

JENNIFER KOLAR AND ATLAS ASSISTANCE DOGS –
TRAIN THE PERSON IN FRONT OF YOU:
MAKE YOUR TRAINING ACCESSIBLE
FENZI DOG SPORTS ACADEMY WEBINAR
THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2021

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Fenzi Dog Sports Academy Webinar

Jennifer Kolar and Atlas Assistance Dogs -

Train the Person in Front of You: Make Your Training Accessible

Thursday, August 19, 2021

3 PM Pacific Time

Melissa Breau: There we go. All right. Welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining us tonight. If you want, say hi in the chat box and let us know where you're joining us from and that you can see and hear us.

Jennifer Kolar: Hi, I'm Jennifer with Atlas Assistance Dogs, and I'm really excited to have everyone here to talk about this really important topic, accessibility in dog training.

Melissa Breau: Awesome. First and foremost, we're working from pre-recorded videos today, so I'll play them here in the platform, but I'm also sharing links to the videos on YouTube. If you have any issues with the platform, you can view them there and then rejoin us for live Q&A. We also have live transcription. I have that link pinned to the chat box, and for this particular presentation as well, Jennifer and her team have also captioned the video itself, which is super exciting.

I'll kick us off with the intro video, and you guys can turn off your mic and camera until Q&A, and we'll see you back here later. Awesome.

[Intro video]

All right, guys. Let's get into our main presentation for tonight. Here we go.

Jennifer Kolar: Hi, everyone. Welcome to our presentation. Today we'll talk

about how to Train the Person in Front of You: Make Your Training Accessible. We'll cover everything from etiquette to changes you can make right now. Keep in mind that working with people with disabilities isn't just for the service dog trainer. There are many people with disabilities who have pet dogs. And there are a lot of ways that you can work with them much more effectively, and support many more clients, with just the handful of tools that we're going to cover today.

We'll now talk about who created the presentation and who is talking to you today. First, I'm Jennifer Kolar, and I'm a white woman with an invisible disability. I have light brown hair and blue eyes and wear glasses. Today I'm wearing a teal shirt. I am one of the founders of Atlas Assistance Dogs, a nonprofit dedicated to using only positive methods to work with people with disabilities to train their own dogs to be service dogs. I have a wide array of personal service dog and dog training credentials, including being an Atlas certified trainer and a diabetic alert dog trainer, as well as a Karen Pryor Academy certified training partner.

Molly Neher: Hi. I'm Molly Neher. I'm the director of operations and programs at Atlas Assistance Dogs. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a white woman with brown hair and green eyes. I'm currently wearing a gray sweatshirt and a flowery top, and I do have a density. I have epilepsy.

Sarah Indano: Hi, folks. I'm Sarah Indano. I am a non-disabled white woman that goes by she/her. I have brown eyes and brown hair that's up in a ponytail right now, and I'm wearing a black shirt currently. By day I am a guide dog mobility instructor, and in the evenings I run a company called Able Trainers, focusing on dog training with accessibility built in from the start. I'm a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, Knowledge-Assessed.

Agnesa Redere: Hi, everyone. I'm Agnesa Redere. I am a non-disabled white woman that also goes by she/her. I have light brown hair and blue eyes, and I'm

currently wearing a floral shirt. As you can see, I have several credentials, including being a Fear-Free certified trainer.

Patty Aguirre: Hi, I'm Patty Aguirre. I'm a retired physical therapist. I'm a white woman with gray hair and glasses. I use she/her pronouns. I have multiple sclerosis, which causes problems with mobility and weakness and fatigue, and I use a mobility dog.

Jennifer Kolar: Let's jump right in to our goals and learning objectives for this presentation. We hope this webinar will help you understand the importance of disability inclusion for your training programs. We also want to identify and challenge assumptions made about disability, and about dog training in relation to disabilities. We want to provide concrete tools to make training accommodating, adaptive, and successful for dog handlers with varying abilities. And, we want to move you forward on an accessible training journey.

This presentation will not get into the specifics of any particular type of disability, but rather broadly examine a starting off point. We'll cover quite a bit, from etiquette to accommodations you can make are right now. Making training accessible benefits everyone.

Agnesa Redere: Before we dive into the how of our talk, we want to dive into the why. Specifically, improving accessibility benefits everyone, because you can reach a wider audience by including those who may not have been included otherwise. It provides you with creative challenges, as you consider how to modify your training exercises to reach the needs of a wide audience. And overall, it just makes the world better for people and dogs, as well as making it kinder and more welcoming.

