



Please note: we use the term 'blind' liberally in this article to represent anyone who has visual challenges to the extent that they have difficulty with the scenarios mentioned below-so it does not mean it is only for 'totally blind' people. Some people don't like the term 'blind', especially if they have some usable vision and will rather resort to "Visually impaired", "low vision", "partially sighted", etc. Yet the author who compiled these has come to the realization that it does not bother her. "What difference does it make-I'm anyway sighted to the blind and blind to the sighted..."

10 Things not to Say or Do to Blind People

1. "It's over there" or "here" (while pointing or nodding). You must be specific when giving directions to a blind person. For example: "Your keys are on the tray on the coffee table." or "Walk straight, then turn left, and the door is on your right". Better to say too much than to say too little. And make sure you know the correct directions yourself or you'll misguide them!
2. "Would it help you to imagine what I look like if you touched my face?" People usually only do that in plays! (Because faces don't really feel that different from one person to another.) But you could tell the blind person: "Do you want to feel what my dress, bag, hairstyle, or other things look like?" these things could feel different and may be interesting to the blind person. Blind people enjoy regular conversations but sometimes just need some more clues about what's going on around them. Think about things that are interesting around you and share it with your blind friend.
3. "I'm sure she can't do it because she can't see-so I'll do it for her". Many times, blind people can do things you don't think they can or even the blind person themselves may say they can't. Try to think of ways they could do it and help them. For example, when the person needs to hang up their coat, don't do it for them, tell and show them where it needs to be hung up and encourage them to do it themselves even if it takes longer or it looks funny when they feel around with their hands to find the hook. You will help them become more independent and this can help them for the rest of their lives!
4. "Did you feel what she just did?" You don't have to avoid using words like "see," "look," and "blind." It generally does not make blind people uncomfortable. You should use these words as you would in conversation with a sighted person. You can also say, "See you later!" or "Did you watch that play?"
5. "You must have heard or smelled what everyone else couldn't". People think blind people's other senses are very strong. Sometimes they are and sometimes they aren't. If what you are saying is not true, you can make the blind person feel very uncomfortable or have to pretend like they did hear or smell it when they didn't in order to feel better about themselves. At other times, it may seem like the blind person cannot hear properly or is not as smart because they don't react appropriately. It might be that background noise makes it difficult for them to hear one person talking or they don't see something funny and don't laugh along with everyone. Put yourself into their shoes and try to understand their reactions. And you generally don't need to raise your voice when talking to people whose only disability is blindness!



6. "Guess who I am." No matter how familiar you are with a blind person, it is considered impolite to make them guess your voice. Always say your name when you start talking to your blind friend. This is not necessary if they say your name first showing they know who you are already. If the blind person does not know you and they are with someone, don't ask the other person questions you really want to ask the blind person. Ask them directly and treat them like regular human beings. And don't forget to say goodbye to your blind friend before leaving the room or they may not notice you left and end up having a conversation with themselves!
7. "I once knew a totally blind man who was so skillful that he didn't even use a cane." Walking without a cane takes guts, not skill. A cane increases a blind person's safety which enables them to remain independent. A cane is a tool, like glasses. It helps blind people know what's in front of them and avoid bumping into things and detect stairs. It also helps others identify the person as having a visual challenge and can offer help if needed. Also, it's ok if a blind person occasionally gets hurt a bit trying to do things independently-the short term pain is worth the long term gain!
8. "You don't look blind", "How much can you see?", or "Don't Glasses help you see?" There are many kinds of eye conditions which can be obvious or not. These comments can make the blind person feel awkward and put them on the spot. They may not want to describe their visual condition and it's no one's business to judge or question about it. Have you ever met anyone who is faking being blind?
9. "I'm so sorry you are blind" or "let me grab your arm so I can walk you". If you really care about the blind person and want to help them, think twice about making personal comments or doing things you think are helpful; rather, ask if they need help and how they would want you to help them. Telling them you hope they'll be able to see again is generally not very comforting as most eye conditions can't be cured as of yet and it only gives false hope or can make them feel 'broken'. Rather encourage them to use the abilities they have to be the best they can be!
10. "You're amazing!" or "Your such an inspiration!" Visually impaired and blind people learn skills to do everyday tasks such as reading, writing and managing in school , at work or at home. Sometimes they need to use special things and do it in different ways than everyone else. Saying a person is amazing for doing something you wouldn't think is so amazing when others do it can be demeaning or uncomfortable. Don't give false praise. You can say "It's so interesting how you read with your device" or "I admire your courage in keeping on trying to learn a skill even if it's hard for you." You can also say "because I'm inspired by you I will do something good for others or myself" or "I believe in your abilities so I will give you a job, trust you to help me, and so on"-that can really make the blind person feel good about themselves!

www.insightbeyondeyesight.org

+1 (828) 423-0003

*Insight beyond Eyesight is an
officially registered 501 (c) (3)
non-profit organization.*

Tax ID number: 87-2396199

This article was compiled by Mrs. Rachel (Rochel Yenti) Bodek. Rachel . is a blind woman who is a TVI (teacher of the visually impaired) and is a co-founder of an organization for Jewish people who have low vision or are blind called Insight Beyond Eyesight. To contact her, you can e-mail her at insightbeyondeyesight@gmail.com