

Peer Information Sheet: Cerebral Palsy

All young people are unique. We all have strengths, and we all have areas where we are still learning. We are all born with our own unique combination of hair, eyes, personality, and our own very unique fingerprints.

*Some people are born with Cerebral Palsy. Just like hair or eyes or fingerprints, this is a **part** of them, but not **who they are**. When you take the time to get to know them, you'll find there are lots of things you have in common.*

About Cerebral Palsy

Teens with cerebral palsy have challenges with their muscle strength and coordination. Muscles are important for many things we do - movement, balance, talking and eating. Cerebral palsy can affect different muscles differently in each person - so some teens might be able to do some of the same things as their peers, while others might find things like movement and talking challenging

Friendship tips

Being a teenager is often a time when friendships become really important to us. We often want to spend more time with people our age who share similar interests. We might worry more about what other people think, because we want to fit in.

Feeling part of a group and feeling like you belong, is important for all young people. This includes teenagers with cerebral palsy. Teens with cerebral palsy like to hang out with friends and join in the activities that their friends are involved in. Activities that involve lots of running, movement or balancing might be challenging for them. You can help by choosing activities that include everybody, or by thinking of ways to change the activity to include everyone.

Moving around at school

Some teens with cerebral palsy might get tired at school. They might move slowly, or they might be shaky sometimes. They might walk a little differently, or they might use a frame or wheelchair to move around. Balancing can also sometimes be tricky. You can help by staying with them when walking somewhere instead of rushing ahead or by carrying their books for them if they would like your help. Keeping classrooms, lockers and other shared spaces clear of obstacles may also be important.

Communication

Teens with cerebral palsy may communicate in a few different ways. Some might not use words to talk. They might use pictures, hand or head signals, or a computer to talk.

Teacher Aides

Some teens might have a teacher's aide or other support staff in the classroom. You can still talk and work with them when their aide is there - their aide is there to support their learning, but they cannot replace the value of working and interacting with other students of the same age.

Stop bullying!

Bullying and exclusion can have a devastating impact on a young person's life. This can be particularly difficult for a young person with a disability if they are excluded, picked on, laughed at and bullied because of their disability. If you see a young person with a disability being excluded or bullied, you can make a big difference in that moment. In fact, your help and support may make a difference or be remembered long after YOU have forgotten all about it!

If you see a young person being bullied at school, and it is safe for you to speak out, speak up and tell those who are bullying to stop. Tell them that it isn't okay and it isn't cool. Standing up for someone else stops bullying more than half of the time! If you are still worried about exclusion or bullying, ask a teacher or another adult for help, or help the young person seek help and support. Speaking up and reaching out can help keep them safe, and can have a lasting impact on their life.

Just like you

Teenagers with cerebral palsy have lots of ways in which they're just like you. They have their own interests, preferences and hopes and dreams, just like you do. They want to feel like their ideas, views and input is valued, just like you do. And they want to feel connected – like they belong – through having friends, going to parties, hanging out, and being included... just like you do.

So remember, you probably have more things in common than you have differences!