



Common Problems in Social Situations

(Adapted from the 2008 “PYLN Toolkit” prepared by the Pennsylvania Youth Learning Network - a group of youth with various kinds of disabilities.)

Always make an effort to be social, because friends and family can support you through a lot of good and hard times in your life! Try to notice the attitudes of others and your own attitudes in different situations. This will help you know how to deal with difficult situations.

Here are attitudes of others which may get in the way of your social life:

- Fear
- Ignorance
- Pity
- Hate
- Lower expectations
- Superiority
- Charity

In summary, people may focus more on your disability than your abilities!

Attitudes you may have that may affect your social interactions:

- Inferiority
- Self- Pity
- Lack of self-confidence or advocacy
- Fear

Other factors that may affect your social life:

- Lack of knowledge or awareness
- Lack of encouragement to get involved
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of a good support network at home



Remember, there are many accommodations that can help you live your life:

- Wheelchair use--ramps, elevators, accessible vehicles like Wheel-trans public transit
- Hearing or Visual problems—close captioning, “Listen” buttons on websites
- Written communication—voice activated systems, computers
- Aids like personal care attendants and service dogs.

Worksheet on Social issues:

Sample questions for you to brainstorm about:

To help you work through social issues you may experience, here are a few examples to think about and answer. Use your problem solving skills. Work with a friend or support person. In the blanks at the end of samples, list any social issues you may have and think about how you can solve them. We'll start with an example:

Q: I love to meet new people, but I have Social Anxiety Disorder and get extremely nervous in large groups. How do I find a way to meet new people but also avoid these crowds?

A: A good way to meet new people is finding a common interest group to get involved in. While social gatherings at school can be congested, an independent group may be much smaller and more relaxed. An additional bonus is that these people have the same interests as you, so it will be easy to strike up a conversation and make new friends! Whether your interests involve things like art or sports, or even church or volunteering in your community, there are usually several clubs and organizations to become a part of, without the hassle of large crowds.

Q: I have lots of friends and love hanging out with them at lunch. The only problem is that, at the next table a couple of boys are always laughing and making fun of me for having Down syndrome. I usually just tell them to shut up, but this doesn't usually work and I just go and sit at another table. I know that I should be able to sit wherever I want at lunch, so how do I deal with these boys?

A: (Brainstorm possible answers)

Q: I have been chosen to be in the school play but I have lines to learn and I really can't read very well. How can I learn my lines?

A: (Brainstorm possible answers)



Q: I have a physical disability requiring the use of a wheelchair, and I have wanted to visit a coffee shop that many of my friends go to, but I am unable to because of a small set of stairs which lead to its door. How can I join my friends at this location?

A: (Brainstorm possible answers)

Q: My friend invited me to his birthday party at his house in a week. I'd love to go, but my family and none of my friends are able to drive me. I am not able to drive myself because of my disability. How can I still see my friend when I have no way to get to his house?

A: (Brainstorm possible answers)

Q: I just received an awesome new laptop for my birthday! It's perfect, except that I can't use it! I have a visual disability and do not have the software necessary to use it. Where do I find this software, so that I can connect with all of my online friends?

A: (Brainstorm possible answers)

Q: I am a guy who loves sports. My friends and I always watch rugby, and love talking about it. A couple of my friends tried out for our school's team, and made it! I am really happy for them, but I have always wanted to play sports myself, and cannot make the school's team because my Cerebral Palsy requires me to use a wheelchair. Are there any opportunities for a guy like me?

A: (Brainstorm possible answers)