

## Dos and Don'ts for Disability Allyship



**Disability Ministries**  
The United Methodist Church



DO	DON'T
<p>1. DO LISTEN DEEPLY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hear the stories, concerns, hurts.</li> <li>● Believe what you hear.</li> <li>● Acknowledge the pain and injustice.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...interrupt, rationalize, or get defensive.</li> <li>...say anything – just listen!</li> <li>...quote scripture or theology.</li> </ul>
<p>2. DO ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Speak directly to a person with a disability.</li> <li>● Inquire about                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...accommodations needed.</li> <li>...experiences, choice of language.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Focus on relationship-building.</li> <li>● Explore more deeply if comfortable for your conversation partner.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...direct your question to a caregiver, companion, or interpreter.</li> <li>...ask for a person's diagnosis or medical information or share that information with a third party: don't "out" anyone!</li> <li>...use ableist language.</li> <li>...focus only on the disability experience.</li> </ul>
<p>3. DO PRESUME COMPETENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assume a person has a way to accomplish things and will ask if assistance is needed.</li> <li>● Assume that a person can communicate and understand you.</li> <li>● Create space for leadership, then step aside.</li> <li>● Check in to gain guidance on issues to be addressed and involvement needed.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...assume you know what someone else needs.</li> <li>...insist on providing help or help when not requested to do so.</li> <li>...alter your speech pattern and language.</li> <li>...ask for feedback and input, then ignore it.</li> <li>...stereotype based on media impressions or people with apparently similar disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p>4. DO ANTICIPATE AND NOTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...barriers and lack of accessibility.</li> <li>...who is and is not present "at the table?"</li> <li>...who is and is not in the speaking center?</li> <li>...persons being "othered."</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...assume that anything is truly ADA compliant, or that ADA compliance is sufficient.</li> <li>...assume people with disabilities are not present out of lack of interest.</li> <li>...allow good intentions to serve as an excuse.</li> </ul>
<p>5. DO PLAN AHEAD AND COMMUNICATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Involve people with disabilities from the outset before decisions have been made.</li> <li>● Budget for and routinely provide needed accommodations.</li> <li>● Provide accessibility information on-line.</li> <li>● Provide material ahead of time in the requested accessible format.</li> <li>● Consider transportation needs.</li> <li>● Consider accessibility in all event aspects.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...plan an event without ensuring full accessibility.</li> <li>...make expensive plans without checking them first with people needing accommodations.</li> <li>...make it hard to find needed information.</li> <li>...make a promise and fail to keep it.</li> <li>...operate from the assumption that any needs are "special needs."</li> </ul>

<p>6. DO SPEAK OUT, ACCEPT CONSEQUENCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Say or do something <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...when you spot, read, hear ableism.</li> <li>...when concerns of a person with a disability are dismissed or ignored</li> <li>...when safety is compromised.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...expect gratitude or do it for your ego.</li> <li>...be surprised by resistance or hostility.</li> <li>...back down when you ruffle feathers.</li> <li>...let the fear of doing the wrong thing keep you from doing something.</li> </ul>
<p>7. DO ADVOCATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Challenge unjust policies and laws.</li> <li>● Ask for feedback and follow the lead of persons with disabilities.</li> <li>● Pick your battles but keep the goal of an inclusive society in mind.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...assume someone else will do it, or that someone with a disability will want to be the advocate for all disability issues.</li> <li>...jump in without knowing the facts and the history of the situation.</li> </ul>
<p>8. DO EXPLORE CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Practice universal design – plan alternatives so all can participate in a way that works.</li> <li>● Celebrate the way that diversity expands possibilities.</li> <li>● Remember that many people with disabilities have a wealth of experience finding creative ways to make things work.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...insist that the outcome and process should stay the same as it has always been.</li> <li>...assume your role is to be the fixer and problem-solver.</li> <li>...get in the way of the Spirit leading us all to a new day and new way of being.</li> </ul>
<p>9. DO CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflect on ways the world is easy for you.</li> <li>● Ask for and accept critical feedback.</li> <li>● Apologize and move on when you get it wrong.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...deny that ableism and privilege exist.</li> <li>...get defensive or argue if you are called out.</li> <li>...take critique personally.</li> <li>...be hard on yourself if you don't get it right.</li> </ul>
<p>10. DO KEEP ON LEARNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Approach learning with humility.</li> <li>● Follow blogs of disability activists.</li> <li>● Explore intersectionality.</li> <li>● Find other allies and hold each other accountable.</li> <li>● Teach others what you have learned.</li> </ul>	<p>DON'T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...assume that you have reached the point where you no longer have ingrained ableism.</li> <li>...expect you can be a lone ranger ally.</li> <li>...take yourself too seriously.</li> <li>...underestimate the power of a few people to make a difference!</li> </ul>

Written by Deaconess Lynn Swedberg, update 08/23/23