axel springer_diversity & inclusion

Disability Etiquette

a workplace guide _



» Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn't mean he lacks vision... We all have ability. The difference is how we use it. «

- Stevie Wonder

content_

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introduction _

It's not what you think it is.

15% of people worldwide have a disability (WHO, 2011). That's more than one billion!

We created this guide to:

- Build empathy and a sense of togetherness with people with disabilities.
- Spread knowledge and raise awareness about disabilities.

 Give guidance for interacting with people who have disabilities in a way that acknowledges their condition but doesn't exclude/differentiate them.

We hope this practical guide will give you a better understanding of the large spectrum of many disabilities and will make you feel more comfortable when encountering them.

Some disabilities look like this



Some look like this



Unless you have a friend or colleague who has a disability or you have one yourself, you might not be familiar with these conditions. You might not even notice them because while some disabilities are visible, others are not.

Key figures

15% _

15% of people worldwide have a disability (WHO)

\$10.7 trillion _

Friends and families of people with disabilities are controlling more than \$10.71 trillion in annual disposable income.

(Estimation by Return on Disability)

80%_

80% of disabilities are acquired between the ages of 18 and 64. (The Valuable 500)

1.2 billion

Almost 1.2 billion people across the world live with some form of disability (based on 2020 population).

75-80%_

When asked, people with disabilities say that between 75% – 80% of their customer experiences were not meeting their expectations.

(Return on Disability)

Key terms

impairment _

Impairment describes a loss of function (psychological, physiological, anatomical).

disability_

Disability is a condition that impairs, interferes, or limits a person's ability to perform an activity, that is considered performable for a human being.

ableism_

Any behavior or mindset that devalues people with a disability. This can be intentional or unintentional.

accessibility_

Accessibility is the quality of being accessible or usable. A venue, facility, product, service, etc. is accessible if it can be used by people with disabilities (with or without the help of assisting technologies).



Disability is always contextual. Meaning: the person with an impairment might not be disabled in an environment designed for them.

disability etiquette _



Etiquette refers to a way of acting that is polite and well-mannered.

We aim to inspire you to interact with people that have disabilities in a respectful and empathetic manner. Thus, this part of the guide portrays 12 possible situations in the work context, that may help you understand how to adopt a disability etiquette.

In general, the following 5 points are a good start in building your etiquette:

- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Be aware that not everyone has the same abilities as you.
- Show empathy.
- Be patient.
- Ask the person with a disability if they need help; if so, follow their instructions.

Intention versus Impact –

why we see the need for this guide

We all try our best in everyday interactions, with friends, colleagues, or even strangers at the supermarket. Unfortunately, we don't always get them right.

We need to keep in mind that our good intentions are not a guarantee for good impact. Even when we mean well, our actions can come across as offensive or disrespectful.

Learning how people with disabilities want to be treated is the best way to ensure the impact of our interaction matches our intentions.

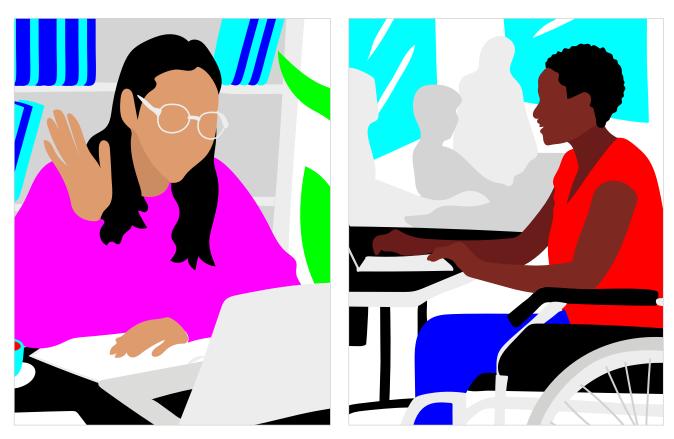
locomotor disabilities _

Seeing the person not the aid



When you encounter a person in a wheelchair, make yourself noticeable and talk to the person. Ask them if they need help and only touch the wheelchair with their permission. If the person accepts your help, ask for instructions and follow them.

