

The Courtesy Rules of Blindness

When you meet me don't be ill at ease. It will help both of us if you remember these simple points of courtesy:

1. I'm an ordinary person, just blind. You don't need to raise your voice or address me as if I were a child. Don't ask my spouse what I want — ask me.
2. I may use a long white cane or a guide dog to walk independently; or I may ask to take your arm. Let me decide, and please don't grab my arm; let me take yours. I'll keep a half-step behind to anticipate curbs and steps.
3. I want to know who's in the room with me. Speak when you enter. Introduce me to the others. Include children, and tell me if there's a cat or dog.
4. The door to a room or cabinet or to a car left partially open is a hazard to me.
5. At dinner I will not have trouble with ordinary table skills
6. Don't avoid words like "see". I use them, too. I'm always glad to see you.
7. I don't want pity. But don't talk about the "wonderful compensations" of blindness. My sense of smell, touch, or hearing did not improve when I became blind. I rely on them more and, therefore, may get more information through those senses than you do — that's all.
8. If I'm your houseguest, show me the bathroom, closet, dresser, window — the light switch, too. I like to know if the lights are on.
9. I'll discuss blindness with you if you're curious, but it's an old story to me. I have as many other interests as you do.
10. Don't think of me as just a blind person. I'm just a person who happens to be blind.

In all 50 states, the law requires drivers to yield the right of way when they see my extended white cane. Only the blind may carry white canes. You see more blind persons today walking alone, not because there are more of us, but because we have learned to make our own way.