

Congregation Dorshei Tzedek Guidelines for High Holiday Greeters

Inclusion goes deeper than accessibility. It means believing that all of our congregants and guests should have the opportunity to participate and contribute as comfortably as possible.

Welcoming and taking note of each other's presence is deeply important and may have a greater impact than we realize, even beyond the actual time spent at services. Greeting is the first step in helping congregants feel welcomed. However, sometimes interactions with those who appear to have a disability can become formal or uncomfortable because the Greeter fears making a mistake in communication. Genuine warmth and friendliness is what matters the most.

The following guidelines are provided to give you information and help you feel more comfortable and knowledgeable about best practices in inclusion. As we all know, people face many unseen struggles (not only disabilities), and we do not necessarily know how people are doing, so instead of asking "How are you?" it's lovely to say things like "It's nice to see you," "I'm glad you're here," or whatever works for you! Here are some more tips:

- **Speak directly to people with disabilities** when accompanied by an assistant, family member, or ASL interpreter.
- **Use normal tone and volume** when speaking to people with disabilities.
- **Give extra time as needed.** Some people need more time to process information and/or formulate a response.
- **Be prepared to repeat or re-phrase the request or suggestion.** Sometimes just changing the order of the words is helpful.
- **Be sensitive about physical contact.** For people with sensory issues some things can feel very uncomfortable.
- **Understand that many needs are invisible,** such as: (1) needing easy access to restroom for medical reasons, (2) pain, (3) limited mobility, (4) feeling distraught in new situations, (5) uncomfortable sensory experiences, (6) restlessness, (7) confusion, (8) difficulty understanding and following directions.
- **Respond in ways that are supportive, kind, and calm** if a congregant or guest seems emotionally overwhelmed or is calling out in a way that might seem disruptive. We don't know what their internal experience is.
- **Be warm and kind to the parents/guardians of children with disabilities.** If their child is struggling let them handle it, do not intervene, but instead ask if they need anything – "What can I do to help?" Let them know you're glad they're here with us at services.
- **For adults, don't assume that help is needed.** Ask if you can be of assistance and then let the person describe what would be helpful.
- **Face everyone to whom you are speaking.** Many people with hearing impairments use lip-reading to help. It is often impossible to know who is affected by hearing loss.
- **Try to keep lobby quiet, less crowded.** In addition to the noise being a general distraction, this is a barrier for people with sensory or processing issues and for

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people with visual, hearing, balance, or mobility impairments. **Remove physical obstacles.**

- **Consider asking a volunteer** to temporarily take over your responsibilities while you provide assistance to those in need.