Molly Neher: Let's talk a bit about disabilities and medical conditions. The definition under the Americans with Disabilities Act is "a physical or mental

impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities," which can mean a variety of different things. It's really a gray area, if you think about it. Two people with the same diagnosis might experience it very differently, and one person may consider themselves disabled, while another with the same diagnosis may not, and may not need the same types of accommodations that the first person might.

So, why is understanding disability rights and talking about disability so important? And not just as dog trainers, but as a whole. First of all, one in four adults in the U.S. are affected by disability, about 26% of the population. Anyone can become disabled at any time in their life. So if you think about it that way, if we're not talking about disability, if we're not acknowledging the experience of disability, that's a huge group of the population we're not talking about and not trying to include into the conversation in society.

Disabilities vary from person to person. Some disabilities are visible and some are not. Someone might be in a wheelchair, or someone else, like me, you would never know had a disability. Something we want to touch upon specifically for this group in this presentation is that often, when we think of people with disabilities who have dogs, we assume that those dogs are service dogs. That's not true. Many people with disabilities have pet dogs. And this is really what this presentation is all about. We're not talking about service dogs. We're talking about pet dogs, and we're talking to pet dog trainers.

Jennifer Kolar: As Molly explained, there is an obvious need to improve inclusivity where we can, starting by improving accessibility. In the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act provides governance to support the rights of disabled people, and the ADA sets forth a definition of accessibility. I have the legal definition of accessibility presented on this slide, but I want to simplify it. When something is accessible, it means there are structures and/or procedures

in place making it possible for people with disabilities to participate and enjoy it to the same extent as individuals without disabilities.

It can be challenging to improve accessibility retroactively. For example, a building not designed to include an accessible bathroom arrangement will not be easily converted. For that reason, we should strive to include accessibility in our considerations from the start.

There's one image on this slide, and I'll describe it for you. This is an image of an accessible hiking trail, and there's one person on the left in a wheelchair, turned and looking back towards a group of people back behind them on the right.

Now that we've covered what accessibility is, let's determine your business's baseline level of accessibility. As I read these questions off, jot down some notes about what your answers would look like. First, how will your clients find and communicate with you? What additional information do you need at intake? How do your clients learn best? How in depth is your knowledge of disability etiquette? Is the location you've chosen to work in accessible? What training aids are optimal for your client? How can your training procedures be modified for people with disabilities? How will your clients optimally cue their dog? And finally, are you prepared if something goes wrong?

Jennifer Kolar: Now, let's talk about questions to ask during your intake session with your clients to really help you best structure an accessible training plan. For example, what are their primary goals and concerns? Some of these, you may already know, and some, you may be trying to guess about. But don't guess. Just ask. Take time to find out what they're concerned about in particular, what might be challenging for them and their dog.

Are there activities that might cause physical pain, such as moving from sitting to standing, or from standing to sitting, or just standing on their feet for a while, or how about moving their hands to use a clicker or hand out treats? Does that cause them pain?

What kind of dexterity and mobility challenges might they have? Do they struggle transitioning between positions, for example, sitting to stand or standing to sit? Are there any environments they might avoid or intentionally seek out? For example, someone with severe social anxiety may not want to go anywhere in public or anywhere with crowds, or they need to be in an environment that has a lot of light, or very limited light, or be warm or be cold. It's not uncommon for people with disabilities to not be able to self-regulate temperature very well.

How do they prefer to take in and process information? Is it better to give them information ahead of time that they can pre-review, so that then when you meet together, they already know what to expect? Do they want you to record the session so they can review the video afterward? Do they need you to send an email summary or take notes? Find out what works best for them.

Find out what the optimal session length is, including when breaks are helpful. I think as dog trainers, we think a lot about what's best for the dog and when the dogs need a break. But we really need to think about the people, too. Even though it may be inconvenient for us if we're driving somebody to work with somebody and we try to schedule a one-hour session, that just might not be possible for someone with disabilities. You may be looking at 15-minute sessions. You may need to take advantage of a mix of remote and in-person training. So really find out what's best for them.

Find out what other specific information they think is relevant about working with them and their dog. Don't assume that just because someone doesn't have an obvious disability that they don't have an individual disability. Also, don't assume

that because they come with certain adaptive technology, that they will want additional assistance. Ask them first about what they need and how to best work with them.

