



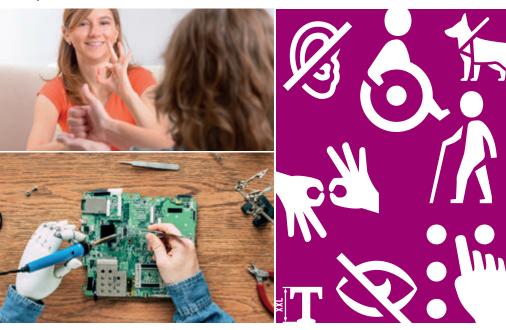
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Part 2 of the Model **People** with disabilities – a guide for co-workers



Part 2 of the Model

People with disabilities – a guide for co-workers



Table of contents

About the Go4Diversity project	4
Objectives of the guide	4
Etiquette in contact with people with disabilities	5
A co-worker with a disability	8
Types of disabilities	14
Deaf and hearing-impaired people	14
Blind or visually impaired people	22
People with motor disabilities	27
People with intellectual disabilities	33
People with autism spectrum disorders	39



About the Go4Diversity project

The Go4Diversity project is an international cooperation project implemented owing to the European Social Fund as part of the POWER Program. The project is implemented in the Polish-Belgian-Swedish partnership, and its aim is to develop effective solutions to increase the motivation of employers to employ people with disabilities in the open labour market.

The guide we provide to you is part of the Go4Diversity Model developed in the project. All components of the Model are intended to "normalise" disabilities in the workplace and increase employers' interest in employing people with disabilities. The results of scientific research conducted in different countries indicate that the success in the professional activation of people with disabilities usually depends on representatives of three groups of stakeholders: people with disabilities, employers and potential so-called "able-bodied" co-workers of persons with disabilities. It is often the attitude of the latter that determines whether a person with a disability finds their place in the workplace, and this attitude depends largely on knowledge of the subject of disability as well as its various shades.

Our guide is intended for people whose colleague is/may be a person with a disability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDE:

- » Teach the basics of etiquette important when dealing with people with disabilities.
- » Provide important information about people with disabilities in general and in the workplace.
- » Show the diversity of people with disabilities and help understand their behaviour and needs in the workplace.
- » Deepen knowledge about people with disabilities, their specificity, needs, possibilities and expectations.
- » Debunk a myth about disability and make it a normal aspect of life.



ETIQUETTE IN CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

BASIC RULES

- >> Use appropriate phrases. Replace the word "disabled" with the term "a person with a disability". Say "a person with diabetes", not "a diabetic", "a person using crutches or a wheelchair", not "a person bound to a wheelchair". If this is not necessary, do not point out anybody's disability. Do not use terms such as "sick", "a disabled person", "a sufferer" or "a victim". If you are not sure how to identify a person, ask.
- » A person with a disability is not a victim, someone who suffers or who needs sympathy. Put the person first and treat their disability as a trait that only requires the right prosthesis, medicines or facilities.
- » Be natural in contact with a person with a disability.
- » A person with a disability may require support or help, but always check whether they expect it and to what extent. It is best to ask them directly if and how to help.
- » Do not check the authenticity of equipment used by people with disabilities. For example, do not check whether a blind person's white stick really helps them find their way, or whether elbow crutches help a person with a physical disability move around etc.
- » People with disabilities who use wheelchairs, crutches, prostheses or hearing aids treat them as part of their own intimate equipment. By touching or playing with it, you interfere in their personal sphere. You certainly do not want anyone to use your toothbrush or play with it.
- » Remember that there are different types of disabilities. A person with a disability is not only a person moving in a wheelchair or using elbow crutches.



