

Tips for meeting blind people

What to do when you meet someone who has low vision or is blind.

- **Introduce yourself!** Even though they may know you, they may not recognise your voice.
- If you leave the room tell them you are leaving. No one likes to be talking to themselves.
- Introduce others in the group and use people's names so the person who has low vision or is blind knows who you are speaking to.
- Always **direct questions to the person** who has low vision or is blind, not the person they are with. Just because their vision is less doesn't mean they can't talk.
- Do not interact with guide dogs while they are wearing their harness. Distracting a working guide dog could be dangerous.
- You don't need to talk loudly to someone who is blind or has low vision, just talk clearly.
- Don't be afraid to use words like see, look and watch. People who are blind or have low vision use them too.
- Give **specific directions** like "behind you, on your left" or "I'm putting the cup by your right hand". Avoid general comments such as "over here" or "it's there".
- If you are going to touch or guide someone, let them know what you are doing before you do it. Say: "I'm just going to take your right arm".
- How much people who are blind or have low vision can see can depend on how much light is around, sudden changes of light levels, whether they are tired, if they are somewhere unfamiliar.
- If you want to know how much they can see, ask them: "Can you see alright, or would you like me to help you?"
- If you want to know if a person who has low vision or is blind needs help – **ask them!**

For more information please contact the Royal NZ Foundation of the Blind: phone 0800 24 33 33 or email: general@rnzfb.org.nz