

Other Booklets Produced by the Trust

- Helpful Hints - For those who want help.
- People with Intellectual Disabilities can change YOU!
- The Blessing of Including People with Disabilities in Your Church
- Communication

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Supporting People with Disabilities



**ELEVATE Christian Disability
Trust**

Supporting People with Disabilities

Every person is going to meet a person with a disability at some time during their life. You may be required to assist a friend, a relative or a stranger, to give ongoing support, or help in a one-off situation.

The Bible shows that serving people with disabilities is an important aspect of Christian Ministry, and Jesus modelled this way of life as an example for us to follow (See Matt. 22:39, Matt. 20:28, Luke 22:27). Any ministry involving disabled people will be of mutual benefit to all concerned and of great value to the Kingdom of God.

Your main aim in wanting to support people with disabilities is to see them reach their God given potential. You are to be a friend, advocate, facilitator, supporter and encourager.

Who is disabled?

The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001 defines disability: -

“Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have”

The 2001 Census on Population & Dwellings shows that 20% or 1 in 5 of the Population of New Zealand has some long term disability that affects their daily living. This equates to 760,000 people.

A pyramid of assisting a disabled person

Start at the bottom of this pyramid and see how high you can rise. You will be doing really well if you get close to the top. Too many people look at this pyramid and imagine that it is too hard to climb, and therefore do not even begin to attempt it. But what people need to know is if they just take one level at a time, it is not a difficult goal.



The Do's and Don'ts of Attitudes with Disabled People

DO	DO NOT
View the person as a person created in the image of God, who is highly valued by Him. Have love, understanding, and compassion,	View the person with a disability as an object of pity.
Trust God to help you overcome any challenges that may concern either your disabled friend or yourself.	Talk down to people with disabilities in a patronising way
Adopt an attitude of humility. Admit when you don't know what to do or say, be willing to learn.	First check if they need or want your assistance. Do not push yourself on to the disabled person.
Remember that humour is vital in your relationship with people with disabilities – be real.	Laugh at disabled people, or seek out those with disabilities just to satisfy your curiosity.
Make genuine friendship the goal of your contact with the disabled person.	Be fearful of people with disabilities.
Be patient – this is a key ingredient: (a) With the disabled person, who you may have to make allowances to accommodate them in your life. (b) With yourself as you make allowances and learn from them.	Allow lack of confidence to affect your relationship with the person. Do not expect the disabled person to have more grace than you! (They are a person, just like you!).
Be gracious, be grateful — show appreciation, be positive – model this yourself.	Do not show a lack of grace, even if the disabled person shows a lack of grace towards you.

Where do people with disabilities live?

Disabled people live everywhere - in every walk of life, in every strata of society, and in every community.

Why should we support people with disabilities?

Because Jesus taught us to value all people (Luke 14:15-24).

So where & when can we support people with disabilities?

Anywhere! In the community, in homes, shopping malls, and churches....the list is endless! And when? - Anytime the person asks for assistance, and when you see a need, ask if you can be of assistance.

How can you Support People with Disabilities?

Remember to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how best to support a disabled person. Be mindful of asking the person first if they want your assistance. If they say yes, then ask and listen to what they say! The list below is some practical suggestions for you. It is just a start, and presents a few examples of how you can support disabled people.

1. By giving practical support:

People with disabilities may appreciate support with shopping, housework, meal preparation, gardening, and financial management (banking, completing forms, keeping records, etc.). Other vital practical help could include the provision of transport to church or medical appointments etc.

2. Teaching people with disabilities creative skills

How to knit, sew, embroidery, metal-work, woodwork, gardening, or teaching music... Encouraging an individual to go back to school or do some further studies, so they can gain qualifications and experience for employment.

Music has opened up a whole new world for many people – for example Maurice Topia. Maurice uses his musical talent by busking, and has raised over \$40,000 for charity!



Maurice playing his keyboard.

3. ***Only a phone call away:***

The telephone is a lifeline to many disabled people, particularly people who spend a lot of time at home, giving them a vital link with their community. People welcome conversation, and when you can't visit, the phone is the next best thing. Also encourage them, if they can to use the phone to ring other people.