- » Avoid words that are perceived negatively, such as "a cripple" or "handicapped".
- » Not all disabilities are visible, and not everyone with a disability wants others to know about it. Not everyone also feels disabled even though they really are. Respect this and maintain confidentiality in communication and assistance.
- » Do not make decisions in the name of people with disabilities. They know best what they can and cannot do.
- » Do not be afraid to use common phrases or expressions. A person with visual impairment, like others, will say "goodbye" or "see you tomorrow". With a person using a wheelchair you can "go for a walk" or "go shopping".
- » Move the focus from disability to facilities and access for everyone. Do not pay too much attention to disability, but take it into account as appropriate. When thinking about access, do not focus only on people using wheelchairs or only on the blind, but also take into account people of short stature, without arms or with hearing impairment.
- In direct contact, try to take a position which is comfortable for both sides. For example, when talking to a person in a wheelchair, it is more convenient to do that in a sitting position. If this is not possible, try to keep a proper distance so that the person sitting in a wheelchair does not have to raise their head. Do not crouch down, stand too close or too far, do not force the other person to take an uncomfortable position, but do not take it yourself either.
- » When talking to a person with a disability, including intellectual disabilities and hearing impairment, address them directly, not their attendant or (sign language) interpreter.
- » Do not use the term "deaf-mute" for deaf people!
- » Do not use the third person form when talking about somebody in their presence. This also applies to people with disabilities!



- » Use typical gestures, e.g. a handshake, also when meeting people with disabilities. If there is something they cannot do, they will certainly tell you about it or indicate what they expect (e.g. they will have a handshake with their left hand if they do not have the right one).
- When a person with disability is accompanied by a guide dog, do not touch or provoke it. It is at work, it needs to be focused and has been taught not to interact with others while performing its duties. When not working, the owner may allow you to have contact with it, but always ask first.
- Try to approach each type of disability in an individual way. Some solutions highly appreciated by people with one type of disability are unacceptable for people with another one.
- » In conflict situations, try to be flexible, patient and open to the point of view of people with disabilities.





A CO-WORKER WITH A DISABILITY A DISABILITY IS A PERSON'S TRAIT, NOT A DEFECT

Appropriate facilities, medicines or means of communication often allow full functioning and eliminate differences in efficiency. Do you find it hard to believe? Many of us are only able to live, learn and work efficiently because we wear glasses.



A person wearing glasses also feels their limitations when they take them off.

TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DIVERSITY OF DISABILITY AND DO NOT IDENTIFY IT WITH DISEASE

Only some people with disabilities are people in need of treatment, although most of them need rehabilitation and special assistance.





PEOPLE WITH RECOGNISED DISABILITIES, COMPARED TO OTHER PEOPLE EMPLOYED UNDER AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT, HAVE ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE RIGHTS, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO COMPENSATE FOR THE FUNCTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF DISABILITY

This is ensured by the applicable law that must be respected by the employer. It includes (with some exceptions):

- » No possibility of working overtime and night shifts.
- » Shorter working time (7h / 24h, 35h / week) when a disability is severe or moderate.
- » An additional 15-minute break for gymnastics or rest when working at least 6 hours a day. Remember, sitting for hours in a wheelchair is tiring. This additional break is not a whim but a need for rest resulting from the specificity of a given type of disability. The same also applies, for example, to uncomfortable positions for people using elbow crutches, or eye strain for the visually impaired. If you are not convinced, try to be a person with a disability one day. You will see for yourself.
- Additional holiday leave: a person with a severe or moderate disability is entitled to additional holiday leave of 10 working days in a calendar year. The person is entitled to the first additional holiday leave after working in a given place for one year after being recognised disabled in one of these degrees.
- » Additional days off: a person with a severe or moderate disability has the right to be released from work for a rehabilitation stay (maximum once a year) for up to 21 working days a year, or specialist tests and treatments without the loss of remuneration. The total amount of additional leave and a rehabilitation stay shall not exceed 21 working days in a calendar year.

11 Go4 Diversity



People with a severe or moderate disability may take advantage of additional holiday leave or days off for medical examinations or rehabilitation stays once a year.



WHEN WORKING WITH A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, THINK ABOUT THEIR ACCESS TO WHAT YOU USE IN THE WORKPLACE

In addition to the workplace, you use public areas such as cupboards, a coffee machine, a microwave, toilets, rubbish bins, doors and windows. At each of these places, it is worth checking whether they are accessible to co-workers with disabilities, if they are properly marked and whether information about them has been provided clearly. Make sure you mark entrances, door numbers and escape routes correctly.



