Students with disabilities open up about their personal trials, coping strategies and unfailing optimism

By Gabrielle Zeger, reporter

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Not sure how to talk about disabilities?

These guidelines will help.

- If the person is in a wheelchair, and you can hear them, he, do NOT bend over. This only serves to make the individual feel inferior.
- “Person first” language, please!
  “This means you “person with disability” as opposed to “disabled person.”
- Do NOT assume the person is mentally slow. Side note: The phrase “mental retardation” is outdated terminology. The word “retard” is no longer accepted to describe a person with a mental disability.
- People with disabilities ask for help when they need it. Most teens and adults in chairs (or otherwise) have gone through life fighting to get what they need educationally, as well as at work, and are therefore unafraid to speak up when they need something. Be considerate of their needs, but do not become overbearing in offering assistance.
- Crippling jokes are unacceptable and offensive.
- Kindness counts. Just be nice.
- Treat people with disabilities with the kind of respect and dignity you would want.