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How to Ask Questions of Disabled People

- **Be respectful and considerate.** Ask open-ended questions and avoid making assumptions. Instead of asking, “What’s it like to be disabled?” consider asking something more specific like, “Can you tell me about how your disability impacts your day-to-day life?”
- Be mindful of not reducing someone to their disability. Acknowledge their individuality and experiences.
- Avoid asking personal or intrusive questions about their condition unless they volunteer that information or give permission to ask.

Actual Questions YETI Members Have Been Asked:

- How do you have sex?
- Do you sleep in your wheelchair?
- If you could change your disability, would you?
- Do you want to have kids?
- Do you date?
- How can you do **(insert activity here)** if you are disabled?

IMPORTANT: Some of these questions could be appropriate in the right relational context. You are asking to understand rather than to study someone. Here are some things disabled should consider when connecting with new people. Keep in mind the person they are connecting with is thinking through these things too.

1. Share When You Feel Ready

You don’t have to disclose your disability right away. Take time to assess the person’s openness and whether you feel safe and supported in the connection. Trust your instincts about when the moment feels right.

2. Keep It Simple and Positive

You can choose how much detail to share. Start with a simple explanation that focuses on what’s important for them to know, such as:

"I have [disability], which means [how it affects you]. It doesn’t define me, but it’s part of who I am."

Keeping it positive helps set the tone for the conversation.

3. Set Boundaries and Be Clear on Your Needs

You don’t have to answer every question or go into personal medical details. If someone asks something you’re not comfortable sharing, it’s okay to say, “I’d rather not talk about that, but I can tell you how it affects our friendship.”

If you need accommodations or support, be upfront about what helps:
"I have trouble with loud environments, so I may need to take breaks during events."

4. Watch for Reactions & Be Open to Questions

Some people may not know much about your disability, so they might ask questions. If they're respectful, you can help educate them. If they react negatively or dismissively, it's okay to step back and set boundaries.

5. Remember: It's About You, Not Their Comfort

Your disability is part of your life, and true friends will accept and respect that. If someone makes you feel bad for sharing, that's a reflection of them, not you. Surround yourself with people who value and respect all parts of who you are.