When organizing meetings, conferences or integration events take into account the diversity of not only disabilities. Ask! People have very diverse needs.



Remember that people using a wheelchair cannot get everywhere. Make sure you place the items they might need within their reach.

You are organising a conference, a company meeting or you are ordering a joint meal. Check to see if there are people with food allergies among your employees, or if there are restrictions to a place or distance. It is good practice to create a checklist taking into account architectural facilities, visual markings or diet. If in doubt, ask.

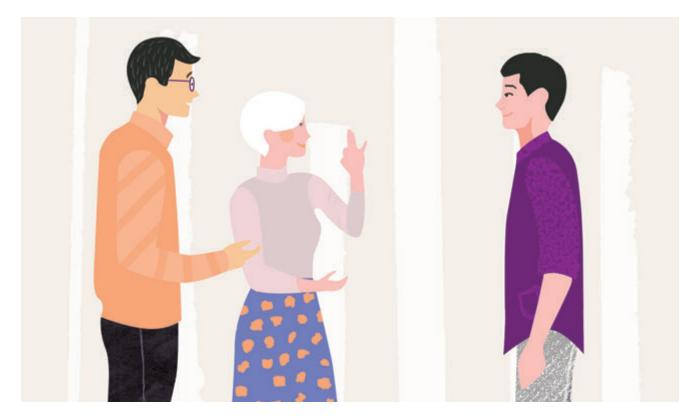


Disability requires a personalised approach. What is well perceived by one group can be a serious barrier to others.



TYPES OF DISABILITIES **DEAF AND HEARING-IMPAIRED PEOPLE**

Deaf people are not speech impaired – some of them use spoken language, others sign language, and they also use written Polish. Some can read the speaker's lips. Sometimes, however, spoken language is quite difficult to understand. It is worth asking for repetition, using gestures or written language.



When talking to a deaf or hearing-impaired person, look at them, try to speak clearly and slowly, also when a sign language interpreter helps you. Do not raise your voice when dealing with deaf people.



Remember, some people who use sign language describe themselves as Deaf (with capital "D") – they form a separate culture and language group, and they do not feel disabled.

Sign language has different grammar than Polish, and the Deaf do not always know Polish well. While speaking to them, it is worth using simple grammatical forms, also in written language, and gestures.



Always address a person with a disability directly, not their attendant or interpreter. Sometimes we do it unconsciously, but it is worth developing this habit as it greatly facilitates communication.



While speaking, deaf people tend to make loud noises, touch the interlocutor, or help themselves with gestures. Such an invasion of a private sphere may be troublesome for hearing people, therefore one should be prepared for that and try to understand it.

When speaking to a deaf person, determine the preferred and most appropriate way of communication. To ensure effective contact, always make sure you are noticed. To attract their attention, you can raise your arm, wave your hand or touch their shoulder. You can also use a light signal (e.g. in the production hall).

Do not raise your voice when dealing with deaf people. Rather, try to speak slowly and repeat the words if necessary, or change your statement into a more understandable one.

Did you know that: All nations have their sign languages. In Poland, as in most countries, there are two of them:

- » SJM is manually coded language an artificial language which is a calque of Polish verbal language, a subcode created by hearing people, often incomprehensible to the deaf.
- » PJM is **Polish Sign Language** a natural language for deaf people, different from Polish. It has its own visual-spatial grammar, making it a multidimensional language.





Among deaf/hearing-impaired people, the knowledge of Polish is poor or even very poor. Its level is believed to be A1-A2. For this reason, the range of vocabulary which those people use is limited. When communicating with a deaf/hearing-impaired person, speak clearly and avoid complicated or flowery statements.

- » Make sure the person is listening to you (they know you are talking to them) before you give them any information (tap twice on their shoulder).
- >> When speaking to a deaf person, always face them. Do not type anything on the computer or walk around the room.
- » Encourage a deaf/hearing-impaired person to let you know when there is something they did not hear or understand.
- » Your face should be in the light. There should be no strong source of light behind your back.

