

Accessibility Claps and Slaps



Whenever I go out, I often find myself doing accessibility assessments. These may range from big, obvious things to the smaller, more obscure things.

As an example, every time I go into my local CVS, I feel so welcome and invited, as though I've been embraced by big warm pharmaceutical arms. As I approach the entrance, two large doors swiftly slide open, welcoming me inside. It's like the Statue of Liberty version of entrances; give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be supplied with ibuprofen, toothpaste and deodorant.

From a wheelchair user's perspective, this is about as good of an entrance that can possibly exist. I can easily roll in without needing assistance, and I don't take up the whole width of the door, so people can easily get around me if need be. Bravo CVS. Thank you.

On the flipside, there are small things that can really dampen accessibility. The next time you use an elevator in a building, take notice of whether or not there is something placed in front of the buttons. I haven't taken a scientific survey, but I'm estimating that about 50% of the time, a trash can, planter or other such thing has been placed there. I get why it's done. There's usually a need for a trash can in areas such as these and placement near the elevator seems like an obvious choice.

But here's the thing... I've got a big wheelchair and tiny little t-rex arms that seem to be getting weaker by the minute. It makes it difficult or even impossible for me to reach those buttons if something is placed in front of them. This pretty much leaves me with a couple of options. I can awkwardly reach across the trash can or planter and hope that I can hit the

button. Or I can put a sweet smile on my face and hope that a kind stranger will take notice and ask if I need assistance. Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against kind strangers. They're the best and the world needs more of them. It's just that in this particular instance, their help shouldn't be needed. It's a button, for the love of Mike, and I am willing and in fact ecstatic to be able to push it. Just please give me that opportunity.

Like most people, those of us with disabilities just want to be as independent as we possibly can. Barriers such as these exist everywhere. I am so thankful and appreciative of all the hard work and determination that was put in by people before me to make this world a better place for those of us with disabilities, but there is more work to be done. Much of it is simple and easy but takes thought and consideration, like moving the f@#\$%&# trash can to the other side of the room.