I'll describe this decorative picture on the right. There's a yellow background an American Bulldog on the left smiling, looking up at a Black person on the right, who has short hair and is wearing a blue blazer and brown pants. And they're smiling at each other.

Molly Neher: Now that we've talked a bit about your starting point when you meet with potential clients, we wanted to cover a bit about some disability etiquette do's and don'ts and guidelines when talking with a person with a disability, or talking about disability as a whole.

I'll start off by saying that I do not speak for everyone in the disability community, or for every disabled person. The disability community is large, and full of many different people from all walks of life, and therefore people have different opinions and preferences. What we have laid out here is really a collection of ideas and thoughts, based off of conversations we've had with other disabled folks, service dog handlers, service dog trainers, and people within the community as a whole. But please keep in mind we do not speak for every single disabled person.

So, here are some guidelines. Match the client's tone and language. Some people prefer using person-first language, such as, "I am a person with a disability." Others might prefer using disability-first language, saying, "I am a disabled person." It's really a personal preference, with no right or wrong. It's completely up to the individual. You'll notice throughout this presentation, we use both forms. We say people with disabilities, disabled people, and disabled individuals.

When you're interacting with a client, try to pick up on what they're saying, and if you notice they're leaning one way or another, try to just match that language.

Disability, disabled, non-disabled, etc. are not dirty words. There's often a big discomfort around disability and the word disability in general. But it's nothing to be uncomfortable about. Disability is a word. Disabled is a word. They're not bad words to use.

And on that same level, talking about discomfort, you can laugh along with an individual making a joke about their disability or condition. A lot of people with disabilities do use humor and laugh at themselves or laugh about their disability because honestly, sometimes it's funny. I laugh about my seizure disorder all the time, and I make jokes about it, and so do my close friends. There's nothing worse than being met with a huge wall of discomfort when trying to make a joke or make light of a situation, and pretty much being told, "No, you shouldn't be laughing about this," or "You should be taking this more seriously. That's not funny." No, sometimes it's really funny. I've had some seizures in some really funny places. It's funny.

Believe the person's experience. Don't try to tell your client how they should or shouldn't feel. If a client of yours tells you they're fatigued, even if they don't look like it, or if they tell you they have a migraine even if it doesn't look like it, just believe them.

Talk to the person, not to their equipment or the person or caretaker with them. Sometimes you may have clients who have a helper, a sign language interpreter, or maybe a caretaker helping with the mobility equipment or helping with movement. Your client is still your client. That's who you're interacting with. Obviously, if you want to communicate with the caretaker, you absolutely can, but if you have something to say to your client, talk to your client!

And we'll be saying this a lot throughout the presentation, but ask for what you need to know to provide support, but do your best to not be intrusive. And we're also going to be saying this a lot. You may get it wrong, but if you do, that's okay. Just listen, apologize, accept, and move on.

We have a few do's and don'ts for you. Ask if the person would like assistance or if you can touch their equipment or help with training, but definitely don't touch or push the person's wheelchair or equipment without permission. This is definitely something we have been told by and heard of by many disabled people. Having someone just come up behind them and assume they need help pushing their wheelchair up the hill and going ahead and grabbing it can feel like a very intrusive violation of space, and even sometimes traumatizing for some people. Even if it would be helpful for training purposes for you to handle the wheelchair or the cane or the other equipment in some way, shape, or form, just ask the person first, just like you would ask to touch a part of their body, right?

Before taking over the handling of the dog and assuming the person can't do it, observe what they're doing first. It may take them a little longer than the way you might be training, or longer than how your non-disabled clients would be doing it, or they may train a little differently using some different motions. Maybe they just need more time to think, cognitively, just taking in information differently. Don't just assume they can't because they're doing it differently or not as fast.

And before you even jump in and take over the leash, think of ways you can adapt the training so that your client *can* do the handling. We're obviously going to give you some great tools throughout this presentation, but put your brains together with your client and talk with them and think of good solutions together for the team.

Do include your disabled clients in the same activities as you would other clients. Don't exclude them from other training moments or activities that you would have

other clients participate in. And if your brain immediately jumps to, "Oh, I usually go to this place, but that's not wheelchair accessible," or, "I usually do this, but it would probably be too many people and too overstimulating for someone who gets overwhelmed in crowds," change that mindset a little bit and try think about how you can adapt your program to be inclusive and accessible for everyone, so you don't have to Other your disabled clients.