Remember, deaf/hearing-impaired people can communicate in many ways, e.g.:

- » Use spoken language (depending on the degree of hearing loss).
- » Use sign language (not all people with hearing impairment can do that!).
- » Read the speaker's lips (only some people).



- » Write on a piece of paper or blackboard (but for many Polish is a foreign language and they might not know it very well).
- » Write text messages or e-mails.
- » Use instant messengers.



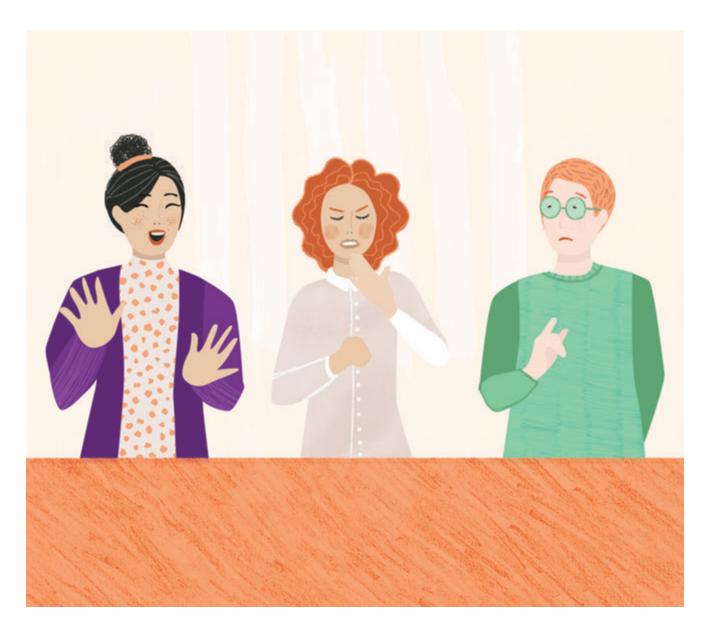
Deaf / hearing-impaired people can communicate in many ways. It is worth asking about their preferred one.





All nations have their sign languages - there is no universal one. But the specificity of sign language means that it is much easier and faster to communicate using different sign languages than spoken ones.





Sign language is multidimensional and facial expressions play a very important role in it. They indicate, for example, whether an interlocutor made an affirmative or interrogative sentence.



In the case of hearing-impaired people, it is worth ensuring:

- » proper acoustics in the room reverberation is a great enemy of people using hearing aids or implants,
- elimination of unnecessary noises that make it difficult to understand speech – e.g. by closing a window overlooking a busy street,
- » speaking at a normal pace, not too fast but not too slow either,
- » turn-taking during employee meetings, so that two or more people do not speak at the same time.

It is necessary to bear in mind that a hearing aid or implant does not mean that a person wearing it can hear perfectly well. In the case of greater noise (e.g. in a production hall), such a device may even hinder verbal communication.

Remember also that hearing-impaired people have great difficulties when talking on the phone. Try to avoid this type of communication.



BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

People with visual impairment are very diverse – some of them suffer from
visual field limitation, some do not see clearly, some are able to distinguish light and shadow,
whereas others do not distinguish specific colours. Many of them – even those without vision
– have a good sense of direction and the ability to navigate in a familiar environment.
Some use white sticks or guide dogs.



A blind employee should be informed of changes in the environment. Do not change the position of the equipment without informing them about it.