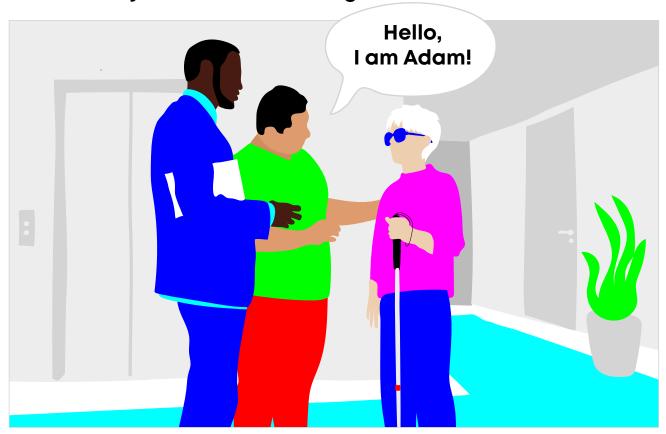
Assuming ability



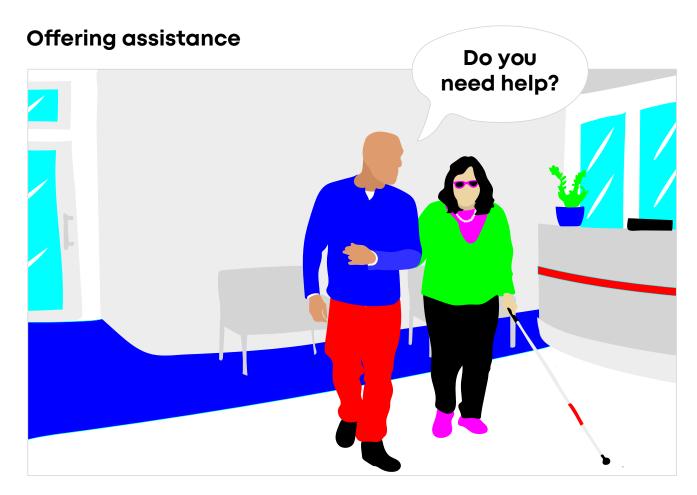
When we meet someone virtually, there is a lot we cannot see. Don't assume the other person has the same abilities as you. Hence, when you invite them to visit a building (e.g., office or meeting space) for the first time, make sure to ask if they can access the location, e.g., by using stairs. If not, offer to find a suitable alternative.

vision disabilities _

Mindful ways of communicating



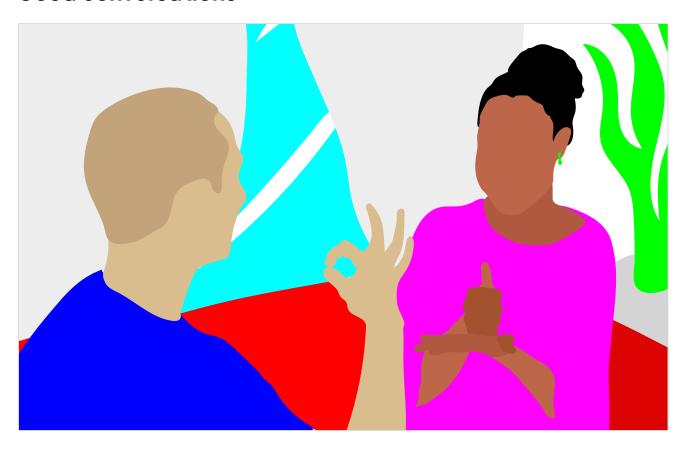
When you introduce yourself to a person who is blind, touch their arm or shoulder gently as you do so. This ensures they know you are addressing them. Also, let them know when you are leaving. Otherwise they might think you are still there.



