

WORKING WITH MEMBERS

As an advisor, you have the privilege of working closely with Aktion Club members. Within the Kiwanis family, that also means you're considered an expert on effective interaction with them. All of us who work with Aktion Club have a duty to communicate respectfully and in an appropriate manner with our members — and we must set the example for those around us. So we're providing you with some basic tips on communication, along with guidelines regarding "People First Language."

10 COMMUNICATION TIPS

- 1.** Speak directly to the person, rather than through a companion (or a sign language interpreter who may be present).
- 2.** Offer to shake hands when introduced. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
- 3.** Always identify yourself, and others who may be with you, when meeting someone with a visual disability. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking. When dining with a friend who has a visual disability, ask whether you can describe what is on his or her plate.
- 4.** If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.
- 5.** Treat adults as adults. Address people with disabilities by their first names only when you're extending that same familiarity to all others. Do not refer to adults (Aktion Club members) as "kids." Never patronize people in wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- 6.** Do not lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair, or pet a service animal. People with disabilities treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies. People with guide dogs and help dogs do the same with those animals — so never distract a service animal without the owner's permission.
- 7.** Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking, and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod of the head. Never pretend to understand if you don't understand; repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
- 8.** Place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or on crutches.

9. Lightly tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder or gently wave your hand to get his or her attention. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish whether he or she can read your lips. If so, try to face the light source and keep hands, drinks and food away from your mouth when speaking. If a person is wearing a hearing aid, don't assume that they can distinguish your speaking voice. Never shout at a person. Just speak in a normal tone of voice.
10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about this?" that seem to ignore a person's disability.

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

Our words — and the meanings we attach to them — are important. They create attitudes, and they drive social policies and laws. They influence our feelings and decisions, affect people's daily lives and more. How we use them makes a difference.

People First Language is used to speak appropriately and respectfully about an individual with a disability. It puts the person before the disability — so the disability describes what a person has, rather than defining who a person is. For example, when referring to a person with a disability, refer to the person first by using phrases such as: "a person who ...", "a person with ..." or, "person who has..."

Here are suggestions on how to communicate with and about people with disabilities.

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE TO AVOID
Person with a disability	The disabled, handicapped
Person without a disability	Normal person, healthy person
Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	Retarded, slow, simple, moronic, defective or retarded, afflicted, special person
Person with an emotional or behavioral disability: person with a mental health or a psychiatric disability	Insane, crazy, psycho, maniac, nuts
Person who is hard of hearing, Hearing-impaired	Suffers a hearing loss
Person who is deaf	Deaf and dumb, mute
Person who is blind/visually impaired	The blind
Person who has a communication disorder, is unable to speak, or uses a device to speak	Mute, dumb
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound
Person with a physical disability	Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, spastic
Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder	Epileptic