



TOOLBOX STRATEGIES

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STRATEGIES

- 1. Some things that people with disabilities want others to know:**
 - **I am not my disability. I am a person, just like you, who happens to have something different about myself- Person First philosophy.**
 - **Instead of focusing on DIS-abilities, focus instead on CAPabilities, the gifts each of us brings to the table.**
 - **All people have similar needs: to be loved, respected, accepted just the way we are, have friends, be part of a community, make difference/contribute, have choices, make decisions, be in charge of own life as much as possible. Want to be needed.**
 - **Each person is unique- cannot make generalizations based on disability diagnosis. Each of us has innate worth and dignity, but differ in our needs and in circumstances. People with disabilities may need specific types of supports or accommodations. And each of us has our own handicaps and challenges.**
 - **Words and labels hurt.**
 - **No matter the level of functioning, each person deserves to be treated with great respect and dignity.**

- 2. Checklist of information which would be helpful to know about the person:**
 - **Diagnosis of disability**
 - **Who knows the person best? Contact information about caregiver**
 - **Age**
 - **Communication style**
 - **What to expect**
 - **What NOT to do**
 - **Person's likes and dislikes**
 - **Person's spiritual needs and experiences**
 - **Medications which may indicate specific issues to take into account**

3. GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Wait to be asked before touching.
 - Relate to person based on chronological age, not ability level.
 - Don't assume starting points or reasons for behaviors.
 - Listen carefully- don't interrupt- ask questions- ask to repeat or reexplain if you don't understand- WAIT for answers. Recognize when too many words have become overwhelming.
 - Don't speak quickly- use normal tone of voice.
 - Use visuals or hands-on activities.
 - Use short, open-ended questions- what can I do for you? What are you feeling?
 - Interact directly with patient, don't talk about person to caregiver.
 - Tell me your story.
 - Establish and maintain eye contact.
 - Warm greeting with smile.
 - Meet person where h/she is.
 - Plan just to be Present without an agenda.
4. Ideas for strategies for specific disabilities-(recognizing that each person has a unique profile)
- Developmental Disabilities- Cognitive- focus on concrete, exs, demonstration, simple language-help person anticipate.
 - Down Syndrome- concrete, step by step.
 - Autism- check with caregiver for what works- unique responses- shadowing, limit verbal.
 - Language Impairments- listen carefully for meaning behind words- Wed. for Fri. or September-short- concrete examples- use drawing, visual.
 - Asperger Syndrome-don't expect social, talk about interests, use short verbalizations, great memory.

- **ADHD- short and sweet, breaks in discussion.**
- **Physical Disability- meet person at his/her level- ask if wants help, if so-how? Cerebral Palsy- use of assistive technology, communication board, computer.**
- **Deaf- keep face and mouth visible, check preferred communication method. Use sign language when appropriate or gestures.**
- **Learning Disabilities- allow for additional processing and response time, ask person about preferred learning style, use multi-modality approaches.**
- **Depression- listen, be present, I'm here for you. Arrange for community support, ongoing.**
- **Anxiety – cognitive therapy, reminders of past experience when person got through it.**
- **Tourette Syndrome- reduce stress to reduce ticking behavior.**
- **Traumatic Brain Injury- short visits to deal with fatigue and lack of stamina- don't expect memory, put in writing for future reference.**
- **Vision Impairment- enlarged print, use of tape recorder or computer, ask before helping.**

5. Spiritual needs of those with disabilities:

- **Same as anyone else.**
- **Sometimes may need different pathways to experience Divine presence, sense of holiness. using actual objects for symbols (small Torah), drawing, using concrete and shortened language.**
- **Singing, humming, chanting, drumming, one word or phrase. "Joyful noise" but sometimes "still, small voice."**
- **Touch, ritual, movement, music, dance, painting, sculpting, poetry.**