

## OFFICIAL DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Northeastern uses the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) interpretation, as allowable by law, stating:

“...a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.”

## OUR DEFINITION OF (DIS)ABILITY

Let's elevate our thinking to find ways to improve inclusivity for all students. (DIS)ABILITY is a guiding principle that puts every person's ability first, regardless of their visible or invisible, permanent or temporary impairments. By embracing this value we will increase engagement and awareness from within the university community and find new ways for our students to learn with all intelligences.

# 10 KEY SUCCESS STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH (DIS)ABILITIES

### PUT ABILITY FIRST

Always start here. Assume capability. Make sure that as with all students you look for abilities rather than disabilities.

### BE AWARE

Pay attention to body language. What message are you conveying? What message is the student conveying? Listen for language and observe behaviors that might indicate difficulty for the student.

### BE ACCEPTING

Learn about people first language and how to write to communicate appropriately about persons with (dis)Abilities. When interacting with students it's important to be able to maintain eye contact and express compassion. Remember that there are things that you can't change with one interaction, but keep calm and present. Understand *Non-compliance vs. non-comprehension*: Imagine that you are in a foreign country, and you do not speak the language. Should you be punished for not following directions appropriately?

### SET CONSISTENT EXPECTATIONS

Be consistent with expectations and standards. Break down instructions into specific and clear components. Provide lists of expectations and structure learning around repeatable patterns.

### ALWAYS USE MULTIMEDIA

Combine visual information with auditory and present in a visual format. Bring information to a concrete level. Avoid abstract information. Remember interest is the best way to increase motivation around learning.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

After you break down instructions ask students to explain what they understood and list the steps they have to take. Don't assume a student understood something just because he/she agreed with you. Encourage student to paraphrase back what he/she heard.

### RESPOND TO CRISIS

If you have a student that can't make a connection or doesn't understand an issue, respond. Try to identify the issue and clearly define the issue.

### USE POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Be positive and reinforce desired behavior. Tell the student what your expectations are, show them how to perform to meet them, engage with them around the subject material and check for understanding. Reinforce successes and suggest new approaches to understanding of the first course doesn't work out.

### INNOVATE

Look for new ways to share and express information. Technology is constantly advancing and changing but major barriers to Universal Design best practices have been lifted by recent technological developments.

### ACT AS AN ADVOCATE

Become a (Dis)Ability Project Ally. Students and Peers value understanding and a willingness to understand this issue above all else. Part of this includes maintaining appropriate confidentiality. Part of it is modeling the kinds of behaviors that you want to see. But always share your understanding and seek out new opportunities for compassion and growth.

[read more at neiu.edu/sds](http://neiu.edu/sds)

## WHAT YOU SAY MATTERS

### PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE IMPROVES COMMUNICATION

#### WHY IS LANGUAGE IMPORTANT?

The way you categorize groups of people (i.e. using the word handicapped instead of disabilities or disabilities instead of abilities) impacts the way you interact with the specific groups of people you are referring to. Language is a very powerful tool that can either (intentionally or unintentionally) foster inclusion or exclusion.

#### WHAT IS PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE?

Person first language is a common and most often accepted approach by advocates of people with (dis)Abilities. Person first language puts the person before his/her (dis)Ability. Person first language tends to stress the verb, "to have" rather than "to be". It is argued that "have" implies possession while "be" implies identity.

#### WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE?

Our Professor uses a wheel chair.  
She has a learning disability.  
I wear glasses.  
I know a Student who receives accommodations with Student Disability Services.

#### IS PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE ALWAYS A CORRECT WAY TO DESCRIBE A PERSON WITH A (DIS)ABILITY?

