



DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Suggestions for Direct Communication

1. Relax. If you don't understand what to say or do, let the person who has a disability help put you at ease.
2. Follow the normal flow of conversation. Don't accent the disability, unless that is the focus of your conversation.
3. Be considerate of the extra time it may take a person with a disability to say or do things. Let the person set the pace for talking or walking.
4. Speak directly to a person with a disability. Don't assume a companion or attendant to be a conversational go-between.
5. If you are talking to a person who is deaf through a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter. Do not say, "Ask him/her what hi/her name is." Say: "What is your name?"
6. If you are speaking with someone who is blind, don't grab the person – but let the person know where your arm is so he/she can hold it if they wish. If you are walking together, ask if he/she would like to know where a curb is. (Some people are so adept with a cane or a dog that this isn't necessary.)
7. If you are going to meet someone who uses a wheelchair in a public place (restaurant, library, etc.,) check to see if the chosen location is accessible before you go.

Suggestions for Persons with Speech Difficulties

1. Give whole, unhurried attention to the person who has difficulty speaking.
2. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.
3. Rather than speak for the person, allow extra time and offer assistance when needed.
4. If you have difficulty understanding, don't pretend. Repeat as much as you do understand. The person's reaction will guide you and clue you in.

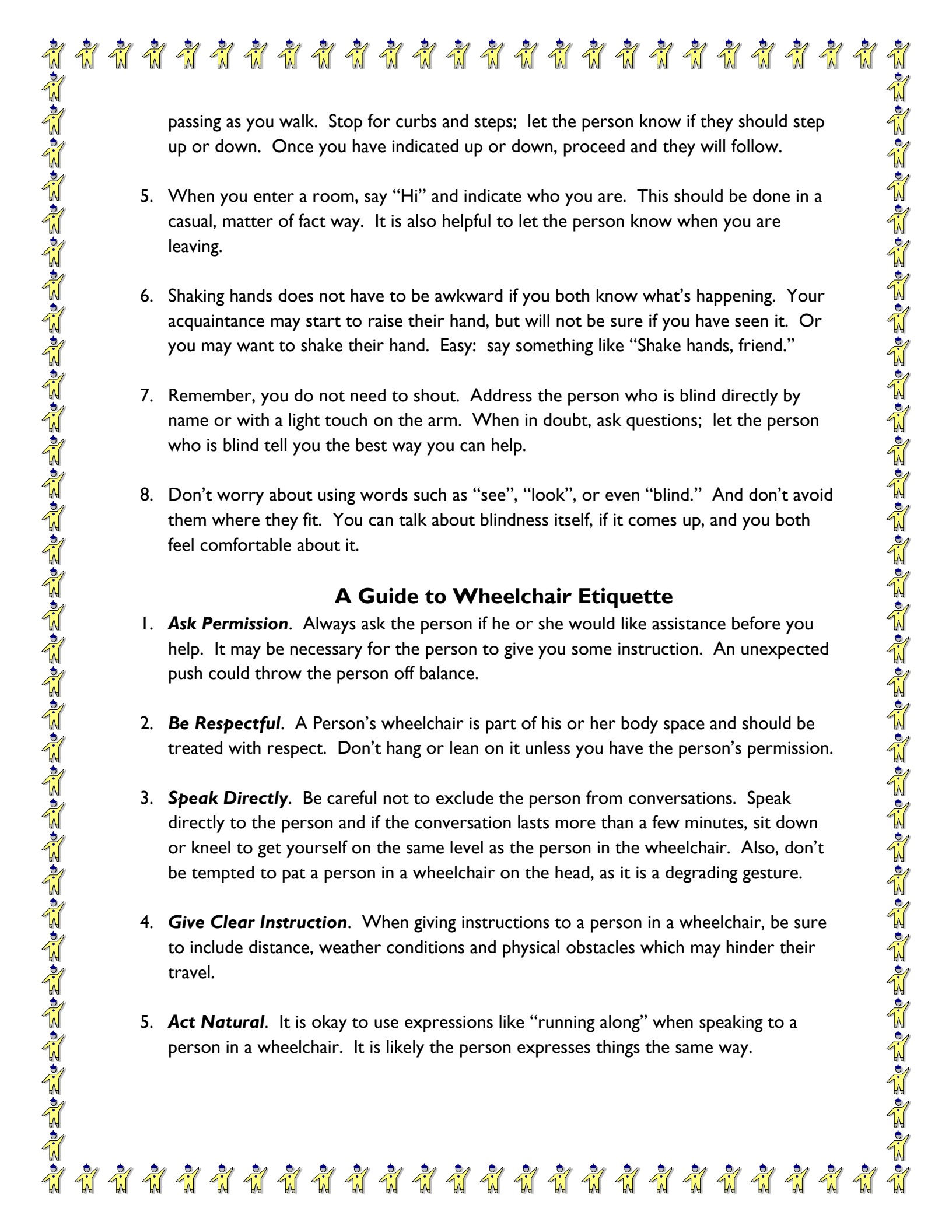


Suggestions for Persons with Hearing Loss

1. If necessary, get the person's attention with a wave of the hand, a tap on the shoulder or other signal. Move away from background noises.
2. Speak clearly and slowly, but without exaggerating your lip movements or shouting.
3. Be flexible in your language. If the person experiences difficulty understanding what you are saying, switch the words around and rephrase your statement rather than keep repeating. If difficulty persists, write.
4. Place yourself facing the light source and keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when talking in order to provide a clear view of your face. Speaking directly into a person's ear won't help and could be harmful.
5. Look directly at the person and speak expressively. The person who has a severe hearing loss will rely on your facial expressions, gestures, and body movements to assist in understanding. Use sign language if you and the person are both familiar with it. Ask what the person prefers.
6. When an interpreter accompanies a person, direct your remarks to the person rather than to the interpreter.

Suggestions for Persons with Vision Loss

1. It is appropriate to offer your help if you think it is needed but don't be surprised if the person would rather do it himself.
2. If you are uncertain how to assist, ask the one who needs assistance.
3. When addressing a person who is blind, it is helpful to call them by name or touch them gently on the arm. Don't make them guess who you are. This could be embarrassing for both of you.
4. When offering your assistance, grabbing their cane is definitely out, and so is petting their guide dog. If you are walking with a person who is blind, let them take your arm. The person may feel most comfortable walking a half step behind. Walk at your normal pace. After a few steps, ask the person if you need to speed up or slow down. It is helpful to speak casually and naturally about the terrain, objects and buildings you are

