You can play an important role in ensuring a positive interaction with a person with a disability by remembering a few simple tips:

1. Ensure that your actions and behavior in communicating with persons with disabilities respects their dignity, independence and right for the same treatment as anyone else.
2. If you are unsure of how to communicate, use common sense and consider how you would expect to be treated in a similar situation.
3. Show the same courtesy and respect when you greet and interact with a person with disabilities as you would in greeting any other person.
4. Don’t make assumptions about the person’s needs or preferences – ask them.
5. And, be aware and follow these tips:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nature of disability:</th>
<th>How to interact effectively with a person with this disability:</th>
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| **Speech Disability**       | • Be patient, don’t interrupt person or try to complete the person’s thoughts  
                              | • Be honest if you don’t understand the person; politely ask them to repeat themselves or invite them to tell you in a different way (such as writing it down) if appropriate |
| **Hearing Disability**      | • Gently touch the person to ensure that they know that you are addressing them  
                              | • Ask the person how they prefer to communicate (may include speech, sign language, writing, gestures, through a support person etc.)  
                              | • Ensure that the environment is conducive to the type of communication that will be used (e.g. well light, minimal distractions, enable good visual contact etc.), |
| **Physical Disability**     | • Respect the person’s individual space; don’t lean into their space without their permission  
                              | • Do not interfere with their assistive devices by moving them or adjusting them without their permission  
                              | • Interact at eye level whenever possible  
                              | • Do not assume the person requires your assistance; ask if they do |
| Visual Disability                                                                 | • Gently touch the person to ensure that they know that you are addressing them  
|                                                                                   | • Introduce yourself and others who are present or may arrive                    
|                                                                                   | • Tell the person when you are leaving                                            
|                                                                                   | • Face the person when you are speaking and speak in your normal tone and volume  
|                                                                                   | • If you are traveling with the person, ask if they need your assistance (such as taking their arm and guiding them)  
|                                                                                   | • Inform the person of any important posted information/signage                   
|                                                                                   | • If the person uses a service animal, review the tips for interacting with a person with a service animal |
| Cognitive Disability                                                              | • Treat adults with cognitive disabilities as adults, not children                
|                                                                                   | • Be flexible in your approach to communicating with the person by paying attention to how they are responding (e.g. confusion, avoidance, over stimulation etc.)  
|                                                                                   | • Be patient, don’t interrupt person or try to complete the person’s thoughts     
|                                                                                   | • Be honest if you don’t understand the person; ask them to repeat themselves if needed |

Adapted from the Alberta Health Services, Calgary Health Region, *Communicating Effectively with People with Disabilities* resource