

# DATING

WITH   
DISABILITIES



Relationships are difficult to navigate and can be even more daunting as an individual with a disability. If you want to get started but are unsure about how, here are some tips and tricks to make dating more accessible for everyone!

# UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS AND LIMITATIONS

You are the most knowledgeable person about your challenges and how they affect your life. Before you begin looking for a new relationship, it is important to be familiar with what you require to stay comfortable and what you need to avoid to limit triggers.

For example, if you have a physical disability, you may need to consider what date locations would be most accessible for you. If you have a mental disability, you may need to consider if there are places, personalities, sounds, or other things that are triggers for you.

There is nothing wrong with having boundaries when it comes to forming relationships. Boundaries help to keep misunderstandings and disappointment minimal so you can enjoy your new relationship to the fullest!

# UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS AND LIMITATIONS

You should also outline your needs and limitations outside of the lens of disability. Here are questions you should ask yourself before you begin dating.

- Are you comfortable with someone you are unfamiliar with being close to you?
  - If so, how close?
- Who is allowed to touch you?
  - Are you comfortable with someone you are unfamiliar with touching you, and in what ways?
- What language are you comfortable with?
- What values are most important to you?
  - Is it important to you that people you connect with share those values?
- Are there personality traits of potential romantic connections that are dealbreakers for you?

# BE OPEN AND HONEST ABOUT YOUR DISABILITY

Creating open and honest communication from the beginning is crucial to maintaining a healthy relationship. There is nothing embarrassing about living with a disability and a person worth having a connection with will feel the same way. Plus, honesty is more attractive!

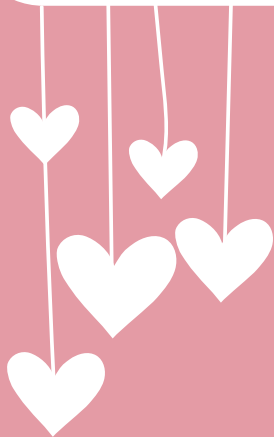
In fact, according to a study conducted by the University of Rome, faces of people who were perceived to be honest were rated more attractive than those who were not.



# TAKE THINGS SLOW

Whether it is your very first date or just your first date with a new person, remember to take things slow. Dating is a process and finding the right person for you includes trial and error.

If you go on a few first dates and none of them go further than that, don't feel discouraged. That is just one of the many parts of dating and is not a reflection of you or what you have to offer.

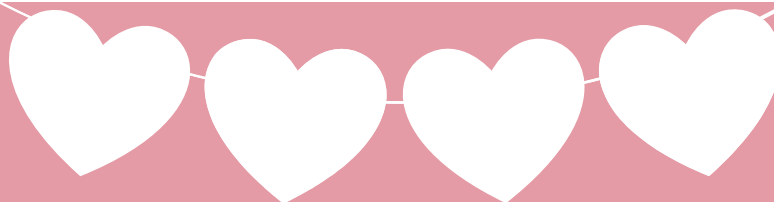


# CONSIDER USING DATING APPS

Dating apps are a great way to meet many people that you may not have otherwise encountered. App stores even have dating apps specifically designed for people with disabilities. Some of these include, [SpecialBridge](#), [Dateability](#), [Udolly](#), and more.

Whether you choose to use the specialty dating apps or the preference-free ones, they offer a great way to explore what you are and are not looking for in partner.

If you choose to use apps, please remember to always be safe. Let a trusted individual in your life know where you are going and who you will be with.



# HAVE CONFIDENCE

You have every right to feel confident about what you have to offer. According to an article written by Modern Recovery, these are some strategies to boost your self-esteem.

- Look in the mirror and give yourself praise for the qualities about yourself that you like (kindness, compassion, resilience, etc). Studies show that positive self-talk boosts confidence.
- Practice “I am” statements to help affirm your positive qualities. (EX: I am kind, I am thoughtful, etc.)
- Set goals and celebrate when you make progress. Praising yourself for little wins can adjust your mindset to a more positive outlook.
- Give yourself more responsibilities. The more things you have to do, the less time you have to overthink about your situation or indulge in negative thoughts.



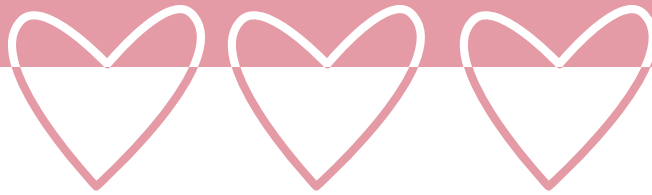
# LEARN THE TRAITS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

One way to avoid relationships that are bad for your mental/physical health is to learn the traits of a healthy relationship prior to beginning your dating journey.

The National Council on Independent Living provides many videos regarding this topic. To view their YouTube series, click [HERE](#).



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