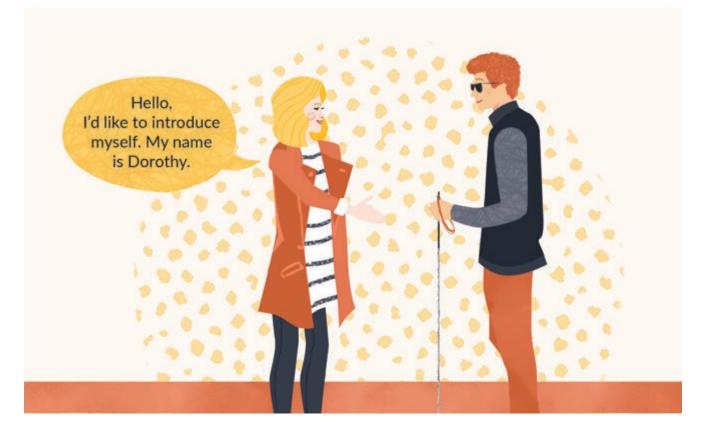
- » In general, blind/visually impaired people experience the presence of other people around them or see them, but they may not notice their interlocutor staying outside their contact zone. To get the attention of such a person, sometimes you need to tap them on their shoulder, always saying who you are and what your role is (e.g. a colleague, boss, security).
- » A blind person should be thoroughly acquainted with the environment in which they are to stay or work. They need to be shown around and become familiar with it. It is also necessary to inform them about changing the position of equipment. Do not arrange any equipment in passages and do not move the things on the blind person's desk. Do not hang any big showcases or shelves on the walls at body height.



If a blind person asks you to describe what they have on their plate, do that using the clock position e.g. At 12 o'clock you have a pork chop and at 5 o'clock – a salad.



- » A blind person may need a guide when they enter a new area you can give them your arm and help them walk through it. It is also acceptable to direct such a person's hand on the back of a chair or handrail.
- In the event of obstacles or possible injuries, one should give clear directions (do not say "Watch out" but "Stop! Stairs!" or "Watch out for the hole in the pavement").
- A white stick, just like a wheelchair, is an element of a given person's private sphere.
 Do not move or touch it. When it lies in the passage, ask the owner if it can be moved.

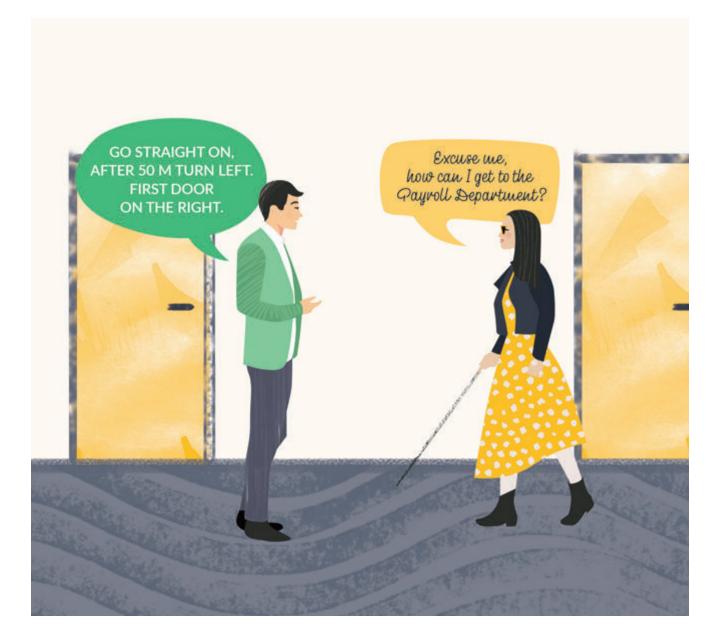


Say hello to a blind person by shaking their hand and introducing yourself.



- » Visually impaired people often use their eyesight fairly well, but they may require more readable and larger print or contrasting letters, a larger screen or better light (not very bright). Avoid shiny paper due to light reflections. Determine what facilities can be important and introduce them.
- In the case of visually impaired people, contrasts in their environment also play an important role, e.g. door or light switches contrasting with the walls, tableware contrasting with the colour of the table, or containers with different elements for assembly contrasting with the colour of the workbench.
- » Introduce yourself when meeting a blind person, even if you have been friends for a long time.
- » Signal your presence when you enter a room where a blind person sits and inform them when you leave.
- » If you want to address a blind person who is in a group of people, signal that you are talking to them, e.g. by using their name.
- » If you want to shake a blind person's hand, you do not have to wait for his or her initiative just say "I want to shake your hand."
- » Describe events which do not involve any sounds.
- > When assisting a blind person, use as many verbal messages as possible e.g. inform them about obstacles encountered on the way, describe the rooms where a person with a disability is for the first time.





