

Disability Myths and Myth-Busting Facts



Myth #1: People with disabilities are brave and courageous.

FACT Adjusting to a disability requires adapting to a lifestyle, not bravery and courage.

Myth #2: All persons who use wheelchairs are chronically ill or sickly.

FACT The association between wheelchair use and illness may have evolved through hospitals using wheelchairs to transport sick people. A person may use a wheelchair for a variety of reasons, none of which may have anything to do with lingering illness.

Myth #3: Wheelchair use is confining; people who use wheelchairs are “wheelchair-bound.”

FACT A wheelchair, like a bicycle or an automobile, is a personal assistive device that enables someone to get around.

Myth #4: All persons with hearing disabilities can read lips.

FACT Lip-reading skills vary among people who use them and are never entirely reliable.

Myth #5: People who are blind acquire a “sixth sense.”

FACT Although most people who are blind develop their remaining senses more fully, they do not have a “sixth sense.”

Myth #6: People with disabilities are more comfortable with “their own kind.”

FACT In the past, grouping people with disabilities in separate schools and institutions reinforced this misconception.

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Myth #7: Non-disabled people are obligated to “take care of” people with disabilities.

FACT Anyone may offer assistance, but most people with disabilities prefer to be responsible for themselves.

Myth #8: Children should never ask people about their disabilities.

FACT Many children have a natural, uninhibited curiosity and may ask questions that some adults consider embarrassing. But scolding curious children may make them think having a disability is “wrong” or “bad.” Most people with disabilities won’t mind answering a child’s question.

Myth #9: The lives of people with disabilities are totally different than the lives of people without disabilities.

FACT People with disabilities go to school, get married, work, have families, do laundry, grocery shop, laugh, cry, pay taxes, get angry, have prejudices, vote, plan and dream like everyone else.

Myth #10: It is all right for people without disabilities to park in accessible parking spaces, if only for a few minutes.

FACT Because accessible parking spaces are designed and situated to meet the needs of people who have disabilities, these spaces should only be used by people who need them.

Myth #12: People with disabilities always need help.

FACT Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help. If you would like to help someone with a disability, ask if he or she needs it before you act.

Myth #13: There is nothing one person can do to help eliminate the barriers confronting people with disabilities.

FACT Everyone can contribute to change. You can help remove barriers.

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