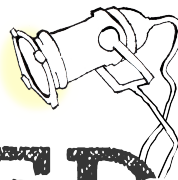


{ spotlight on ability }



UNIFIED[®] theater

TIPS ON DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

People can get uncomfortable around people with disabilities because it's unfamiliar, but the general premise "treat others how you would like to be treated" should still apply.

Always Ask

If you think a person with a disability needs help, **ask them first** before acting.

Be Sensitive

It is okay to politely ask someone for details about a disability, but recognize that it's also okay for them to not want to talk about it.

Don't Assume

Keep in mind that someone using a wheelchair is not necessarily sick or weak. Likewise, if someone doesn't use verbal language, it doesn't mean that they can't hear you or that they don't understand what you're saying.

Just Say So

Know that **it's okay to ask** people who have speech difficulties to repeat what they said if you didn't understand the first time. That's way better than just assuming they said something they didn't or never hearing their point at all.

Be Patient

If you're talking to a person with a disability, or without for that matter, **give them your full, unhurried attention**. Don't just jump in and try to speak for him or her. Let them get their point out even if it takes a bit more time.

Everyone's Entitled to Personal Space

Don't lean or hang on someone's wheelchair when talking to them - wheelchairs are an extension of their personal space. Likewise, you need your personal space. It's ok to ask someone with a disability to give you your space or to substitute a hug for a high five if that's what you prefer.

People Need Guidance not Pushing

If you're guiding a student who needs a little support getting around the stage or a rehearsal space, don't drag them or push them from behind. Think about not immediately using physical contact to help someone get from point A to point B, first **try explaining things through verbal directions**. Then, if they do need actual guiding, **let the person take your arm** so you are guiding them instead of pushing or leading them. If you're helping someone with a vision impairment, always use specifics such as "left a hundred feet" or "right two yards".

Chill Out

And lastly, relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions, such as "see you later" or "I've got to run", which seem to relate to the person's disability.

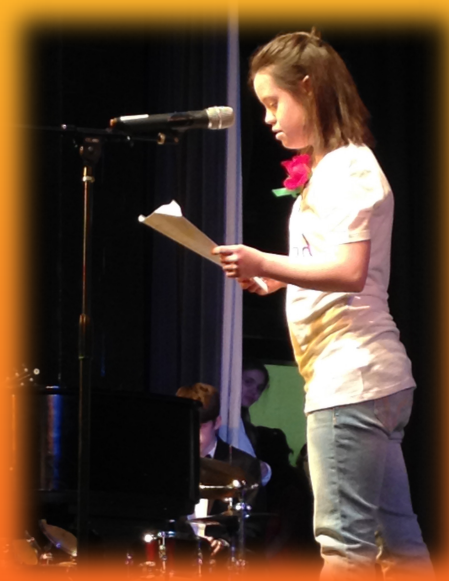


PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

*Just like we always see ability first in Unified Theater,
 we try to reflect that in the language we use.*

People first language means just what it sounds like - **putting the person before their disability.** You can think of it as an easy sentence structure rule: the person should always be said or come before the disability in the phrase. You also want to say someone **has** a disability rather than they **are** disabled.

By using people first language you're reminding yourself that a disability doesn't define a person entirely; they're a person first and a disability is just something they happen to have -- like if you have brown hair or green eyes.



People first Language



Not People first Language



Do you include kids with disabilities?

Do you include disabled kids?

She has a disability

She is disabled.

He has a brother with a physical disability.

He has a handicapped brother.

She teaches kids with developmental disabilities.

She teaches mentally retarded kids.

He uses a wheelchair.

He's confined to a wheelchair.

He has autism.

He's autistic.

She has a mental illness.

She's crazy.

My friend has a visual impairment.

My blind friend.

The boy in my scene group has a hearing impairment.

The boy in my scene group is deaf.

**Unified Theater includes kids of all abilities
 (or kids with and without disabilities).**

**Unified Theater is for special needs kids and
 regular kids.**