We wanted to touch on a concept called inspiration porn, a well-known concept within the disability community. Inspiration porn is the depiction of people with disabilities as inspirational solely or in part based on their disability, often for the benefit of able-bodied people, and often at the expense of the disabled person. And it really doesn't acknowledge the complex experience of disability. There's really a lot of examples of this you've probably encountered many, many times, without even realizing it. There are news stories, stories on social media, videos, stories, everywhere.

One specific example I can give is a story that came out about a year ago, celebrating a waiter who had helped a disabled woman finish her meal. That was kind of it. It was really celebrating the non-disabled waiter, and how great it was for him that he did this incredible, generous act, helping a disabled woman eat. And they really didn't go into any explanation of who this woman was and what her disability was, and what it means for how she regularly eats, and what accommodations can be made so she doesn't need a waiter to help her eat.

We have two other examples right here, but you really see often these kinds of examples circulating on social media. Here, you have a picture of a little boy wearing two prosthetic legs, happily running on a track. And the quote on the picture says, "The only disability in life is a bad attitude."

Another picture here has two young teenagers. One is a young boy, standing up and wearing a nice, white suit, and holding hands with a young woman in a pretty

pink dress, who's in a power chair. They're holding hands, and the quote says, "He asked her to prom, even in her condition. Like and share equals respect."

Obviously, right there the hero in the story is this able-bodied young man, and it has nothing to do with her experience as a woman with a disability. We don't know anything about their relationship, friendship, etc. And it pretty much just assumes that because she has a disability, she would never be invited to prom or have a relationship. And again, the hero is the non-disabled person.

So, what can you do? Show your clients understanding and support, obviously. But don't use words like, "You are so brave" or "It's so inspiring of you," or "You have so much strength and willpower." Again, don't treat them differently than any other client. If you want to celebrate something exceptional they just did, that their dog just did the best thing in the world, that they worked tooth and nail on to get their dog to do, celebrate it! But if you want to tell them it's so inspiring that they came to your class, because they have a disability, maybe think about that.

Jennifer Kolar: Now let's talk a bit about contingency planning and some questions to ask. One thing to keep in mind is that people with disabilities have unique needs, and they may or may not consider something an emergency that you might. For example, ask your clients to describe, "If x happens, how can you support them and their dog?" x can be a panic attack, a seizure, low blood sugar, etc. What do they want you to do? Do they want you to contact someone? Who is that? Or is it something that they just want you to help them sit down? Be aware that if someone has regular panic attacks or regular seizures, what might be kind of scary or shocking to you is just everyday life for them. They don't want the paramedics called. They don't want 911 called. They don't need additional support, other than just to have you recognize it and calmly respond. So please make sure you understand what they want you to do. And

don't take for granted that the best thing to do is call their emergency contacts. In many cases, that's the opposite of what most people with disabilities

Sarah Indano: We've covered your baseline level of accessibility, intake questions, and do's and don'ts. Now, let's talk about some changes to training we can do right now. But first, we need to arrange our antecedents. Check out our ABCs. We always look to set up our dogs for success, but what decisions do we need to make and what questions to we need to ask to arrange antecedents for the human end of the leash?

Decide what's worth training, versus changing the environment, or using different tools. We don't have to put it all on our dogs, with respect to training versus changing the environment. For example, do we use a standard box clicker, a more accessible clicker, like a dome-shaped clicker or clicker ring, or a verbal marker? Would that be better for the situation and better for your client's level of frustration? You may have talked to your client before about mobility, stamina, dexterity, processing information, session length. Have you considered for your training how far away the parking lot is from where you want to train? Did you plan to teach down by luring the dog to the ground with someone who may have vertigo?

Consider the physical, mental, and monetary costs for your clients. We should always be asking those questions about our training sessions in relation to our clients. Maybe try changing the training environment for a lowered mental cost. For example, a group class may be too difficult. Or a lesson at Home Depot may have too much going on. Maybe shortening lessons can lower the physical costs, or offering breaks during lessons.

Finally, build a network of people to support your clients in their training will only make it easier for them. None of us train alone. None of us train in a vacuum. Encouraging your clients to have a support system, be they professional dog

walkers or trainers, family, friends, neighbors, or volunteers, will help them in their training journey.

So, what changes can you make to your training right now?

