



## Talking Points on How to “End the Awkward”

Learn one or more of the talking points below so you can respond to questions on how to “end the awkward.”

### *10 Seconds or Less Talking Points*

- American Sign Language is fun to watch, but if you’re having a conversation with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, be sure to watch them and not the interpreter. **(10 seconds)**
- Just because someone uses a walking cane, arm brace, service animal, chair, or any other assistive device doesn’t mean they can’t hear. There is no need to speak louder when talking to them. **(10 seconds)**
- Don’t automatically assist someone with a disability without asking first. It’s okay to offer help, but respect when someone says, “no.” **(5 seconds)**
- Do not pet the service animals of people who are blind, low-vision, or any other disability. It can distract the animal from doing its job. **(5 seconds)**
- People with disabilities have sex with people with and without disabilities. There’s no need to ask about logistics, because that would be awkward. **(5 seconds)**
- Avoid saying “Good for you,” “You’re so brave” or other patronizing remarks toward people with disabilities. Remember, like you, people with disabilities are just trying to live their lives. **(10 seconds)**

### *10 – 15 Second Talking Points*

- Service animals are well-trained and look as though they want to be pet. However, they take their jobs very seriously when they are working. They do not like to be distracted or separated from their owner. **(10-12 seconds)**
- People with and without disabilities appreciate the golden rule: treat others the way you would like to be treated. If you run into an awkward situation and you don’t know what to do, just ask. **(10-12 seconds)**
- Just because someone is blind, it does not mean they are deaf (or vice versa). Avoid speaking loudly in someone’s face just because you notice they are blind or have low vision. **(10 seconds)**

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- Introduce yourself when speaking with the visually impaired. This is something you would normally do anyways, but in the case of someone with vision issues, do it right away just to let them know you are near so they are better aware of their surroundings. **(10-15 seconds)**
- Dr. Karen Gaffney has a PhD from the University of Portland. She is also a woman with Down syndrome, an intellectual disability. Don't underestimate someone's potential based on limited information about them. **(10 – 12 seconds)**
- Some people might have accommodation needs that you don't think about like not being able to be in a bright light, in noisy rooms, or near strong scents. Don't be offended if someone needs leave the room or requests a separate space. **(10-15 seconds)**

### 15 – 20 Second Talking Points

- Wheelchairs and arm braces are not confining. They are important and personal pieces of technology that allow people who need them to do fun stuff, like grab a drink with friends! Remember, touching someone's property without their permission only makes it awkward for everyone. **(15 seconds)**
- American Sign Language is a beautiful language and fun to watch, but if you're having a conversation with someone who uses it and you keep staring at their interpreter, it can feel as though you're ignoring the person. Eye contact is preferred and don't be offended if the person watches their interpreter instead of watching you. **(15-20 seconds)**
- Sometimes it looks like a person with a disability could use assistance, but jumping in might be dangerous. For example, someone who looks as though they are struggling to open a door might actually be resting their weight on the door. Opening the door wider might cause a fall. How can you know for sure? Ask if they need a hand and don't take it personally if the answer is "no." **(15-20 seconds)**
- Some people with disabilities are fun to talk to, but when the conversation is riddled with unwarranted remarks such as "you're such an inspiration," the comment could feel objectifying. People with disabilities do not want to be viewed as inspirational things. **(15-20 seconds)**

### Partner Agencies and Organizations

