

Disability Campaign.org

Party Strategies for People with Disabilities



Photo Credit: McNeillLifeStories.com

Parties are a great time to get together with family and friends, but for people with disabilities family reunions and holidays can be a struggle. Still, having a disability, chronic pain or illness, or a child with autism doesn't inevitably mean you can't host an end-of-the-year office party or attend the next wedding. Most people and families with disabilities can participate at some level. Though it will take some effort, with careful planning and self-care, parties and get-togethers may be an option for you or your family. Below are some tips for attendees and hosts on how to "celebrate well" with a disability.

Hosting with Disabilities

- Remember to do things at your own pace.
- Don't be afraid to delegate others to help do some of the party tasks. Perhaps you can have a potluck and ask the party guests to bring a dish by hosting. See if a friend can clean your home or run errands for you; helping hands will take some pressure off of you.



Image: TheRefinedPalate.com

- Consider using outside vendors, such as a house-cleaning service, or buying “pre-made” meals (dinner platters) and desserts if you have the means and don't feel comfortable asking your guests or friends to help.
- Plan your party or reunion well in advance to reduce stress.
- Have a schedule and know when things need to be done. Sort items on your to-do list by their level of priority.
- Have a set time for when your event will start and end.
- Know what you can handle and embrace your limits; the most important thing is to take care of yourself.

Hosting for a guest with disabilities

- Know that your guest might come late and leave early.
- Ask all your guests if they have any food allergies or sensitivities to fragrances. Some people have sensitivities and allergies, including those that are life threatening, and you may not know it. If you cannot accommodate their special needs, let them they are welcome to bring a dish or snacks for themselves or to share with the rest of the party guests.
- If the person needs extra assistance with anything, such as with feeding or upon entering your home, make sure someone is there to help. Be willing to make them feel comfortable and at ease.
- If they don't like crowds or need to lie down due to fatigue, prepare an empty room or quiet, safe space where they can go and relax.
- If they are in a wheelchair, create space around the house and the table for them to move around. If you don't have an accessible entrance, make sure the person knows and ask how you can make your home more accessible.
- Do what is best for your guest but respect their space; not everyone needs or wants help. Don't pity them; rather, show empathy. Be of encouragement and show understanding and care.

Attending with a disability

- The night before the party, do your best to get a full night's sleep. The day of the reunion, eat well and minimize stress to improve your chances of feeling better (or at least not feeling worse). Although there are factors of your illness or disability you cannot control, make a conscious effort to be well and be aware of how you're feeling prior to the event and on the day of the party.

- The key is to communicate with the host. Let him or her know if you're having a bad day and inform your host of any allergies for them to consider for food preparation.
- Always be prepared if you need a ramp or any form of transportation. Don't assume that the host will have an accessible entrance.
- If you take medications, make sure they are packed and ready to go, especially emergency medications.
- If possible, tell the host that you may need special assistance such as with eating or walking. Also inform him or her that your health may require you leave early.
- Don't feel bad if you need to excuse yourself and leave. Most people will show understanding and consideration. Just ask politely to be excused.



Image: Franciscan-Services.com

Attending with children who have disabilities

- If you are attending a party with a child who has disabilities, know that what may be fun for you may not be for them or vice versa.
- Your child is more than likely accustomed to routine, so have the party on the calendar in advance. Discuss with your child some details about the reunion so they can get prepared and feel more comfortable while at the party.
- Have a set time when to leave, but be flexible if necessary.

- Prepare and pack your child's medications, medical supplies, insurance cards etc. and carry them with you, including any doctor's notes. This is especially important if you are traveling long-distance, such as to attend a holiday party or family reunion.
- Don't be afraid to ask the host for help if you or your child need it.
- Your child might need a quiet room to relax if he or she has a tantrum or is not feeling well. Let the hostess know these things so that they will prepare a room in advance.
- This is a different environment for your child and they're adjusting the best they know how. If you feel you must leave early, kindly excuse yourself with the host if possible.

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