Melissa Breau: I'm just switching videos. Give me just a minute and then we'll be back up and running. Here we go.

Sarah Indano: Let's talk about adaptive tools next. As we go through, consider the limitations of the tools you may be using, and what ideas you have for different types of tools, or how to make the ones you use more accessible. Remember, the key to accessibility is the extent to which the tool is functional for the person you're working with.

We'll talk about leads, marker devices, and treat delivery devices. Starting with leashes, consider using rubber grips for people with limited dexterity, such as the one on the upper righthand side, or hands-free leashes, such as the one pictured on the top lefthand side, the with a person wearing the Bold Lead design Atlas Leash slung across their shoulder in a hand-free configuration and attached to a medium size dog on a platform. Hands-free gives our clients the ability to mentally balance all the other things that go into our dog training.

You can also find leashes, collars, and harness with magnetic clasps for closures. These can absolutely help clients with limited dexterity.

As far as marker devices, we often think about our traditional box clicker, in which you depress into the box, or a clicker with a button on the top of it. Some of these can be difficult to hold or to click. The clicker ring, pictured on the bottom left, is a ring-shaped clicker with a button on the top shaped like a jewel. If you were to turn the ring to the inside of your palm, you could press it with your

thumb. They can be a little easier to click, and you tend not to drop them because they're on your hands already.

On the top right we have a picture of a different accessible clicker. It's a cylindrical- shaped clicker with a dome button on the top that can be pressed with a thumb or palm, with a clip on the side to attach to your treat pouch, belt, or pocket.

Creative devices that are easy to use are absolutely absolutely accessible, but creative clicker placement can also make your training more accessible, and adapt what we need to do, whether it's placing the clicker beneath your client's arm or on the floor. There are many different ways to use it that you may not have considered before.

We'll also talk about treat delivery devices. Wooden spoons with a spreadable reward, such as peanut butter, or whipped cream, or something that doesn't upset your dog's stomach, is something to help clients who may not be able to bend over, whether you have vertigo or limited mobility for getting up and down off the ground, so that you can reward in the position that you want.

Food tubes, such as the bottom right example, is a squeezable and refillable tube that you can put any concoction in that you want, so long as it's thick enough to stay in. These can absolutely help with clients who may have arthritic hands. It can help deliver treats effectively without being too hard to maneuver them and pick up small pieces of treats.

Remote treat dispensers can help our clients with the timing and location of the treat, and of course, helpers will always be there for us. So making sure your client has the network of people to help can benefit them and create a more accessible training experience.

Agnesa Redere: Now that we've talked about adaptive tools, let's see them in action. We'll show you two videos, and I'll describe what's going on in them. First, you are likely a dog trainer or have an interest in training dogs, so you may gravitate towards trying to figure out what behavior is being trained in these sessions. I want you to focus on the handler mechanics and how those provide an adaptive solution to the training challenges presented.

In the first video, we have Patty. She's sitting in a chair facing a medium-sized dog that is standing. Patty has a clicker on the floor under her foot, and she's using that to mark behavior.

In this second video, we see Patty again, standing facing a wall. Next to her is a large standing dog. Patty has a barrel-shaped dome clicker like Sarah mentioned, attached to her treat pouch, and she's using her thumb to click the clicker.

Depending on your training setup and environment, you may or may not have helpers or assistants in the room with your clients. For many people, whether able-bodied or not, having a helper is incredibly useful. When using helpers, consider the following. Who might you ask to be a helper? How can you divide tasks between the handler and helper? What instructions would you give to the helper, such as where to stand, what to wait for, and where and how to deliver a treat.

On this slide on the righthand side we have an image of two women sitting down, and they are both petting a Greyhound that's in between them.

Next, we'll see a video of a helper in a training session. The handler is Patty, and she alerts her helper to click the clicker by saying the word "Click." As this happens, Patty releases a treat from her hand to the ground.

Sarah Indano: So, we've talked about helpers. Now, let's talk about some tangible skills that we can train our dogs and our clients' dogs to do, to help make our clients' lives easier. I call them lifestyle skills.

Let's talk about target training to start, and targets in particular.

Pictured here is an accessible target, made out of a keychain with a high-contrast piece of red duct tape wrapped around it. There's a magnet on the back, which has it currently attached to a metal door. There's a piece of Velcro on the front, and also a camping gear tie that we can twist to anything we want to hang it on. What makes this target accessible to people who are blind or low-vision is a bell that's also attached to it, so the dog rings the bell, and the handler has the auditory cue that the dog has done the behavior we want.

