

At Ease With the Blind



Presented by Christian Record Services



Christian Record Services

and



National Camps for Blind Children

Mission Statement

Christian Record Services provides free Christian publications and programs for people with visual impairments.

At ease with the blind

To be at ease with the blind and visually impaired, we need both knowledge and experience.

The next few pages show how to interact with blind individuals. Combine this information with some experience and you will be *at ease with the blind*.



At ease with the blind when:

Becoming acquainted

- When meeting a blind person for the first time, watch for an extended hand. Take hold of it and shake it, even though it may not be pointing directly at you. Be at ease; the blind person wants to be at ease with you.



Conversing

- Talk directly to the blind person, rather than the accompanying person.
- Blind people may not be able to see you, but they can still listen and carry on a conversation. Use a normal speaking tone — many blind people can hear exceptionally well.
- It's all right to use words such as “look” and “see.”
- If you describe something to a blind person, try to paint a vivid word picture.

At ease with the blind when:

Taking a walk

- Always ask the blind person if she would like to take your arm. Never grab her arm.
- Whether a blind person has the assistance of a dog, a cane, or a sighted guide, most are taught to walk a little behind their means of assistance. This doesn't mean you need to walk any slower while you are assisting them. Walk at a speed that is comfortable for both of you.
- Be sure to pause slightly before ascending or descending stairs and curbs. Let her know if you will be going up or down stairs.
- Warn her of obvious obstructions such as low-hanging tree limbs, fences, or construction work.
- When squeezing through a narrow opening or around an obstruction, tell her so she can follow you with her hand still tucked in the crook of your arm. You may move your arm behind you slightly to signal the blind person to follow your lead.
- When you leave, be sure she knows you are leaving. Always be polite and leave in a courteous manner.



At ease with the blind when:

Crossing an intersection

- When you see a blind person walking with a cane or with a guide dog, always give him the right-of-way.
- If he appears to be waiting to cross a street, make your presence known and ask if he needs assistance. If he does desire assistance, offer your arm.
- When you have reached the other side of the street, ask if he would like further assistance. If he does not, then leave in such a way that he knows you are departing.



Walking with two blind persons

- Offer your assistance to both blind persons by extending both your right and left arms.

At ease with the blind when:



Getting into a car

- As you approach the car, tell the blind person whether he will be sitting in the front or back seat, or ask which he would prefer.
- When you reach the car, place his hand on the top or side of the open door and let him seat himself.
- Offer to help with the seat belt.
- Make sure he is sitting far enough away from the door that he will not be bumped when you close the door.
- Upon arriving at your destination, carefully explain what the area will be like as he gets out of the car.

At ease with the blind when:



Visiting in your home

- When a blind person visits your home, acquaint her with the position of furniture and rooms.
- In the bathroom, explain where each item is, including towels and soap.

Seating and socializing

- Place the blind person's hand on the back of the chair and allow her to seat herself. It's helpful to explain the location of the chair in the room.
- Introduce others who may be present. If the occasion calls for sitting around a table, explain who is seated near her.
- If she isn't well acquainted with you, introduce yourself before conversing with her.

At ease with the blind when:

Announcing the presence of others

- Save your blind friend from embarrassment by introducing him to those in the room. If others come in after you, be sure to introduce them also.
- If a blind person is in the room, go up and introduce yourself. Make sure he knows when you leave as well.
- If you haven't talked in a while, don't ask him to guess your name; tell him who you are.

Helping with money

- Identify each denomination of bill you are working with. Blind people have their own system of identification once told what the bills are. Allow him to put his own money away as he wishes.
- Coins are different sizes. There is no need to identify them.



At ease with the blind when:



Dining

- When you seat a blind person, tell her where things are on the table.
- Describe the various dishes of food and offer to help serve her.
- Tell her where each food is located on her plate, comparing the plate to a clock. For example, you could say peas are at one o'clock.
- If others are ordering seconds, ask if she would like anything more.
- When dining in a restaurant, read the menu to her and allow her to order her own food.

At ease with the blind when:

Participating in projects

- Blind people like to participate and be part of the team. If you have a blind person on your committee, find something he can do to contribute. For example, he could phone each team members to remind them of the next meeting.



Thank You!

Blind people face hidden barriers each day

Inferiority

Blind people are not inferior just because they have limited abilities. Give blind people the benefit of the doubt concerning their abilities.

Pity

Blind people don't want you to feel sorry for them. What they are looking for is a chance to be independent.

Hero worship

Some people treat the blind with special attention which they don't want. The blind don't desire a lot of attention. They want to lead a normal life.

Fear

Many people are afraid they will do or say the "wrong" thing around a blind person. Because of this fear, they simply avoid the individual. Meeting and becoming friends with someone who is blind will enrich your life.

Stereotypes

Many people believe blind individuals have a keener sense of smell and hearing. Others assume the blind can't speak for themselves or are also deaf and must be spoken to in a loud or overly distinct voice. Use a normal tone of voice when addressing blind people.



The blind, who comprise nearly 1.5 million in the United States alone, desire nothing more than your compassion — understanding combined with knowledge. They are not looking for pity.

At ease with the blind

Christian Record Services (CRS) is helping the blind and visually impaired in your community.

Personal service

Each year CRS representatives and volunteers visit in the homes of the blind and visually impaired, and also in nursing homes and schools, offering positive materials the blind can use to enrich their lives.

Camps for the blind

Each year hundreds of blind people attend CRS-sponsored camps spanning the United States (National Camps for Blind Children) and Canada (National Camps for the Blind). Representatives assist in identifying potential campers and raising the funds necessary to send them to camp.

Scholarships

CRS encourages blind people to get an education and offers partial scholarships for undergraduate studies.

Public information

CRS representatives visit schools, service clubs, and conferences, informing people of the needs of the blind and the contribution they make in their communities.

Lending library and education

Over 2,000 recorded titles are available free to patrons throughout the United States and Canada. Nine Braille, large-print, and audio magazines are also available.

At ease with the blind

Key Points for relating to blind people

- ★ **DO** treat them like ordinary people.
 - DON'T** raise your voice or use childish language.
- ★ **DO** speak when you enter the room.
 - DON'T** leave cupboards and drawers open.
- ★ **DO** show houseguests where things are.
 - DON'T** be afraid to use words such as “see” and “look.”
- ★ **DO** introduce them to others.
 - DON'T** ask someone else (a spouse or friend) what the blind person wants; ask the blind person.
- ★ **DO** encourage them to talk about their interests.
 - DON'T** think about them as blind people, just as people who are blind.
- ★ **DO** tell them about their dinner plate, using the hands of a clock—12, 3, 6, and 9—as a frame of reference.
 - DON'T** worry about being politically correct; just say “blind” or “visually impaired.”

The gifts of people like you provide these free services to those who cannot see. Your support of CRS will change and save lives.

Thank you.



*To learn more about blindness and the free services
Christian Record Services offers for those with visual
disabilities, please contact us.*

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