

upper body strength and good use of both arms. Quadriplegia may have good upper body strength but is usually limited in the use of the arms and hands.

Q. What is a stroke?

A. A stroke or CVA (cerebrovascular accident) is a sudden loss of consciousness resulting when the rupture or occlusion (blockage) of a blood vessel leads to a lack of oxygen in the brain. Strokes or CVAs strike approximately 700,000 people in the United States each year, claiming the life of about 283,000 of its victims. But perhaps more significantly, 4.2 million people are currently CVA survivors, many with permanent disability.

Q. When my children see someone with an obvious disability they stare and want to ask questions. What should I do?

A. Children are naturally curious. Asking questions, touching and feeling are keys to learning. Most people with disabilities would rather entertain a child's questions than to be avoided. Not allowing the child to approach the disabled may cause fear and anxiety. Would you want a child to avoid you or be afraid of you just because you

were "different?" Let a child's curiosity be satisfied, with reason.

Q. I see a non-disabled person parking in a "handicapped parking area." What should I do?

A. First, do not assume that a crime is being committed because there is no "obvious disability." Many people have problems, such as heart ailments or pulmonary (lung) conditions that causes shortness of breath. Therefore, they need to park as close to a facility as possible. States require vehicles that regularly transport people with disabilities to be identified, either with a license plate or a placard. Look for the identification. If no identification is visible, ask the individual if they are aware of the designated spot. It may be ignorance. If you should encounter resistance or belligerence, simply take down the license number and report it to authorities.

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Get the Frequently Asked Questions about disabilities



Q. How do I treat a person with a disability?

A. The same as anyone else. People with disabilities are "people" just like you and me. They have feelings and emotions - they laugh, they cry, they love and love to be loved. As the "Golden Rule" states, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Treat them with respect and dignity.

Q. I am uncomfortable approaching and being around someone who is disabled.

A. It's natural to be uneasy around any stranger or unfamiliar territory. Relax! Remember, you are a stranger to them too. Introduce yourself. Strike up some sort of conversation - the weather, a sporting event, politics - anything to break the ice. Disabilities are not contagious. Don't act like you are afraid you might catch something from them.

Q. How can I help someone in a wheelchair?

A. Generally speaking, if you see someone in a wheelchair that does not have an assistant with them they are already fairly independent. Ask if you can be of assistance. BUT...don't feel rejected if your offer is turned down. Many people in

wheelchairs have fought hard to gain independence and would rather "do it on their own." When addressing an individual in a wheelchair, position yourself so that you make eye contact. Don't make them strain and crane their neck to see who is speaking. If you find yourself holding a conversation over a minute or so, try to seat yourself at eye level. You will both be more comfortable.

Q. How can I assist someone who is blind?

A. First of all, announce yourself - let them know who you are. Just because someone is blind, don't assume they need assistance. Many people who are blind live totally independent lives. Let them know that you are willing to help if assistance is necessary. If you are to lead them, point your hand to the floor, then bend your arm at the elbow 90 degrees. The person who is blind will grasp your arm and follow. Walk as you usually would - informing them of upcoming obstacles, steps or rises or falls in elevation. If the person is using a service dog, do not pet or in any way distract the dog while in harness. They are at work and their owner needs their full attention.

Q. How can I communicate with someone who is deaf?

A. Most people who are deaf are fairly independent. The main difficulty here is communication. Many people who are deaf communicate via sign language - American Sign Language, or ASL. ASL differs from spoken language in that it is visual rather than auditory and is composed of precision hand shapes and movements. Learning ASL would be a great asset when working with the deaf and hard of hearing. One can usually communicate with body language or writing. Do not assume that all people who are deaf can read lips. Be patient. Communication between the hearing and the hearing impaired may take considerable time.

Q. What is the difference between paraplegia and quadriplegia?

A. Paraplegia and quadriplegia are generally the result of a spinal cord injury. Quadriplegia is the result of an injury to the spinal cord in the area of the first to seventh cervical vertebra. Paraplegia is a spinal cord injury to the thoracic or lumbar region of the spine. One with paraplegia usually has good