Of course, we have nose targets to ring bells, but we can use them to get our dogs to stand still, to put equipment on. We may use paw targets for easy nail trims, chin rests for ear cleaning, or a platform to get dogs to stand still for grooming. Of course, that sounds a lot like cooperative care. We'll talk about that next.

Cooperative care can lower the energy expenditure on our clients' part of taking care of their dogs. They may not have the stamina, balance, or strength for care. Targeting behaviors go hand in hand with cooperative care. Pictured here is Laima, Agnesa's red tri female Australian shepherd, doing an excellent chin rest with her squishy face.

As far as enrichment and meeting our dogs' needs, we want to consider the physical, mental, and monetary costs. Pictured here is my German Shepherd, Fletcher, using a store-bought snuffle mat. There's not a huge physical cost to a store-bought snuffle mat, but there is a monetary cost. But consider if we were to

ask a client to make one on their own. Think about the physical and mental cost of that. What's the physical cost of asking your clients to do a decompression walk, depending on how long it is? Maybe our clients only have the stamina for the day to get from their car into their house, and from their car into work. And a decompression walk may not be realistic on that particular day.

Finally, let's talk about lifestyle skills in relation to human equipment. We want to have our dogs adjusted to the equipment that our clients are using, as early as possible. Preparation and planning to introduce them to that is the best way to handle this. Giving our dogs time to adjust, especially with a big change in their lives, and teaching them how to interact with our equipment safely -- whether that's how to move out of the way if a wheelchair is coming down a narrow hallway, or making sure our dogs aren't underfoot if there's a walking cane involved.

Pictured here is Patty with two of her Golden Retrievers. She's sitting on her motor scooter, and one of her Golden Retrievers that's a cream color is sitting on the scooter with her. Another Golden Retriever is sitting on the ground.

Jennifer Kolar: Now that we've looked at those considerations, let's talk about some considerations for clients, and potential challenges and things to consider. First, I always like to stress to any client I'm working with that the dogs learn *in spite* of us, not necessarily *because* of us. And this is something I tell all my able-bodied clients as well, to help alleviate the fears that they don't have to be perfect, and their timing doesn't have to be right on. With time and creative training, they'll be able to reach their goals and their dog will be able to figure it out.

So, what are some potential challenges you may face? A big one is difficulty with timing. Many people with disabilities may have trouble getting the words out that they're trying to process in their head, or cueing, marking, or treating on time.

This is where things like helpers can be incredibly valuable, which we've talked about already.

Repetitive motions by the handler may be part of their condition. We call this stimming. The person may have repeated nodding or hand maneuvers. If you're working with someone who's training a service dog, that could actually turn into a cue for something you want the dog to do. However, when working with a pet dog, it's most likely something you want the dog to ignore and not be distracted by.

Be aware that clients can feel really intimidated, if you demonstrate with your dog or with there's. Now, this is also true for our able-bodied clients, but for a client with disabilities, if you're demoing in a way that they can't possibly mimic or physically do, then you're setting them up to feel a sense of failure or shame. So be aware of that, and really with having them demo the dog, then work with their dog, or have that in mind as you're demoing, to make sure you're not moving in a way that's impossible for them.

Be aware of sensory overload, brain fog, and limited energy. Something that may not be overwhelming to you, such as going into a box store like Home Depot, can be incredibly overwhelming for some clients. For some people, a crowd is two people. Whereas for others, they can handle a large group. So be aware of what sensory overload might look like for your client, which is different for each person. It could be sounds, smells, sights, echoing happening in the room, etc. Just be aware of that.

Be aware that for many people with disabilities, brain fog is something that comes with that. It just takes longer for the brain to process information, to take it in. It may appear as if they're not listening or not getting it, but they're really just working within the confines of how their brain is processing right then, which can

change within the session or from day to day. The same goes for energy. It can change day to day or over the course of the session.

I like to use the analogy of spoon theory when describing available energy. If I had ten spoons in my hand to represent the amount of energy I have available to do what I want to do during the day, let's say it takes me only one spoon to get up, take a shower, get dressed, eat breakfast, and get ready to go to work. I have nine spoons left to go through and do everything else I need to do in my day. At the end of the day, I may even have a spoon left over.