If you are instructing a blind person, be sure to give specific directions which will help them reach their destination effectively without using a visual sense of direction.



PEOPLE WITH MOTOR DISABILITIES

- The group of people with motor impairment is very diverse in terms of the cause of disability and the level of functioning in everyday life.
- » Limited physical ability may be the result of an accident, illness, brain damage, disease, injuries and deformations occurring within the muscular, skeletal or nervous system.
- » People with physical disabilities are people in a wheelchair, using crutches or a prosthesis e.g. of an upper or lower limb, but also people with osteoarthritis, multiple sclerosis, spinal diseases or short stature.
- » People in wheelchairs may have very different disabilities, and thus different needs, and may require different facilities. Some of them can walk short distances, some use their hands efficiently, while others may have significant four-limb limitations. Some are very independent in moving around, others need help when travelling or getting into a car.
- > However, they always require the right space for themselves, driveways or lifts, free passage in circulation areas and a sufficient amount of space around their car in the car park. Do not block passages, clearly mark the places available and directions on how to get there.
- When dealing with a person in a wheelchair, do not touch the wheelchair or put your belongings on it. Try to talk to a person in a wheelchair while sitting, keeping eye contact during your conversation.
- » A person using a wheelchair should be given access to the workplace, or the workplace should be adapted to their needs.



Remember that people using a wheelchair cannot get everywhere. Make sure you place the items they might need within their reach.

FACILITIES FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS WILL ALSO BE HELPFUL FOR PEOPLE WITH SHORT STATURE.



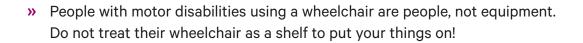
Having a lift is not everything. It is worth taking care of other infrastructure elements. What seems accessible to you can be an insurmountable barrier for others.



- » Provide access to places of daily use tables, cabinets, office and kitchen equipment, locks, door handles and door release buttons, identification cards, intercoms and light switches.
- » A person using crutches or a walking stick may require additional handrails. If they are not there, your help e.g. giving them your arm, can be useful. Such assistance may also be needed in case of slippery floors or stairs. Ask if anyone needs help before you give it.



Having a lift is not everything. Make sure that access to it is not problematic.



» Keep eye contact with the person you are talking to. Do not talk above their head.



A wheelchair is not a hanger for everyone – treat it as a personal item.

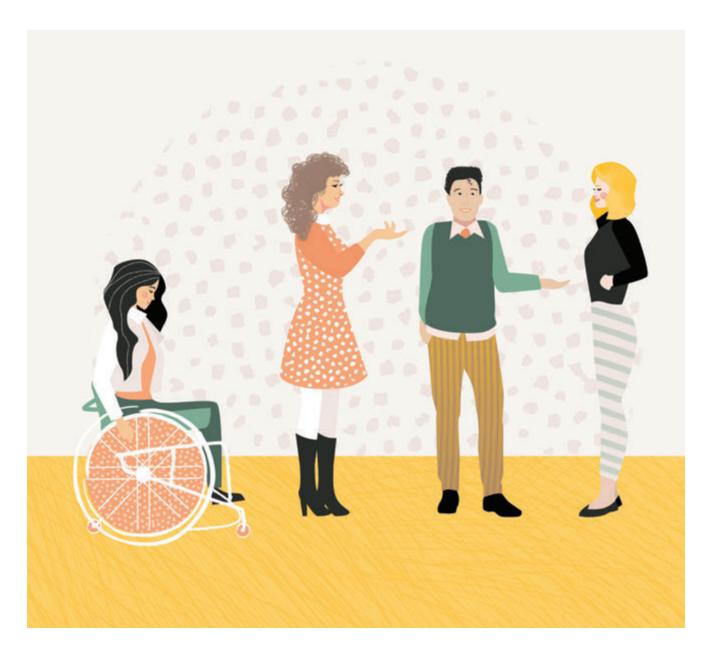






When talking to a person in a wheelchair, try to take a sitting position and keep eye contact during the conversation.





