active disability ireland

Inclusive Fitness – Factsheet

Supporting Someone with a Disability/Impairment



Intellectual Disability

- Level of support may vary depending on the persons ability.
- Praise when success is achieved, encourage when not
- Organisation is key - build routine and familiarity
- Plan and allow for additional time to offer support
- Break the skill down into small parts and build it up
- Give clear step-by-step instructions and language
- Use demos and visual clues for the task
- Regularly check to ensure the person understands the instructions
- Only speak to the parent/carer if the individual is unable to communicate

Physical Disability

- Ask the individual what they area ABLE to do
- Ask if the individual would like any specific assistance
- A mobility aid (wheelchair/stroller/cane etc.) is very much part of someone's personal space.
- Do not lean or sit on mobility aids
- Consider surfaces: gravel / rubber vs. concrete / wood / track
- Discuss possible adaptations - TREE
- Consider rest time in planning an activity

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Develop system of simple signs
- Avoid exaggerating lip movement
- Avoid actions that would make lip reading difficult i.e. Covering your mouth.
- To attract attention, wave or tap the individual on the shoulder
- Face the athlete, ensure you have their full attention
- Provide clear and concise instructions
- Check that the athlete understands the instructions
- Use diagrams or pictures to emphasise points if required

Blind or Vision Impairment

- Level of sight can vary from person to person, at different times of the day & in different environments
- Orientate individual in unfamiliar settings or venue/facility layouts i.e. clock
- Keep background noise to a minimum
- Keep floor space free of obstacles and Inform the individual of any changes in layout.
- Use the persons name to get their attention
- Introduce yourself immediately to the individual
- When leading offer your elbow and walk slightly ahead • Give as much verbal feedback as possible

Neurodiverse

- Level of support needed can fluctuate based on environment, energy, and sensory overload.
- Provide clear structure, routine, and predictable schedules; notify participants of changes in advance.
- Offer a quiet or low-sensory space where participants can take a break if overwhelmed.
- Keep instructions concise, direct, and avoid using overly abstract or ambiguous metaphors.
- Be mindful of sensory triggers like whistle sounds, bright lighting, or loud music.
- Allow processing time after giving instructions before expecting immediate action or response.
- Respect non-traditional social engagement (e.g., preference to avoid eye contact or unique focus styles).

Mental Health

- Focus on creating a welcoming, non-judgmental environment where participation is low-pressure.
- Recognise that energy, motivation, and confidence levels can vary significantly from week to week.
- Offer flexible options to join in, step back, or take self-paced breaks without drawing unwanted attention.
- Use positive, encouraging language to build confidence and lower anxiety around performance.
- Avoid calling individuals out publicly; give constructive feedback privately and discreetly.
- Provide clear details on what to expect prior to the session to reduce pre-arrival anxiety.
- Emphasise social connection, enjoyment, and personal effort over rigid outcome-based metrics.

Long-Term Health Conditions

- Understand that symptoms such as fatigue, pain, or breathlessness can fluctuate daily.
- Encourage self-pacing and normalise participants taking rest breaks whenever necessary.
- Offer simple progression and regression options for physical activities so participants can adjust intensity.
- Ask the individual directly about their comfort limits and what adaptations work best for them.
- Plan for appropriate warm-up and cool-down periods to assist with joint and muscle readiness.
- Be aware of medication timing or environmental triggers like extreme temperatures.
- Focus on continuous movement within a comfortable range rather than high-intensity output.