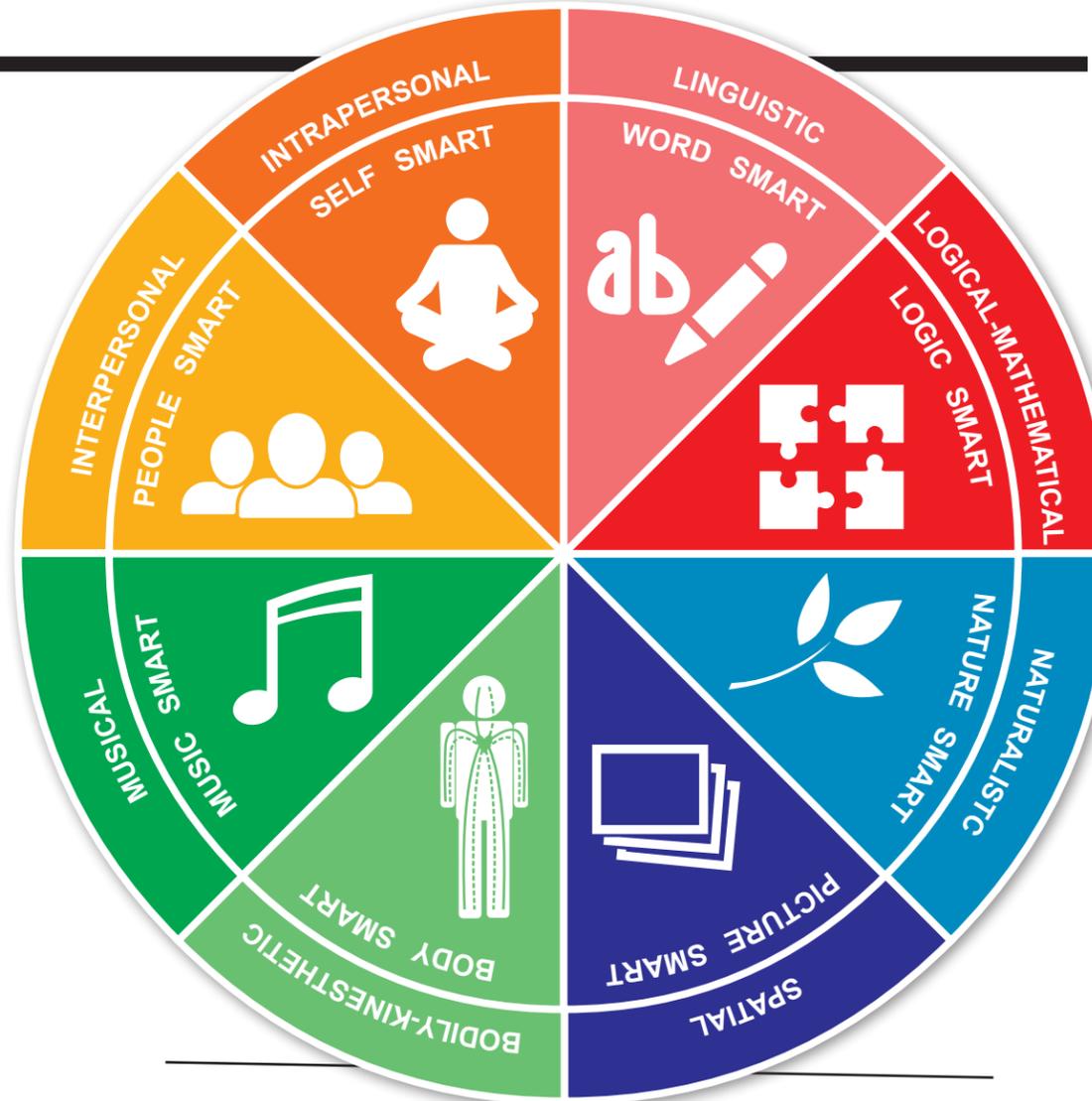
Most often, yes. However, it should be noted there are some advocates and people with disabilities who reject person-first language. Some are reclaiming historically offensive labels. Some promote the idea that a disability is a part of individual identity.

#### HOW DO I DESCRIBE A PERSON WITH A (DIS)ABILITY THAT IS ABSOLUTELY INOFFENSIVE?

Use their name.

#### WHEN SPEAKING TO A PERSON USING A WHEELCHAIR IS IT WRONG FOR ME TO SAY, "YOU AND I WILL WALK DOWN THE HALL.?"

Absolutely not. It is not insensitive to use common expressions such as "I see your point" or "He isn't listening to me."

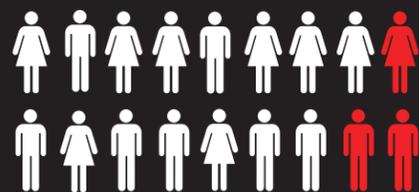


## EMBRACE THE THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

This theory was developed in 1983 by Dr. Howard Gardner, professor of education at Harvard University. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing, is far too limited. Instead, Dr. Gardner proposes eight different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults.

## STATISTICS TO CONSIDER

**44% OF NEIU STUDENTS WHO SELF-DISCLOSE HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY**



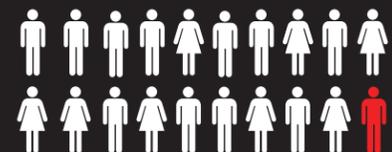
**15% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS LIVING WITH A DISABILITY. (OVER 1 BILLION PEOPLE)**



**20% OF THE U.S. POPULATION IS LIVING WITH A DISABILITY**



**YET ONLY 11% OF UNDERGRADS & ONLY 5% OF NEIU UNDERGRADS SELF-DISCLOSE**



## WE CAN ADDRESS THIS

**DO YOU  
WANT  
TO DO  
MORE?**

THE  
**(DIS)ABILITY**  
PROJECT

**FACULTY & STAFF HANDBOOK** preview

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THE (DIS)ABILITY PROJECT **CONTINUES**  
ONLINE & IN PERSON  
**NEIU.EDU/SDS**  
**FOR DETAILS**

