

People First Language



We at BIMT want our guests (“hikers”) to know they are the most valuable and important people on the tour. People first language aims to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities. To prevent unintentionally offending someone, we have provided a list of terms to avoid.

Offensive Terms

✓ Handicapped	✓ Diseased
✓ Disabled	✓ Wheelchair bound
✓ Retarded	✓ Emotionally disturbed
✓ Crippled or quadriplegic	✓ Normal or healthy kids
✓ Deaf and dumb	✓ Dwarf or midget
✓ Mentally different	✓ A “patient”
✓ Autistic	✓ A “case” or “client”
✓ Epileptic	✓ Slow
✓ Infirm	✓ “suffers from”
✓ Unfortunate	✓ “victim of”

Offensive Phrases

Also, here are a few ways you can respectfully reword phrases

- Instead of “a disabled person,” say “a person with disabilities”
- Instead of “a special needs person,” say “a person with special needs”

- Instead of “wheelchair-bound person,” say “a person in a wheelchair”
- Instead of “autistic person,” say “a person with autism”
- Instead of “dwarf or midget,” say “a person of short stature
- Instead of “normal or healthy kids,” say “typical kids or kids without disabilities”

The key thing to remember is to put the person first. They are not their disability; they are first and foremost a child of God and a person with feelings and emotions just like you.

General Tips for Communicating

- When offering assistance to a person with a disability, wait until your help is accepted and then ask how you can best assist them.
- Address them just as you would any other person.
- It is acceptable to offer a handshake during introductions even if the other person has limited mobility in their hand or an artificial limb.
- Do not alter your voice or speak in a simplified, childish manner.
- If an interpreter is present, speak directly to the person and not their interpreter.
- Do not lean on anyone’s wheelchair.
- Do not interact with service animals without asking first.

- If the person with whom you are speaking has a visual disability, make sure you identify yourself and any people who may be accompanying you.
- Be patient if the person with whom you are speaking has trouble understanding you. Do not get frustrated or raise your voice in an unpleasant way.

Preventing & Handling Uncomfortable Situations

- Some signs of overstimulation include: yelling, screaming, crying, extreme fidgeting, fearful looks and/or aggressive behavior. If this happens, redirect them to a quieter location and if needed, find your guest's chaperone/guardian.
- If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, do not be afraid to ask for help.
- Maintain your composure and speak kindly at all times.
- Never go off alone with one of the guests. Make sure you maintain physical boundaries and don't in any way encourage a guest to view you as their boyfriend/girlfriend.

Beatitudes for Friends of People with Disabilities

Blessed are you who take the time to listen to difficult speech, for you help me to know that if I persevere I can be understood

Blessed are you who never bid me to “hurry up” and take my tasks from me and do them for me, for I often need time rather than help.

Blessed are you who stand beside me as I enter new and untried ventures, for my failures will be outweighed by the times I surprise myself and you.

Blessed are you who asked for my help, for my greatest need is to be needed.

Blessed are you who understand that it is difficult for me to put my thoughts into words.

Blessed are you who, with a smile, encourage me to try once more.

Blessed are you who never remind me that today I asked the same question two times.

Blessed are you who respect me and love me as I am, and not like you wish I were.