

EMPOWERING OURSELVES

In this issue we will focus our air travel section on getting to and onto the airplane. We are also including an article on emotional stress for persons with mobility disabilities—an overlooked topic!

Please share your thoughts and suggestions and we will publish those as well.

Together we can make a difference!

Grow Our Alliance

We can advocate more effectively the
larger our Alliance is.

Invite friends and family to join!

TIPS FOR AIR TRAVEL

Part 2: Getting to and on the Plane

Airports usually have long distances to walk & multiple times to stand in line. To help yourself, think of having a limited number of steps that you can “spend” in your trip. Being able to walk 35 feet comfortably means you have about 14 steps to parcel out so that you do not end up in unnecessary pain. Here are suggestions:

1. Ask to be seated while you are getting check-in service.
2. Insist on staying in a wheelchair and getting a manual pat-down at security.
3. Resist being placed on a cart for distance unless they will take you by wheelchair right up to the gate check-in.
4. Get wheelchair assistance right up to the door of the plane.
5. Ask for help with getting your carry-on to your seat & stowed.

The key is not being pressured into walking too far!

Managing Emotional Stress

When we are in pain from physical difficulties, it is easy to overlook the emotional stress of others’ reactions to us. But emotional stress can be as taxing as physical pain. Here are examples we need to recognize & manage:

1. Ingratiating to ensure goodwill

In many situations we are dependent on the goodwill of others to help us. Even when we feel tired, irritable, or in pain, we may feel that we must be pleasant and grateful. In employment contexts, this is called “emotional labor” and it can be very wearing.

2. Constant self-advocacy

When others don’t recognize that they have inappropriate expectations regarding distance to be walked or time standing, we have the tension of whether to self-advocate or let it go (i.e., avoid the hassle and accept the pain).

3. Resisting guilt tripping

Sometimes others are aware (on some level) that their expectations are inappropriate, but they feel inconvenienced by the need to accommodate. Instead they try to pressure us into poor self-care—e.g., “If you would just walk to the top of the jetway...”

4. Insisting on being addressed directly

While remaining independently mobile is important, there are times when we need wheelchair assistance for long distances. All too often others will ask our “pusher” questions that should be addressed directly to us. It can be tiring to have to politely remind someone to talk to us directly.

5. Being ignored when asking for help

In order to remain independently mobile, we may sometimes walk further than is comfortable and find ourselves almost unable to move. Particularly if we have walked too far without a visible mobility aid, it can be challenging to convince another to help us.

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