



# Basic Cultural Competency for Interacting with People with Disabilities

For Members,  
Visitors and Friends of  
First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego  
2013-14

Remember, people with disabilities are attending First UU Church for the same reason that everyone else attends...to build community, nurture their spiritual growth and act on values to help heal the world.

## Don't make assumptions:

- **People with disabilities are the best judges of what they can or cannot do.**
- People with their own adaptive equipment are the best judges of what their equipment can or cannot do.
- Some people using equipment may not be completely comfortable or familiar with it. Others are using equipment they use every day and are very familiar with its capabilities. Do not assume you know who is who.
- Many people have disabilities that are not visible or are not obvious. Do not assume that someone does or does not have a disability.

## Ask before you help:

- Just because a person appears to have a disability, don't assume they need help.
- If the person with a disability wants help, let that person tell you how you can be helpful *and do what they request*.
- Don't pull or push a door that a person with a disability is touching without asking first; you may knock them off balance.

## Speak to the PERSON:

- Talk to the person with the disability, not to an aide or interpreter.
- Remember that this is a *person*, and talk to a person with a disability as you would to someone without a disability.
- Use "person first" language, "people with disabilities" not "the disabled."

## Be sensitive about physical contact:

- Do not grab someone with a disability; you may knock them off balance.
- Do not lean on or touch someone's adaptive equipment; it is part of their personal space.
- **Do not pet a service animal without asking the owner first. It can distract the animal from its work. Never play with a service animal.**

## Avoid "victim" thinking:

- Remember that to a person with a disability, their life is "normal" to them.

**FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITIES  
THE  
CIVIL RIGHTS  
MOVEMENT  
IS NOT OVER**