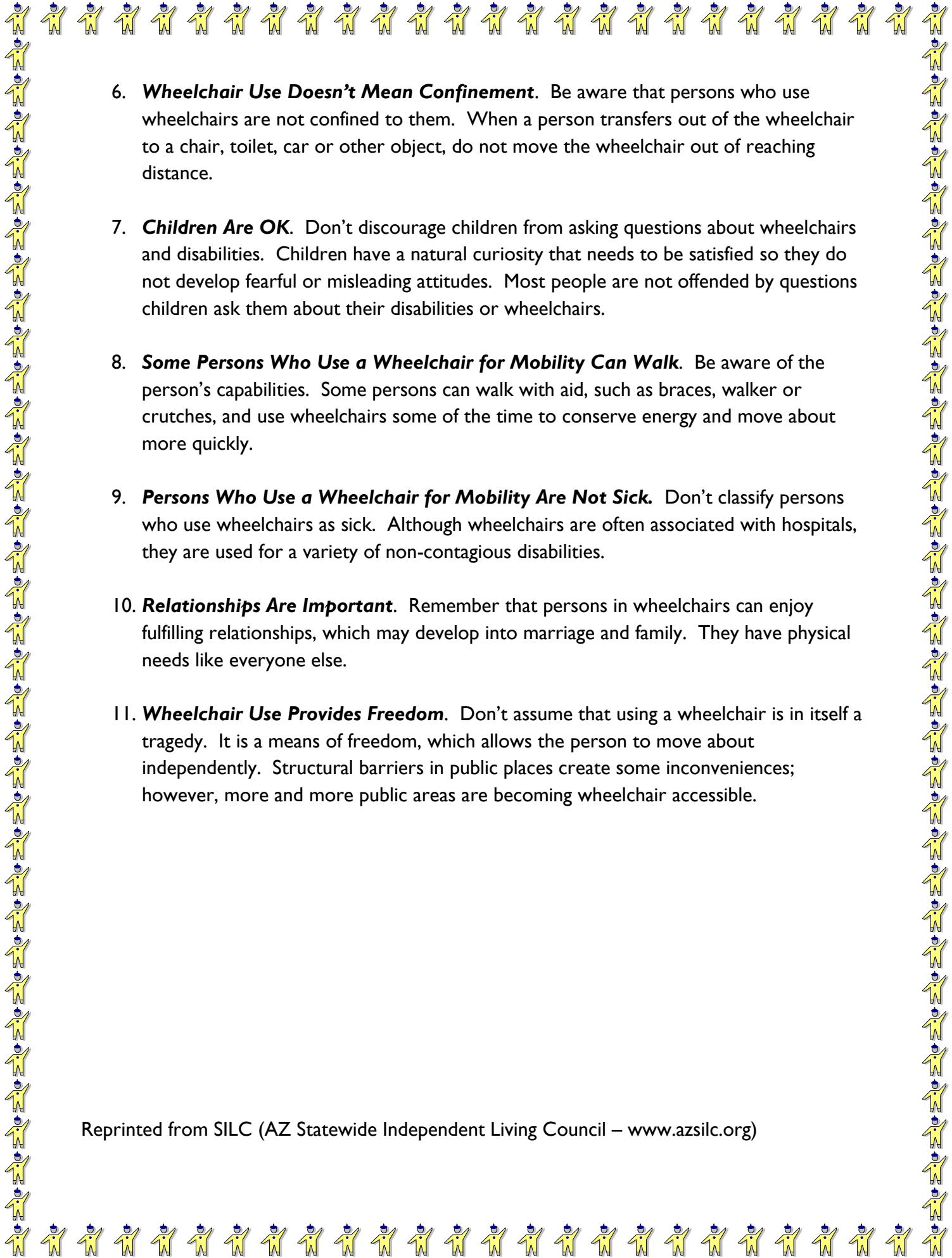


passing as you walk. Stop for curbs and steps; let the person know if they should step up or down. Once you have indicated up or down, proceed and they will follow.

5. When you enter a room, say “Hi” and indicate who you are. This should be done in a casual, matter of fact way. It is also helpful to let the person know when you are leaving.
6. Shaking hands does not have to be awkward if you both know what’s happening. Your acquaintance may start to raise their hand, but will not be sure if you have seen it. Or you may want to shake their hand. Easy: say something like “Shake hands, friend.”
7. Remember, you do not need to shout. Address the person who is blind directly by name or with a light touch on the arm. When in doubt, ask questions; let the person who is blind tell you the best way you can help.
8. Don’t worry about using words such as “see”, “look”, or even “blind.” And don’t avoid them where they fit. You can talk about blindness itself, if it comes up, and you both feel comfortable about it.

A Guide to Wheelchair Etiquette

1. **Ask Permission.** Always ask the person if he or she would like assistance before you help. It may be necessary for the person to give you some instruction. An unexpected push could throw the person off balance.
2. **Be Respectful.** A Person’s wheelchair is part of his or her body space and should be treated with respect. Don’t hang or lean on it unless you have the person’s permission.
3. **Speak Directly.** Be careful not to exclude the person from conversations. Speak directly to the person and if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit down or kneel to get yourself on the same level as the person in the wheelchair. Also, don’t be tempted to pat a person in a wheelchair on the head, as it is a degrading gesture.
4. **Give Clear Instruction.** When giving instructions to a person in a wheelchair, be sure to include distance, weather conditions and physical obstacles which may hinder their travel.