4. ***Providing hospitality:***

Do you realise that people with disabilities hardly ever get invited to someone's home. Some also get very few visitors. What a difference to their lives you could make if you even occasionally took them out, maybe for a cup of coffee, or a drive, even a meal in your home. Here is how Grant Allely described the first time he (at aged 20) went to a Café...

Immanuel Koks dreamed of studying theology overseas...

Immanuel writes,

"Before I started studying theology at the Bible College of New Zealand, I have wanted to study how the hope of the gospel can impact the lives of people with disabilities today. In April 2006, I started working towards studying at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, as I found that it offered a Masters degree in which I could specialise in the Theology of disability. I attempted for over a year to gather funds for this, but could not bring it together.

After that bitter disappointment I wondered what to do next. After praying and seeking the advice of others I decided to do a fact finding trip to several theological institutions in North America and Aberdeen. It became abundantly clear that I should go to Regent College in Vancouver, Canada.

I went back to the grind of fundraising! For the first few months, it looked like another disappointment. A close group of family and friends prayed that God would show us the way forward. We had clear confirmation that God wanted me to push towards Regent College. It was not until the middle of May 2008 that a couple of donors said they would pay for the



Immanuel studying hard at his desk

first eight months study!

With that I decided to go. Since then further funds have rolled in, meaning that I will be able to spend the full eighteen months required to complete a Masters in Theology at Regent College!."

Dale Burdett dreamed of having his own van...

Johanna, (a friend of Dale's), writes...

"I came to know Dale through the buddy system of the NZCCS, and became his buddy. As I took him to meetings I learned to communicate well with Dale, and noticed his longing not to be dependent on others to provide transport. I became very good at getting him into my small car, but all the time Dale was getting older and heavier and the day would come when I would not be able to get Dale in.

Dale saw the solution clearly - to own a van of his own. But where would the money come from to buy one?

I set about the task of raising the necessary finances. I made Dale's need known, and put this in several publications.

After eighteen months we were half way to raising the finances, but donations coming in were slowing down, and the price of a suitable van was going up. Would we make it?

I shared Dale's need again at the ELEVATECDT National Camp.

A lady responded to the need there and then and donated the remaining \$5,000. Later she related how the Lord has



released her into the freedom of giving. Answering this need a key step in this, and what a huge blessing it gave her.

Dale's dream came true, because Johanna shared his dream, & she supported Dale so that his dream could be realised.

"One of my teachers had given up the time to support me. She did all she could to put me at ease. Halfway through the afternoon she took me down to this funny little underground place. To others, this may be a commonplace, but for me, at 20, it was the first time in my life I had been in a Café. My friend seemed to be well known there. She motioned to a burly fellow, who effortlessly lifted me out of the wheelchair and placed me on one of the soft seats by the window. That, in itself, was a significant event. I was out of my wheelchair, sitting in a seat! Just like all the other mid-afternoon shoppers who thronged that busy room. And what a banquet! Still to this day I can remember the mouth-watering array of cakes offered to us. I was asked what I wanted, but didn't know, and felt embarrassed, as I was so used to eating whatever was given to me. I felt like a swimmer who had moved out of his depth. I was being asked to make up my own mind!"



Would you be apprehensive at the thought of taking a person with a disability out? What would some of your fears be?

"What will happen if I can't understand what the disabled person is saying?"...

"Can I relate to this individual person who has a disability?"...

These are real fears. The person with a disability concerned might be just as apprehensive as you! But more importantly, they would appreciate that you had given them your time.

Remember:

- Ask the disabled person how you can best assist them.
- Attend a seminar on supporting people with disabilities.
- Read more books or booklets like this one (see back page).
- Talk to people experienced in supporting disabled people.

5. ***Social and recreational activities:***

Recreation is an important part of a balanced life. Most people get the social interaction and recreation they need. Some people with disabilities do not get the balance of this in their life. This is where you can support them - In encouraging and assisting them to become more involved in social activities or recreation, you enable the person to pursue their current interests and to develop new ones. The value of such social support is great.