When you think a person with vision impairment may need guidance, ask them first. If they do, allow them to hold onto your upper arm. Don't grab their hand or arm!

speech disabilities_

Good conversations



People using sign language often combine it with facial expressions and mouth movements. Never stare at them or disturb their conversation by standing between them. If talking to them, make sure you don't cover your mouth and speak directly at them so they can read your mouth movements.



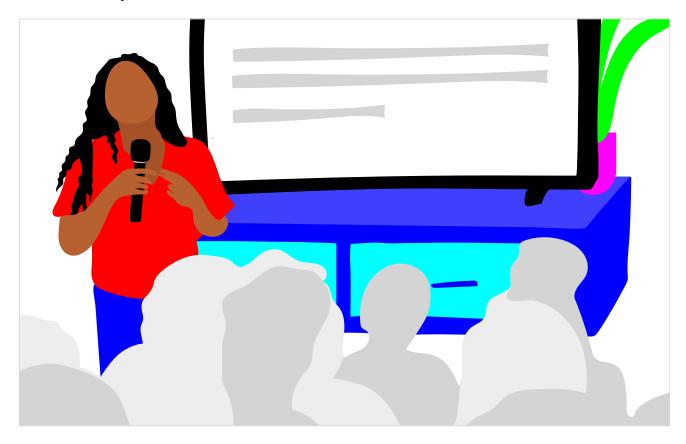
When you have trouble understanding a person, ask them patiently to repeat what they said or let them write it down. It's okay to say, "I don't understand you". To make sure that you understood correctly, ask questions about the content in a way that can be answered with a nod, a headshake, or a few words.

auditory disabilities_



When having a conversation with a deaf person, speak at a natural pace and do not cover your mouth or shout. Write down important information.

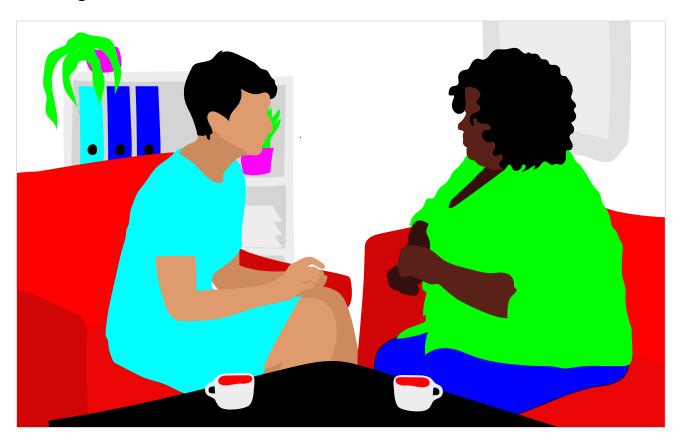
Inclusive presentation



When giving a presentation, be aware that some participants might have a vision or hearing impairment. Make it a habit to always ask if everyone can hear you well, see the slides or if adjustments are needed.

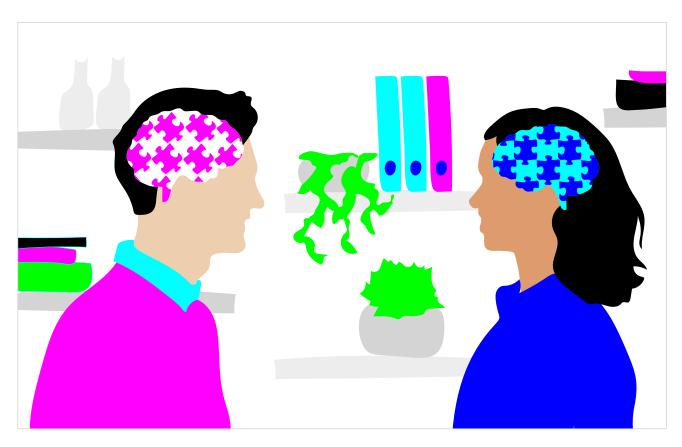
neurodiversity & mental health _

Caring for each other



One in four people might experience a mental health issue during their life (WHO,2001). If you notice a colleague behaving unusually, looking tired, distracted, disconnected, or sad, etc., approach them in an empathetic way. Describe your observation to them first and ask whether everything is okay. Ask, don't assume!

