



Educational Assistance Center

THE ADVOCATE: A Newsletter Devoted to Disability Equity



INTERNATIONAL EPILEPSY DAY IS FEB 13

QUICK FACTS

Epilepsy is the fourth most common neurological disorder in the world, yet misconceptions about it abound. Here are some quick facts and myth busters, as per the Epilepsy Foundation:

1. It is impossible to swallow your tongue during a seizure.
2. Never force something into the mouth of someone having a seizure. This may lead to chipped teeth or a broken jaw.
3. Do not restrain someone having a seizure. Follow the Triple S Rule: STAY with the person, keep them SAFE, and turn them on their SIDE.
4. Epileptic seizures can start at any age, from childhood to later adulthood, and are often the after effect of other health problems such as stroke or heart disease.
5. Epilepsy isn't rare. 1 in 26 people develop it in their lifetime.
6. Seizures look different from one person to another. They do not always involve convulsions.
7. Some epileptics experience short "absence seizures" that involve a sudden stillness and staring into space.

Epilepsy does not prevent people from living full lives. Here are just a few famous people with epilepsy:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Teddy Roosevelt | Edgar Allan Poe |
| Harriet Tubman | James Madison |
| Hugo Weaving | John Roberts |
| Prince | Neil Young |
| Danny Glover | Charles Dickens |

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR SUGGESTION FOR NEXT MONTH'S CONTENT?

Contact Leo Orange at lorange@vccd.edu



Negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviors toward individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses have existed across cultures throughout history. Because people with disabilities have often been perceived as deviating from socially defined norms, it is essential that education professionals use nondisabling, respectful language.

The definitions below help clarify attitudes and terminology that are often misunderstood when discussing disability. An **impairment** refers to an abnormality or loss of a physiological structure or bodily function. A **disability** is the consequence of an impairment and involves a restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity considered typical or appropriate. A **handicap** describes the social disadvantage that results from an impairment or disability. Importantly, an impairment does not always result in a disability, and a disability does not necessarily create a handicap. Disability and handicap are socially defined and influenced by attitudes, whereas impairment is not.

For example, poor vision corrected with glasses is not considered a handicap. Similarly, old age may be viewed as a handicap in some cultures, while in others it is valued, with the elderly respected as leaders and sources of wisdom.

Because of its negative implications, the term “handicapped” should never be used to describe a person.

Language often portrays individuals with disabilities in imprecise, stereotypical, or devaluing ways. To avoid this, language should follow four guiding principles. **Precision** ensures that language accurately conveys meaning. For instance, a person is not “wheelchair-bound” or “confined,” but rather uses a wheelchair for mobility. **Objectivity** requires avoiding language that reflects bias or opinion presented as fact. **Perspective** emphasizes the person rather than the disability, such as saying “a person with paraplegia” instead of “a paraplegic.” **Portrayal** encourages depicting people with disabilities as active participants in life, rather than as victims, tragic figures, or heroic exceptions.

Professors and professional staff at colleges must use **nondisabling language** when interacting with and referring to individuals with disabilities. Professional literature has consistently highlighted how imprecise or stereotypical language can diminish a person’s sense of capability and power. Language should be exact, respectful, and free from ambiguity.

Terms such as “victim” or “sufferer” should be avoided due to their negative and passive connotations. While students may express personal preferences regarding terminology, professors, administrators, and staff hold professional responsibility for setting a respectful tone. The language used in professional relationships influences attitudes, expectations, and outcomes. For this reason, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) strongly encourages **person-first language**, placing the individual before the disability.

ACCESSIBLE FONTS: BEST PRACTICES

Did you know the digital landscape currently offers over 550,000 official fonts? Talk about decision fatigue! Selecting one for your next handout or syllabus may require some consideration.

When it comes to distributing content to students or the public at large, the most important consideration is—you guessed it—accessibility. In this case, **sans-serif** fonts are the way to go. These are cleaner fonts without extra horizontal lines that can make reading more difficult for those with reading disabilities. Go-to sans-serif fonts include **Arial** (used here!), **Calibri**, and **Verdana**, whereas serif fonts to avoid include Courier, Garamond, and Times New Roman.

To be as inclusive as possible, font size must be at least **12 points**. 14-point font is even better, as it is considered the recommended size for older adults and those with visual impairments.

OpenDyslexic is a font designed with dyslexic readers in mind. The intention behind its “weighted” digital ink is to help dyslexic readers distinguish characters that could be flipped upside-down or left-to-right (“b” and “d”, for example). OpenDyslexic is rarely offered within a standard suite of selectable fonts, but it can be added to most browsers via extensions.

This is an
example of
the Open Dyslexic
Typeface

Does it work? Maybe. OpenDyslexic is fraught with controversy, as the idea assumes dyslexia is a visual problem rather than a processing difference. In practice, many claim it helps them read more fluently, while many claim it does not.

The takeaway? **Use 12pt Arial font** to make your text as generally accessible as possible.

EAC STAFF SPOTLIGHT: JOANNE CHANG



Joanne Chang is an Oxnard College alumna who has proudly served as a Part-Time Professor with the (EAC) since 2017, teaching Learning Skills (LS) classes and supporting students in developing foundational academic skills and confidence for college success.

Joanne has concurrently worked at Adolfo Camarillo High School since 2003, serving as an Educational Specialist and Special Education Department Chair. In this role, she provides instructional leadership, oversees special education programming, and advocates for inclusive, student-centered practices.

Outside of her work, Joanne enjoys tending her rose garden and traveling with her family. Her favorite quote by Pablo Picasso captures her philosophy as an educator: *“The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The meaning of life is to give your gift away.”*

