

# Common Myths and Facts

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**MYTH:** Parents/families of people with disabilities are embarrassed and ashamed of their family member and do not really love or want their child/sibling.

**FACT:** Families love their children regardless of disabilities and have the same feelings of protectiveness and nurturing that all of us feel. For most families, love for one another is not dependant upon 'perfection'.

**MYTH:** People with disabilities are very special, heroic, courageous, and overcome unusual obstacles in their lives.

**FACT:** Most people with disabilities consider their disability as just another quality of their existence but not the most single defining quality of their lives. They simply live their lives and do not prefer to be treated any different than people without disabilities. People are not either dependant or courageous, they're just people who are both dependent and courageous and everything in between at different times in their lives. Like everyone else, individual people may accomplish something incredible and then become an inspiration.

**MYTH:** People with developmental disabilities are simple people that cannot learn or understand complex things.

**FACT:** People with developmental disabilities have an ability to learn. Their rate of learning varies depending on the person and their degree or type of disability. Everybody learns.

**MYTH:** Children and adults with disabilities can't make their own friends and also prefer to be with other people like them.

**FACT:** Most people with disabilities enjoy a wide circle of friends and acquaintances based on their gifts and interests, not ability. People with disabilities have friends with and without disabilities.

**MYTH:** Most people with disabilities are really lovable, cuddly, easy to please and happy all the time.

**FACT:** People with disabilities represent a whole range of personality types just like people without disabilities. The existence of a disability doesn't dictate disposition.

**MYTH:** People who have disabilities are sick and their disability may be contagious.

**FACT:** Disabilities are a natural part of the human experience. Individuals with disabilities have varying levels of need and are sometimes sick just like anyone else. Disabilities are not contagious.

**MYTH:** Many people with disabilities have behavior problems, are unpredictable and are dangerous.

**FACT:** The existence of a disability doesn't necessarily dictate disposition. People with and without disabilities who feel angry and lonely for whatever reason can sometimes behave badly. Many times behaviour problems are a response to a person's life and conditions.



**MYTH:** People with certain disabilities don't really know what's going on around them and are off in their own world.

**FACT:** Perceptions can be deceiving. People with disabilities are self-aware and like everyone, crave connections and a relationship with the world around us.

**MYTH:** People with disabilities don't have the same feelings as other people.

**FACT:** People with disabilities have the ability to feel love, joy, disappointment, rejection, etc. just like everyone else and demonstrate their reaction in many different ways.

**MYTH:** People with disabilities physically suffer from their disability.

**FACT:** Most people with disabilities consider their disability to be just one factor of their existence. Suffering is not contingent upon the existence of a disability. The most disabling condition for many of us is isolation and loneliness.

**MYTH:** Adults with disabilities have nothing to contribute and are an economic burden to society.

**FACT:** Most people with disabilities desire and are able to contribute both economically and civically to their communities, when allowed the opportunity.

**MYTH:** Adults with disabilities are really children in adult bodies.

**FACT:** Adults with developmental disabilities experience the same physical maturation as everyone else. IQ levels aren't the only indicator of adulthood. People with disabilities are often kept in the child role through other people's expectations and stereotypes.

**MYTH:** Adults with disabilities don't have sexual desire and are unable to experience sexual feelings.

**FACT:** People with disabilities have the same ability to mature and develop socio-sexual identities as everyone else.

**MYTH:** The birth of a child with a disability is the result of 'spiritual punishment'.

**FACT:** Disability can be caused by factors at birth or as a result of genetic conditions. Most instances of disabilities occur randomly and across all socio-demographic populations. The existence of a disability is not a form of punishment.

**MYTH:** There's a lot you should learn and know before interacting with someone with a developmental disability.

**FACT:** There is no special training or knowledge required to interact with someone with a developmental disability. Sometimes getting to know someone with a disability can take time and sensitivity. Consider the person first, and the disability second.

