

# **I am a person first and I have a disability**

When you deal with me  
treat me just as you would any other person—  
with respect and courtesy.

Please look me in the eye,  
and speak directly to me, not to my companion.

I am used to living with my disability  
but I appreciate your help when I need it.

If I have trouble seeing or hearing or moving easily  
please remember that it is my eyes  
or ears or muscles that do not work  
as well as yours.

Beyond that, I have the same  
needs and wants,  
hopes and desires  
as you do.

I have problems and fears, just like you  
but I also have strengths  
that sometimes even I don't recognize.

I need to talk to you about those abilities  
and I need you to listen.

But most of all, I need you to remember—  
I am a person first!

—*author unknown*

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