Class Activities for **Chapter 8: Physical Challenges and Supportive Services**

**Class activity #1**

Hand out this disability etiquette quiz to your students and ask them to complete it individually. After allowing enough time, review each question, asking for volunteers to provide their answers and the rationale for them.

1. If I see someone who uses a wheelchair struggling with an entrance to a building, it’s okay to help them by holding the door open with my foot and helping push the wheelchair through.

True False

2. It is best not to ask a person with a service dog if they would mind if I pet their dog, since the dog is working to help that person.

True False

3. If someone has a speech impairment and is hard to comprehend when she speaks, I should do my best job to guess what she is saying before I respond, rather than asking each time I am unsure.

True False

4. When someone is hard of hearing or deaf, if I do not know sign language, I should avoid trying to communicate with him.

True False

5. When someone with communication difficulties has an interpreter with her, I should speak directly to the interpreter rather than to the person with whom I’m communicating.

True False

6. It is okay to ask people with disabilities about their disabilities.

True False

7. It is acceptable to refer to someone who has epilepsy as “an epileptic.”

True False

8. People who are blind have an enhanced sense of hearing, so when you meet such a person anew after having met previously, you do not need to mention your name—they will remember your voice and find it insulting that you said what your name is.

True False

Key: 2 and 6 are true; the rest are false.

**Class activity #2**

Create a drawing of 5-7 basic shapes on an 8 ½ by 11 piece of paper, with some of the shapes touching, overlapping, or interlocking. Make enough copies for half of the class to get one of them. Distribute blank pieces of paper to the rest of the class. Have each person with a drawing pair up with someone who has a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. The students with the copy of the drawing should not show the drawing to their partners.

Tell the students with the drawing that they are going to explain to their partners how to reproduce the drawing, but they must use only gestures—no sounds. Additionally, the student receiving the instructions must keep their drawing hidden at all times, perhaps behind a book or folder standing on the desk. Police this fairly strictly. The students doing the drawing may ask questions of those who are gesturing. Give them about five minutes to attempt to reproduce the drawing.

The students who are drawing should then flip their sheets over. For the next round, the people with the drawings may speak in their efforts to get their partners to reproduce the drawing. However, those who are drawing may not ask questions and must draw with their non-dominant hand. Again, the drawings should be hidden from those who are giving instructions until they are completed.

Have the students compare their drawings to the original. Lead them in a discussion of what it was like to try to communicate without one of their typical abilities. What was most challenging? What emotions did they feel through the process? (If you have students in the class who have disabilities, comparing their experiences to those of the students in the class may be instructive, depending on the specific nature of the disability.) How would it be different for them had they lacked that ability since birth? Discuss the struggle in adjusting to a new disability. Does this increase their empathy for those with disabilities? In what ways does this simple activity fail to give a true picture of what it is like to live with a disability? (There are many, which could be a very valuable truth to point out; for instance, this doesn’t simulate the discrimination that many people with disabilities encounter.)

**Class activity #3**

Encourage your students to spend 15-20 minutes walking around the campus in groups of 3 to 4. Have them bring a notebook and writing utensil with them. Note that although the ADA was passed in 1990, there remain many problems with accessibility of public facilities for people with disabilities. Have your students look for as many examples as they can find of challenges that would be faced by people with particular disabilities. Encourage them to truly try to experience the campus through a different lens than they normally do. If you have some students who do have disabilities, they are (of course) welcome to point out aspects of the campus that cause them struggles, or things they observe that would cause issues for people with different disabilities.

After students return, have them share their findings. What examples are most glaring? Is there anything they feel should truly be acted upon? If so, what steps would they take to make that change? Why do so many of these challenges still exist a quarter-century after the ADA was made law?