5. **Act Natural.** It is okay to use expressions like “running along” when speaking to a person in a wheelchair. It is likely the person expresses things the same way.

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6. **Wheelchair Use Doesn't Mean Confinement.** Be aware that persons who use wheelchairs are not confined to them. When a person transfers out of the wheelchair to a chair, toilet, car or other object, do not move the wheelchair out of reaching distance.
 7. **Children Are OK.** Don't discourage children from asking questions about wheelchairs and disabilities. Children have a natural curiosity that needs to be satisfied so they do not develop fearful or misleading attitudes. Most people are not offended by questions children ask them about their disabilities or wheelchairs.
 8. **Some Persons Who Use a Wheelchair for Mobility Can Walk.** Be aware of the person's capabilities. Some persons can walk with aid, such as braces, walker or crutches, and use wheelchairs some of the time to conserve energy and move about more quickly.
 9. **Persons Who Use a Wheelchair for Mobility Are Not Sick.** Don't classify persons who use wheelchairs as sick. Although wheelchairs are often associated with hospitals, they are used for a variety of non-contagious disabilities.
 10. **Relationships Are Important.** Remember that persons in wheelchairs can enjoy fulfilling relationships, which may develop into marriage and family. They have physical needs like everyone else.
 11. **Wheelchair Use Provides Freedom.** Don't assume that using a wheelchair is in itself a tragedy. It is a means of freedom, which allows the person to move about independently. Structural barriers in public places create some inconveniences; however, more and more public areas are becoming wheelchair accessible.

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