

WRONG ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DISABILITY

What exactly is an assumption? It is something that is accepted as true without any real proof. Sometimes assumptions end up being true. Often assumptions are not true. When they end up not being true, they can lead to trouble, hurt feelings, embarrassment, and more. I am sure you have heard of the following adage about what happens when we assume things. If not, I have edited it a bit below. I am sure you can decode the “A” word below.

It’s time to address some of the many wrong assumptions that exist surrounding disability. Trust me, there are no shortages of them in the world that we live in. So, check out the following list. Hopefully, we can challenge some false beliefs that you have or at minimum help you from stepping in “it.”

30 Wrong Assumptions

1. People with disabilities can not make their own decisions.
2. You can easily tell if someone is disabled just by looking at them.
3. Someone who uses a wheelchair is also intellectually and developmentally disabled.
4. Someone who uses a wheelchair cannot walk or move at all.
5. Someone who cannot speak verbally cannot comprehend what you are saying.
6. Someone who chooses not to speak verbally cannot.
7. I should speak to someone with a disability as I would speak to a child.
8. There is no point in teaching someone with an intellectual or developmental disability because they won’t understand or retain what they are being taught.
9. People with disabilities always need our help there is no point in asking permission to help.
10. A person’s disability completely defines who they are.
11. People with disabilities cannot work.
12. People with disabilities do not want to work.
13. People with disabilities would not make very good employees.
14. People with disabilities who are successful in life are superheroes or superhuman.
15. It does not matter if I park in a handicapped parking space if there are others still available.
16. People with disabilities live in constant pain or is always sick.
17. People with disabilities are all the same.
18. People with disabilities do not have sexual or romantic needs.
19. Having a disability prevents intimacy.
20. Disability is a tragedy and should always be pitied.
21. Disability is always a burden.

22. Disability is an abnormality that needs to be corrected.
23. People with intellectual or developmental disabilities get a free pass to heaven from God.
24. People with disabilities can not lead a productive life.
25. People with disabilities need to be treated differently because they are “special”.
26. I should avoid people with disabilities because we have nothing in common.
27. Having a disability makes life not worth living.
28. If someone with a disability has an aid with them, I should simply talk to the aid and not the person with the disability because they won't understand me.
29. People with disabilities are not able to be leaders.
30. People with disabilities are dumb.

A few words of wisdom when it comes to disability etiquette and assumptions.

- People with disabilities are people first.
- We are all more alike than different.
- Always assume competence.
- Treat others the way you would want to be treated.
- It is okay to ask.
- Smile don't stare.
- Start with hello!
- Treat adults like adults.
- Ask before you help.
- Speak directly to people with disabilities.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. Feel free to share your own with us about an assumption you have encountered. We would love to add to the above list. Make sure you share this list with others as we hope to dispel some of the hurtful assumptions that exist around disability.