6. ***Visiting***

People with disabilities appreciate friendship the same as anybody else. But they can also encounter rejection, misunderstanding and prejudice. You can support disabled people by visiting and encouraging them. If the person has communication difficulties, give them the time they need don't make it a rushed visit. Give them the dignity to talk about whatever they want too, as well as sharing your interests. Don't feel that you have to talk about issues relating to disability. Remember that the person has knowledge and interests that go far beyond disability issues!

7. ***Prayer:***

Everybody can pray!. For those with speech difficulties God can hear and understand everybody, even if a person with a disabilities speech is unintelligible to human ears). By praying with a disabled person you enable them to keep open that all-important communication line with God, and enable them to be change agents in the world through prayer! By inviting disabled people to pray for you and for others, they are enabled to play a crucial part in the kingdom of God, and to be connected to others through prayer.

Mark Grantham desired to visit his World Vision sponsored children in India...

Mark Grantham sells chocolates, and the from the proceeds of this he sponsors five World Vision children.

He decided that he would like to visit his three World Vision children in India. With support and encouragement from others, his parents, and friends, he raised the necessary finances, and set a date to go!

He also had two friends who were more than willing to accompany him, and support him to make his dream a reality. It was a life changing trip for Mark, and his story continues to inspire others to dream big dreams, and not to limit what God wants to do through them.

Mark (on right) with one of his sponsored boys and his family. In Mumbai, India.



Mark with his supporters, Hailey, and Matthew.

Grant Allely desired to take some Bibles into China...

He fully believed he could do it. (The first step)

He asked God to enable and empower him to do it, to make possible an opportunity to do this, and to provide the resources to do it.

He set goals, and told his friends his goals; he did what was in his power to do to raise some of the money towards the trip.

He booked his airfares in faith

Grant however had one more need – A support person. Which God provided for him, as a friend to support him.



Grant, in a village in China, with his supporter.

8. ***Material contributions:***

You may have opportunity to contribute resources to the needs of a person with a disability (in finances or in kind). Ask God if this is the right thing to do, and what you should give. If God leads you to contribute, give it in such a way that it is a gift.

9. ***Liaising with relevant agencies:***

Some people with disabilities are not aware of the resources available to them in their community. By contacting the relevant agency with their permission, and on their behalf you could open opportunities for them. A disabled person might ask you to phone different disability related agencies to get information they require.. Alternatively, you might be aware that the disabled person could do with more assistance, or a piece of equipment could be of benefit for them. The local Citizens Advice Bureau is a wonderful resource to find relevant groups in your community Also the WEKA website is good, www.weka.org.nz

10. ***Employment:***

Employment is one area of concern for some people with disabilities, both for those who have jobs and those who cannot get work. Are you blessed with the privilege of being an employer? How about considering giving a job to a disabled person? There are few jobs that can not be done by disabled people, and by giving a disabled person a job. You will be assisting in giving them hope and a sense of self worth. Is there a vacancy in your firm? Is there a disabled person you could encourage to apply for this position?

11. ***Ministry in the church:***

It's important that people with disabilities are included fully in their local church. The potential ministry of many disabled people is being wasted because they lack the support of someone to assist them overcome the barriers that prevent them being included fully. Every believer with a disability should be seen as a vital and equal part of the body of Christ. By helping disabled people to discover and use their God given giftings you'll be doing a great service to the church, and of course to them. Attending church services is only one part of full involvement with the church. You could educate your church to be more welcoming towards people with disabilities, (and therefore more welcoming to everybody!)



Matalena Moliola singing and playing guitar. Matalena participates fully, and uses her giftings to bless and contribute to her church.

12. ***The Power of the Printed Page:***

Why don't you write an encouraging letter to your disabled friend and affirm them, (or perhaps a brief email). A letter from people, blessed other people. You might also send encouraging literature you think they would like. Also encourage disabled people to send cards, and notes of encouragement to others.

13. ***Helping Others to Support:***

Take every opportunity to introduce your disabled friend to other friends. Think how, by doing so, you could share with your friends the blessings you've received from knowing such a person, and their social networks will be increased.

Leon Prenter sharing his testimony via the voice synthesizer on his computer. Leon chose to do this to encourage people with disabilities to set goals and to move forward in God. Part of this is your responsibility to use your giftings to build others up and encourage them. (supporting Leon is Pastor Geoff Wiklund).