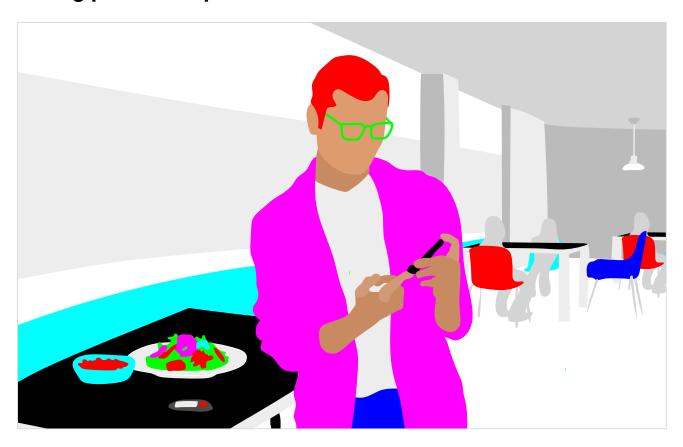
Diverse minds



You can't look into someone's brain. Neurodiversity is something to consider. Whether it's autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc., some people process information and learn differently than a neurotypical individual. This might also include a need for a quiet space to concentrate. Be respectful of those needs.

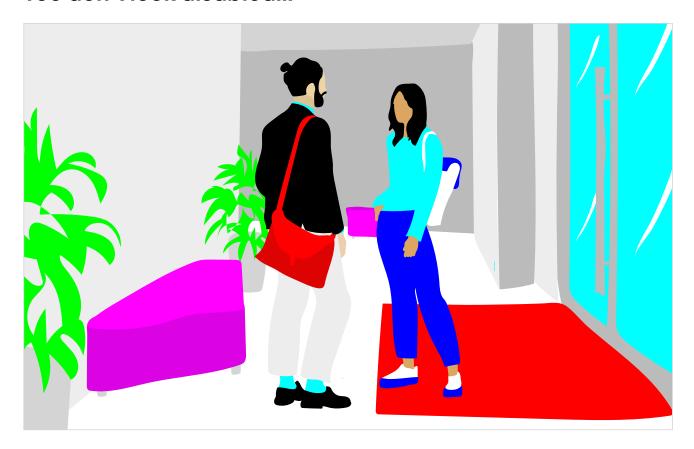
other disabilities _

Giving personal space



People with diabetes must regularly measure their blood sugar, especially before meals. They might also have to give themselves injections. Give them the space for doing so and provide support if needed/requested.

You don't look disabled...

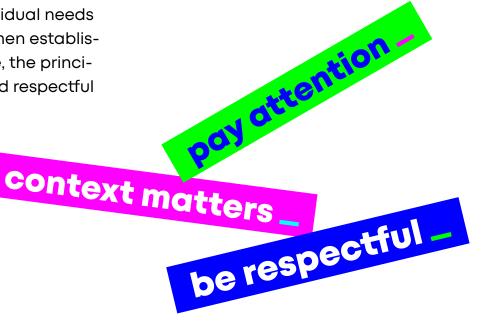


Some disabilities are hidden. Some might also be temporary. For example, cancer patients might get a disabled ID card. Don't say to someone, "But you don't look disabled!", this implicitly says that a person with a disability is ought to look differently. Even if you mean it as a compliment, it might be offensive because it neglects the person's story.

Summary

The situations portrayed in this guide show potential encounters with people with disabilities but are not exhaustive. They show that every situation is different and context matters.