However, for some people with disabilities it may take a spoon to get out of bed, two more spoons to take a shower, another couple of spoons to get dressed, another couple of spoons to eat breakfast. That leaves me only three more spoons to do whatever I need to do during the day. And when I'm out of spoons, I'm done. I'm not able to do anything else. So be aware and don't take for granted the amount of energy you have to do different things. The amount of energy it takes you to do something may be very, very different for your client. And be respectful of that, and be respectful that this could be frustrating for them.

Recognize they may have difficulty seeing or hearing their dogs or other dogs or people or other factors in the environment, and take that into account when you're managing and setting up the training session. Think about dexterity and mobility challenges they might have, as you're planning sessions. If you're someone who has difficulty standing for a long time or walking, think about how you'll set up training sessions indoors or out so they have ample breaks, so they aren't having to balance or stand on their feet for a long time.

Think about where you set things up, so that it's not critical that treat placement is exactly perfect, if it's someone who has trouble with dexterity. Be thinking about using some of those different tools that Sarah talked about previously for treat delivery.

As you think through this, ask yourself what challenges you've faced personally in your own training, or with your clients? You may have worked through some of these challenges even with your able-bodied clients, and you may already have ideas for how to adapt your training that you didn't even realize. So be processing through that and thinking through what you've faced before, and how you've already solved that in the past.

Sarah Indano: Let's talk about specific examples of considerations for blind and low vision clients. In this video, I have my male German Shepherd, Paxton, demonstrating the behaviors I'd like: sit, down, and stand. He has a six-foot leash attached to him, and I'll run my hand down the leash, onto the collar, and along his back to determine what behavior he's doing. I call them easy behaviors. But I acknowledge that what comes easy for us may not come easy to another team.

So, in this example, our important accessibility pieces are the tether and the ability to touch the dog, meaning the dog must be comfortable with this touch. But what are the broader implications of this? In every exercise that we have, we need to consider where the dog is and how the person will know where the dog is. Is that visual cues, auditory cues, touch?

What is the dog doing and how will we know what it's doing, whether that's touch or a helper that can tell you if a dog is doing position changes on a platform at a distance? Of course, we want to be aware of the emotional state of the dog, whether that's putting powder on the dog to make the tension on the body more obvious, or connections through the leash, or listening to auditory signals from the dog, such as heightened breathing, or the direction their ears are pointed. It's making sure our clients are able to determine these things, whether through visual cues are not. This is hugely important.

How will the reward be delivered to the dog for effective training loops?
Understand that our markers may be late, but the dog will still learn.

So let's move on to the spaces in which we train, starting with our social media and websites. How can we make them accessible? Features supporting accessibility are image descriptions, alt text, CamelCase, closed captions, and audio transcripts. Image descriptions and alt text help people who use screen readers. Image or photo descriptions describe the entirety of the photo in great detail, whereas alt text gives you just a small blurb that's easy to swipe through.

In the picture on the righthand side, the photo description reads, "A male yellow Lab has laid down in a white, rigid short Landry basket. His cream color chest fur pokes out of the holes and his body isn't otherwise visible. His big head is draped over the edge, with bright brown eyes looking softly into the camera."

The alt text for an image may read, "A yellow lab is laying down in a laundry basket." It's short, sweet, and covering the most important points.

CamelCase is what we use for hashtags. I have here #LabsOfInstagram. The first letter of each word is capitalized: the "L" in Labs, the "O" in of, and the "I" of Instagram. This allows screen readers to read each word individually. Otherwise, it may sound kind of like a jumbled mess.

Closed captions and audio transcripts allow people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing allow people to engage in our social media, and also allow people who want to take in information visually to have this level of accessibility as well.

Features that limit accessibility are flashing texts or images, that can cause seizures or migraines. Not enough contrast between the text and background can affect people with low vision. We want to make sure there's enough contrast between the text and background of everything we write.

Bloated sites are ones that require too much bandwidth, not just in terms of the internet, but mentally, in terms of too much information to process and parse through.

And reconsider requiring a mouse to navigate. Some people with a mobility disability may not be able to use a mouse, and so they have to use their keyboard or single buttons to navigate through the website.

Websites can have a lot of detail included with them. See the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, WCAG 2.1 included in our resource section, for more information. You can also check out another resource we have listed there, [AccessGuide.io](https://www.accessguide.io), for a quick, easy introduction to accessible social media.

