

What To Do When You Meet A Sighted Person

People who use their eyes to acquire information about the world are called sighted people or "people who are sighted". Legal sight means any visual acuity greater than 20/200 in the better eye without correction or an angle of vision wider than 20 degrees.

Sighted people enjoy rich, full lives working, playing and raising families. They run businesses, hold public offices, get arrested and teach your children!

How do Sighted People get Around?

People who are sighted may walk or ride public transportation but most choose to travel long distances by operating their own motor vehicles, usually one passenger to a car. They have gone through many hours of extensive training to learn the rules of the road in order to further their independence. Once that road to freedom has been mastered, sighted people earn a legal classification and a drivers license which allows them to operate a private vehicle relatively safely and independently.

How do you assist a sighted person?

Sighted people are accustomed to viewing the world in visual terms. This means that in many situations they will not be able to communicate orally and may resort to stammering, pointing, hand waving or other gesturing. Subtle facial expressions may also be used to convey feelings in social situations. Calmly alert the sighted person to his or her surroundings by speaking slowly in a normal tone of voice. Questions directed at the sighted person help focus attention back on the verbal rather than the merely visual.

How do sighted people remember things?

Often they don't remember things. In fact this is one of the most painful aspects of the visual affliction, the degree to which sight inhibits detailed memory. Often, the sighted person must reacquire the same information each time it is needed. You can help by being sensitive to their struggle by learning to anticipate their need and providing them with the information they need when it is necessary. Don't tell them too much too quickly. Be sensitive to the capacities of the individual with whom you are dealing. These limitations vary from person to person and it is deeply upsetting to a sighted person to realize that you recognize their mental shortcomings.

At times sighted people may need help finding things, especially when operating a motor vehicle. Your advance knowledge of routes and landmarks, bumps in the road, and traffic lights will assist the sighted person in finding their way quickly and easily. Your knowledge of building layouts can also assist the sighted person in navigating complex shopping malls and office buildings. Sighted people tend to be very proud and are reluctant to ask for assistance. Be gentle yet firm.

How do sighted people use computers?

The sighted person relies exclusively on visual information. His or her attention span fades quickly when reading long texts so it is best to write in bulleted lists of very brief items. The use of bright colors will help the sighted person stay focused. Computer information is presented to the sighted in a graphical manner to assist them in comprehending their world. Coordination of hands and eyes is often a preoccupation with sighted people so the computer mouse, a handy device that slides along the desk top, saves confusing keystrokes. With one button the sighted person can move around his

or her computer screen quickly and easily, if not necessarily efficiently. People who are sighted are not accustomed to synthetic speech and may have great difficulty understanding even the clearest synthesizer, falling asleep between syllables or becoming distracted by a spot on the carpet. Be patient and prepared to explain many times how your computer works.

How do sighted people read?

Reading is accomplished by the sighted person through a system called "print," which is a series of images drawn in a two dimensional plain. People who are sighted generally have a poorly developed sense of touch. Braille is completely foreign to them and severe bouts of disorientation can sometimes result from over exposure to the use of the higher senses.

Sighted people cannot function well in dimly lit conditions and are generally completely helpless and often devastatingly frightened in total darkness. Their homes are usually very brightly lit at great expense as are businesses that cater to the sighted. Naturally these costs are passed on to the consumer.

How can I support the sighted person?

People who are sighted do not want your charity. They want to live, work, and play alongside you on as equal a basis as possible. You must ignore their tendency to display feelings that they are superior to you. Failing to allow them this delusion may promote aberrant and antisocial behavior. The best thing you can do to support sighted people in your community is to simply open yourself to their world and help open their limited world to the bounty of your experience. These citizens are vital contributing members of the community, real people with thoughts and feelings, hopes and dreams and a story to tell. Take a sighted person to lunch today and make them feel like you truly care.

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