

# Becoming disfigurement confident

People – with and without disfigurements – often ask us what they can do when they meet each other for the first time. Build your confidence by trying these tips next time you're out and about.

## If you meet someone with a disfigurement...

### Don't know where to look?

Look them in the eye. If this is hard at first, look at the bridge of their nose – it has the same effect.

### Think you might be staring?

It's OK to be interested in someone's face but imagine what it feels like to be stared at every day. Just be sure not to be too interested!

### Don't know what to say?

Say 'hello' – sometimes it's as simple as that!

hello!

Do you mind if I asked you what happened?

Talk about the weather, the price of petrol, how crowded the bus is – as you would with anyone else.

If you know the person and they have recently acquired the disfigurement, you could say, 'I'm sorry to hear that you've been

unwell/had an accident. How are you?'

'So what happened to you then?' should not be the first thing you say. Wait until you know someone better or until they tell you themselves. If you're still curious, say something like, 'Do you mind if I ask what happened?' – be prepared that they may choose not to reply.

Express interest in something about them, for example, 'You're my first customer today. Would you like some more coffee?'

### Don't know what to do?

Shake hands if appropriate.

Smile.

Nod your head in acknowledgement of their presence.

Hi! How are you today?  
Can I get you a coffee?

## If you have a disfigurement...

### Is someone staring?

Make eye contact.

Smile at them, raise your eyebrow or say something about the weather, the price of petrol or how crowded the bus is – it breaks the tension.

If they continue to look, say assertively, 'I would prefer it if you did not stare at me.'

OK,  
OK, enough of  
the admiring  
glances..!

Or say in a joking way, 'OK, enough of the admiring glances!'

Or distract the other person by saying something like, 'William carries his teddy everywhere. Does your daughter have a special toy too?'

### If someone asks you a question about your disfigurement.

Give a brief response. Move the conversation on:

Try saying, 'I was burned when I was younger. It was a long time ago and I don't talk about it now. So, how did you meet John?'

Happy to talk about it in a general way:

Try saying, 'I was burned when I was younger. Our house caught fire but I don't remember much about it.'

Happy to discuss more personal details:

Try saying, 'I was burned when I was younger. I'm going in again for more plastic surgery. It's very interesting. They are going to expand a balloon under my skin.'

### Overheard someone making a remark about your disfigurement?

Give them a firm assertive look to let them know you heard what they said.

Try saying, 'Very original!'

Try saying, 'Actually my name is...'

Try saying, 'It's just a birthmark. Nothing that interesting.'

Very original!  
Actually, my  
name is...

For more suggestions, please contact *Changing Faces*.