



## **Sensitivity to Vision Loss: How to Best Assist a Person Who Has Vision Impairment**

### **Please Do...**

1) Introduce or identify yourself and be sure to use the person's name so he/she knows you are speaking to him/her.

2) When others enter or leave the room, tell the person so he knows who is in or out of the room.

3) Inform the person about what is going on in the room or nearby surroundings so the person may be better able to make sense of the nearby sounds.

4) Use a normal tone of voice, and speak directly to the person.

5) Continue to use such words as "see" and "look". There is no need to substitute the words "hear" or "listen". For example, it is appropriate to say "watch television", not "listen to television".

### **Please Don't...**

It's not courteous to ask a person with vision impairment to guess your name or assume he recognizes your voice.

There is no need to speak any louder than usual.

There is no need to modify your speech or word choice except when giving directions. See #18.

## Sensitivity to Vision Loss (continued)

### **Please Do...**

#### **When Walking**

6) Encourage the individual to hold onto your arm, above your elbow.

7) When walking away from a person even for a few seconds leave them in contact with something stable such as a wall, chair, or table.

8. Explain environmental sounds, changes in the walking surface, etc., so that the person will not be surprised or startled.

9. Pause before stepping onto a change in ground surface or before going up or down stairs or a curb.

#### **When Pushing Someone in a Wheelchair**

10) Talk to the person. Inform the individual of any upcoming changes in terrain or direction, explain the source of any loud or unexpected noises, and comment on ordinary environmental sounds.

#### **When Assisting Someone to Sit**

11) Approach a chair/sofa directly from the front. Place one of the person's hands on the seat or back of the chair so that the person can clear the seat, check for arms on the chair, and sit. If balance or unsteadiness is a concern, provide more assistance as needed.

### **Please Don't...**

Don't push or pull a person by the arm or hand.

Don't leave a person with a vision impairment standing in free space. People can feel disoriented and uncomfortable left in open space.

Don't begin to push the chair without informing the person that you are about to move.

Don't help the person to a chair that rocks or moves without letting him know what movement will happen when he sits.

## Sensitivity to Vision Loss (continued)

### **Please Do...**

#### **When Serving or Dining**

11) Maintain consistency in where the person sits in the dining room.

12) Maintain consistency when setting the table so that commonly used items are always in the same location.

13) Provide the person with appropriate utensils, high-sided plates or bowls, dycem mats, etc., if needed to maximize the individual's independence.

14) Use color contrast between the color of the food, the color of the plate and the color of the table top. This helps the dining experience to be more "seeable" for individuals with vision impairment.

15) Tell the person what is on the table that may not already be on his plate: butter, water, drinks, salt, etc.

16) Tell the person what is being served, and it's location on the plate. For example, "The chicken is directly in front of you, the potatoes are on your left and the carrots are on your right." Or use "clock face" to describe the location if the person knows how a clock looks. For example, the chicken is at 6 o'clock, the carrots are at 3.

### **Please Don't...**

Don't assume the person can't feed himself or cut his own food.

Don't assume the person can identify food and drink from the aroma.

## Sensitivity to Vision Loss (continued)

### Please Do...

17) When at a restaurant ask if the person would like you to read the menu aloud. If the person reads Braille, ask for a Braille menu.

### When Giving Directions

18) Use clear words and phrases that the person will understand. For a person with some vision, use visual landmarks: "Turn left at the blue mailbox." Use auditory cues as needed: Tap the handrail as you say, "the handrail is on your left."

### When Working

19) Tell the individual if you must move things!

20) Give directions as clearly as possible. Use phrases, item names, and concepts you are certain the person understands. Directional words/phrases include: left, right, in front of, in back of, etc.

21) Adapt activities and work materials as needed. Control for glare and use sound sources, jigs, textures, task lighting, etc.

### Please Don't...

Don't point down the hall and say "it's just over there".

Don't move or remove anything from in front of a person without saying what you need to move and where you put it!

Be careful that you don't confuse the person with left/right directions. If you are facing the person, your left becomes his/her right!

## Sensitivity to Vision Loss (continued)

### **Please Do...**

#### **Safety Considerations**

22) As much as possible, the furniture should be kept in the same place every day.

23) Doors should either be open all the way or closed all the way.

24) Consider locking and/or alarming doors that lead to descending stairs.

25) Keep corridors and all common areas free of clutter, especially in frequently traveled areas.

26) Secure scatter rugs to the floor so they do not slide or turn up at the corners. Replace worn and frayed carpets with low pile carpet.

27) Use matte finish paints and floor polishes.

### **Please Don't...**

Moving furniture could be very disorienting to the individual, and is a real safety hazard. The person will need to be reoriented to the space.

Leaving doors ajar is a safety hazard.

Never leave doors that lead to descending stairs open!

Fringe on rugs is a tripping hazard.

Avoid floor cleaners that add shine or gloss, or make the surface slippery.

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For additional resources, please visit: <http://www.focusonvisionandvisionloss.org>