

"Quick Tips"  
to Remember in an Emergency Situation when  
Interacting with Individuals Having a Disability

Their Emotional Expressions.....

- may be appropriate or inappropriate
- may be exaggerated or withdrawn
- may not be representative of what they are really feeling; inappropriate affect
- may become aggressive out of anxiety, fear, disruption - may kick, spit, scratch, bite, hit
- may have difficulty waiting/being patient
- may want to be physically closer or not want anyone in their personal space

Possible Language Barriers

- receptive and expressive language delays
- may be nonverbal or have very limited expressive skills
- may use a communication device
- may affect their ability to follow your instructions

Possible Cognitive Impairments

- mild to profound delays
- affects ability to understand what is going on and what is needed
- affects comprehension of safety factors

Physical Involvement

- use of wheelchairs or other adaptive equipment
- poor balance and mobility

May be Medical Overlays

- may have special medical conditions
- seizure disorders not uncommon
- may take psychotropic and/or other medications

What you can do.....

- stay calm yourself and model calm and confidence; be pleasant yourself
- be very aware of the above issues
- look for medical alert jewelry
- use simple language; short sentences
- use your sense of humor to build rapport
- keep individuals well supervised
- use pictures to help communicate