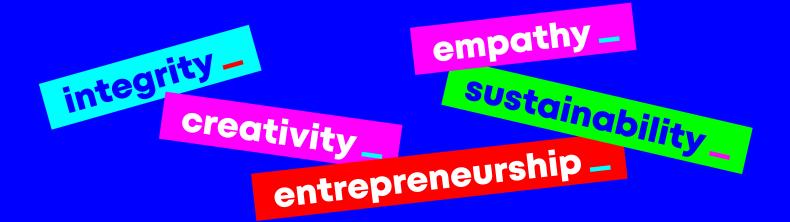
Disabilities are diverse and each person is different. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to the individual needs and wishes. In general, when establishing a disability etiquette, the principels of an empathetic and respectful approach apply.



» Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of 'You're not alone.' «

- Brené Brown

disability in the workplace __



Etiquette in the workplace

Despite being valuable and qualified employees, people with disabilities are underrepresented in the workforce. It is known that diverse teams are more innovative and creative. Hiring people with disabilities can contribute to this diversity.

To achieve higher diversity and create an environment that is inclusive for people with disabilities, consider these suggestions:

- Be approachable if anyone needs a different setting to carry out tasks to reach their full potential.
- Lead by example while interacting with people with a disability in the workplace. For e.g., communicate the accessibility of office buildings and/or flexible working conditions.

 Keep an open mind to learn about disabilities and encountering new situations.

In the context of diversity, recruiters and hiring managers play a crucial role. If you are among them, consider the following suggestions:

- Try to address disability in the job ad and highlight the company's focus on an inclusive work environment. This can encourage people with a disability to send their application.
- Recruiters (sourcers) can actively search for candidates with a disability.
- Interviewers should feel confident interviewing people with a disability.

accessibility of digital products_

more inspiration.

go2.as/design4access_



Design is not only about the looks, but also about functionality. Not everyone has the same experience online as fully abled people. It is important to design digital products that are accessible to all people.

Here are some points to consider:

- Is my content viewable for people with color blindness?
- How clickable is the content for people with a locomotive impairment?
- Can I create content that complements each other e.g., on the visual and auditive level?
- Is the message of the content communicated straightforwardly?

For more inspiration on how to make your digital products accessible, look here:

go2.as/design4access

selfreflection

disability etiquette_

learning process_

Developing your own disability etiquette is a learning process. Unless you are regularly in touch with people with disabilities, interacting with them might be something you are not familiar with

Therefore, we provide some questions to ask yourself to identify patterns, that need improvements.

Do you stare at people who use a mobility aid?

Do you think that there is something wrong with people who look or act differently than you?

Do you use words like retard or cripple to describe people with a disability?

Do you think that people with a disability don't perform as good as people without a disability?

If you answered any of these questions with yes, it means that you might hold an ableist mindset or sometimes act ableist.

Keep Learning

This guide has given you a first insight into becoming more familiar with how to interact with people with a disability and to check your own behavior.

Also, you can take this free online course, that helped us shape our own sensitivity and understanding in creating this guide:

To continue your journey, listen to what people with a disability have to say and learn from their first-hand experience.

onlinecourses.crossthehurdles.org

Check out 'Leidmedien' for information in German on media coverage of people with disabilities:

There are great activists out there who speak up about disability.

leidmedien.de

On Instagram you can follow these accounts:

In English
 @Imfnetwork _

@thevaluable500 _

@diversability _

In German @ninialagrande _

@fraugehlhaar _

@raulkrauthausen _

final word _

Thank you for taking the time to read our guide. We created it in the context of celebrating the **International**Day of People with Disabilities on December 3.

The intent was to raise awareness on the topic of disabilities, how to create better quality interactions in everyday office life, and to help you develop your own disability etiquette.

If you have any questions, ideas, or suggestions, please feel free to contact us!

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Your Axel Springer Diversity and Inclusion Team