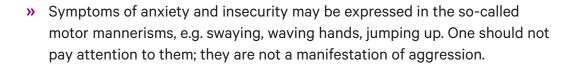
Do not talk above the heads of people with disabilities. Try to make each of the interlocutors take a comfortable position.



PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

- Intellectual disability is not a specific disease entity. It is a heterogeneous group of disorders of various aetiologies, clinical picture and course.
- Intellectual disability more or less limits the fulfilment of social requirements, which applies not only to the cognitive sphere of man but to all spheres of their functioning.
- » By employing people with intellectual disabilities, one can obtain engaged, grateful and dedicated employees and colleagues. At the same time, they are sincere, often fantastic people who live their work and treat their workplace as their second home.
- > However, you have to bear in mind that when employing a person with intellectual disabilities you need to be prepared for everything – both positive and negative situations. Cooperation with such people requires understanding, learning the specificity of their behaviour and predicting possible unusual situations. One should also remember that these people have emotional problems and may cause unusual situations when dealing with colleagues or customers.
- Three good tips for success include getting to know the specificity of a given disease, patience and an inner desire to give a chance to a person with such a disability.
- People with intellectual disabilities often act at work and in everyday life in an established and familiar order; remember that changing the environment or order may require some attention and time to get used to that.

Remember that a person with an intellectual disability may feel uneasy in new situations. Tell them about changes in advance. Do not surprise them.



» However, if motor mannerisms become worse, it may mean that the situation is too difficult for a person with an intellectual disability; in this case suggest moving to a quieter place.



Use short, clear and specific phrases. Give examples. Do not use flowery language.





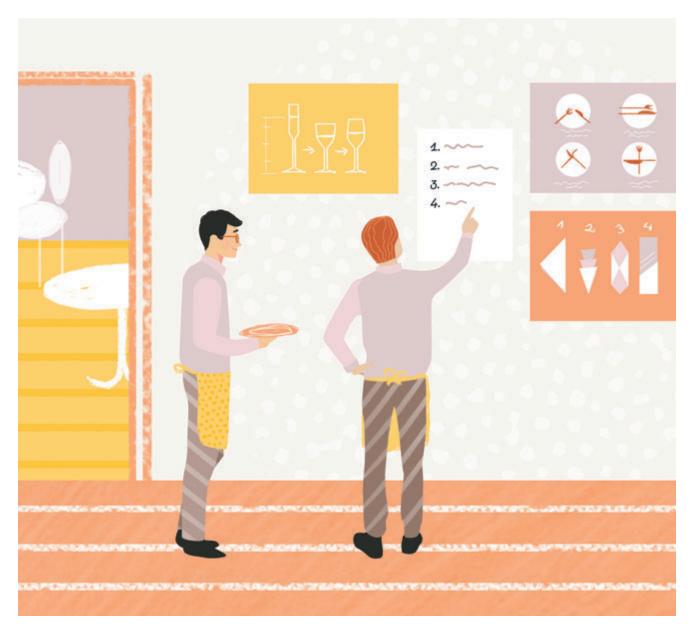
- In the workplace, it is worth introducing pictograms to mark important machines, devices or equipment. This can help people with intellectual disabilities operate them. It is also a good idea to write different instructions or regulations in a simplified language – this should help people with intellectual disabilities to become acquainted with their content.
- » A lot of attention should be paid to effective communication.
- Speak clearly and always use "Mr" and "Mrs" forms, unless a person with an intellectual disability clearly asks you to address them by their first name.
- » Do not use childish language or patronise people with intellectual disabilities.
- » Adjust the pace, complexity and vocabulary of your speech to the person you are talking to.
- » People with disabilities have their own private sphere. Touching, patting them on their back or grasping their hand without permission can be unpleasant.
- » There can also be moments when a person with an intellectual disability invades your private sphere. If you do not wish them to do so, make it clear.





People with intellectual disabilities behave at work and in everyday life according to an established and familiar order. If you want to change this order, inform them about it in advance and give them enough time to get used to a new situation.





It is a good idea to write different instructions or regulations in a simplified language – this should help people with intellectual disabilities to become acquainted with their content.



