sensory overload” problems may become disoriented or confused if there is too much to absorb at once. Provide information gradually and clearly. Reduce background noise if possible.
- Don’t pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what was said.
- In conversation, people with cognitive disabilities may respond slowly, so give them time.
Communication Tips: Blind, Low Vision

• It is appropriate to touch the person’s arm lightly when you speak so that he or she knows you are speaking to him or her.
• Speak directly to the person with the visual disability, not through a companion or third party. Visually impaired people can hear and respond for themselves.
• Identify yourself when you approach a person who is blind. If a new person approaches, introduce him or her. Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them.
• Don’t shout. Most people who happen to be blind have normal hearing. Speak clearly and strongly if you know that an older blind person also has a hearing problem.
• Identify yourself when entering a room and let the blind person know when you are leaving. Don’t leave a blind person talking to an empty room, or standing alone in empty space.
Tips: Blind, Low Vision

• Face the person and speak directly to him or her. Use a normal tone of voice.
• Don’t assume that help is needed. Always ask before providing assistance.
• Never push, pull, or grab a blind person. This can be frightening and it’s often embarrassing.
• If you are offering direction, be as specific as possible, and point out obstacles in the path of travel.
• Alert people who are blind or visually impaired to posted information.
• Never pet, talk to or otherwise distract a service dog unless the owner has given you permission.
• Don’t hesitate to use words like “see” and “look.”
• Don’t use hand signals or gestures.
Communication Tips: Communication Disabilities

• If you are having trouble understanding what is being said, **ask the person to repeat** rather than pretend you understand. The former is respectful and leads to accurate communication; the latter is belittling and leads to embarrassment.

• In conversation, people may respond slowly, so give them time.

• Don't try to finish sentences or guess what the person is saying.
Communication Tips: AAC Specific

• Acknowledge values and multiple modes of communication

• Attend to person and not to AAC system of another task

• Ask/determine the individual’s preferences in communication interactions.

For example: Some people may prefer that you read along as they type or read the completed message. Depending on the device it can be more convenient, especially in crowds and noisy settings.
Communication Rights

- Be spoken to with respect and courtesy

- Be spoken to directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present

- Have clear, meaningful and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications
More Communication Tips

• Shake hands or hand over business cards. If the person cannot shake your hand or grasp your card, they will tell you. Do not be ashamed of your attempt, however.

• It is okay to feel nervous or uncomfortable around people with disabilities, and it's okay to admit that. It is human to feel that way at first. When you encounter these situations, think "person" first instead of disability; you will eventually relax.
Making the Connection

A change in Language and Attitude can change everything!

Our Language & Attitude  Our Actions

Our Work Culture & Environment
What are your questions?
Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

Anne Lamott
Contact Us

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