- » If you do not understand something, ask the person to repeat it.
- » Be patient you will not always get the answer to your question immediately.
- » Use short, clear and specific phrases. Give examples.
- » Avoid abstract concepts, jokes, irony, ambiguities, comparisons and metaphors.

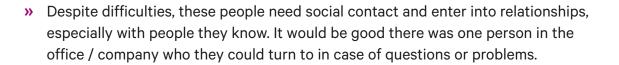


People with intellectual disabilities are perfect at performing monotonous and repetitive work.



PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

- » After introducing some changes in terminology, today we use the term of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as a diagnostic category.
- The number of people who were diagnosed with development disorders in their childhood (autism, Asperger syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder) and with ASD in their adulthood is still growing.
- » According to epidemiological data, about 1 in 100 people are diagnosed with ASD.
- » The term "spectrum" means varied intensity and influence of the main symptoms on people's functioning: difficulties in social relations (in establishing and maintaining them), in verbal and non-verbal communication, repetitive patterns of behaviour, activities and interests.
- » We distinguish 3 degrees of ASD based on the scope of assistance provided: from support mainly in the field of communication, through significant and very significant support.
- » Some autistic people have the so-called "islands of ability" which may refer to functions such as memory, arithmetic, foreign languages or artistic abilities.
- » ASD is a distinguished syndrome of disorders that often coexists with others, most often with an anxiety state.
- In the group of people diagnosed with ASD there are individuals with intellectual disabilities and with average or above average IQ. Therefore, they are called "low-functioning" and "high-functioning" people with autism.
- » About 42% of people with ASD aged 18-24 obtain higher education. They are also independent and able to take up employment. They are able to get qualifications soughtafter by employers and demonstrate diligence in performing their professional tasks.



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- » The behaviour of people with ASD that attracts attention, especially at work, includes adherence to strictly established rules, rituals, and even patterns.
- » It is also possible to observe a lack of understanding of metaphors, mental shortcuts, gestures and non-verbal communication; if we end a meeting, we must clearly state it.



Messages should be explicit.



- When establishing a task to perform, you need to be explicit about. You should say: "This is a set of data. Please enter them in the table and analyse them." Instructions such as "Please find the sources of data and present them in tables for comparison" do not usually work. It is better to provide the employee with all the necessary sources so that they could concentrate on data correlation and analysis.
- » Reactions and behaviours of people with ASD that require understanding of other people at work:
 - FASCINATION, e.g. with computer games, comics, maps, databases etc.
 Employees with ASD may display exceptionally persistent interest in a subject, issue or task; this can be troublesome but also useful in professional work.
 - FIXATION, i.e. excessive concentration on objects, situations, events, persistent analysis; suppressing these reactions and behaviours requires a clear and specific message that will shift employee's attention to another task.
- » While interacting with people with ASD, it is worth taking into account individual differences in establishing and maintaining contact and sensitivity to stimuli:
 - people who are insular and unable to cope with human relationships do not seek contact; they avoid eye contact, maintain a physical distance and the only thing they expect is the information about the task (substantive, formal, specific and explicitly stated, such as: "Sort the letters according to the dates in a binder and then you can go home");
 - people who are passive do not initiate contact but respond when someone else does it;
 - people who are active, open and eager to establish contact may display the following behaviours: poor, exaggerated or sometimes unsuitable for a given situation expression, avoiding or persistently maintaining eye contact, evaluating or sometimes overinterpreting interlocutor's behaviour but without bad intentions.



- » people with sensory hypersensitivity need silence and reduced stimuli, whereas those who are not sensitive can stimulate themselves. Self-stimulation such as rocking, hand flapping, rotating objects or other stereotypical movements intensify in a situation of stress or lack of a specific task. Sometimes it is necessary to ensure the stability of environment, e.g. not changing the arrangement of items on the desk.
- » To make it easier for a co-worker with ASD to function in a team, learn about their specific behaviour and communication; adapt your style to his or her possibilities as well as needs.



For a person with ASD, it is difficult to track the changing facial expressions of the interlocutor and assign any meaning to them. Limit your expressions, speak clearly, calmly and substantively.





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