Jennifer Kolar: Now let's talk about training in different locations. First, as far as working indoors, we mentioned the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, which covers protection in public spaces that the general public can enter. It does not cover private residences, and it doesn't necessarily cover certain types of institutions, such as religious institutions, that do not have to be fully accessible. So when you bring your client into your own training facility or if you're working with them in public, keep in mind what their accessibility needs are and make sure the environment or facility can support that.

So, here are some things you can consider to readily make simple adaptations you can do to make your facilities or the areas you train in accessible.

First, there are ramps, which don't need to be fancy or built-in as a permanent part of the architecture. You can add a simple, temporary fold-up ramp to help make stairs accessible. In the upper right picture of this page, there's a foldable ramp with a woman in a power scooter going up the ramp and entering the building from the outside.

Another really simple adaptation to consider is having chairs available, so that people don't have to stand for a long period of time. Chairs can be used to help station, to spread people out, to make sure they have a convenient place to sit and train. It can also help get equipment out of their hands, because they can then set it in their laps. And the picture on the bottom right is a woman with gray hair sitting in a chair. She's wearing a blue jacket and green pants. She has a chocolate Lab on her left, and she's dropping a treat on the ground to feed him as part of their training that they're doing.

Brightness and visibility of lighting is another important consideration. For some of your clients, bright lights can be migraine-inducing. They can cause seizures. For others, they can't see very well in the light and need extra visibility. So really take into account what each of your clients need, and be aware, if you're doing group classes, your clients may have different or conflicting needs. How do you set up the environment to support everyone as they move through and do different sessions?

Think about having larger print handouts or materials, so you can have handouts to give to your clients to reference which isn't just a benefit for people with low vision. It's just easy, quick reference, so someone can look at it at a glance as they're working with you. Consider having large-print posters that you've written out in big text on the walls at different training sessions for people to reference. The picture on the bottom left shows a large-print sticky pad, a Post-It pad, with a mix of large and small writing, showing how much easier it is to see the larger print from a distance. The smaller print is a bit more tricky. Take that into account as you're working with clients, for things you could do to help them retain information as you work.

Think about using platforms, not just to help the dog understand where to be, but also so that clients can reach for and work with their dog more easily. The

picture on the top left shows a black German Shepherd sitting on an ottoman chair as a platform. Platforms can be just about anything, as long as it's stable and the right size for the dog.

Think about the sounds and echoes in the space, especially in a place like Home Depot. It may be very loud, and it may be hard for someone to hear in.

Alternatively, make sure your voice can be heard, without a lot of other triggering or distracting sounds for the clients or dogs.

Something important to think about is, when you are training, be proactive about letting your clients know what is accessible and what isn't at a particular training location, so you can see what adaptations may be necessary, and if it could still work for them. It's really recommend before you go to train somewhere in public, go scout it out yourself first, understand where you're going to be working, and make sure you're able to give really clear directions for where you're going to meet, and really clear information on what the facility might be like.

Now, let's contrast this with working outside, whether it's outside in different facilities out in public, or in the outdoors. Here are some things to consider and think about when you're out and about.

First and foremost is the accessibility of the location. How far away is parking? How difficult is traffic? How hard is it to navigate there in the first place? Can they park close to where you're meeting? Are there smooth surfaces, versus stairs or irregular paths? Are there handicapped-accessible doors to make it easy to get in and out of? Even if there are accessible items, how far do they have to move and how many different things do they have to navigate to get to where you're going to be?

Make sure there are lots of places to rest and balance. If you're meeting in a mall, think about how often there is seating inside for them to be able to go. Are

there walls to lean against for rest, if there aren't places to sit? Even if someone can walk or stand for long periods of time, they may be unsteady as they're moving and may need additional support. Think about how much additional equipment they need to carry with them.

Again, think about lighting, brightness, and visibility. Is it too much or too little? And how do you adapt that? Think about the weather conditions. If you're training inside or outside, this both pertains to how safe or difficult it is for your clients travel to meet you, as well as how hot or cold it is, how wet or dry it is. For some people with disabilities, self-regulating their temperature is very difficult. So really pay attention to the condition you're bringing them out into.

Think about crowds. Depending on the person, if they have severe social anxiety or if they're suffering from PTSD, having people behind their back or having people moving around them can be incredibly stressful. And keep in mind, what's a crowd to you may not be to someone else. If you're okay being in a building with a handful of people, if you consider it empty, just remember for someone with severe anxiety, that could be a crowd. Take that into account.

Also, where are the bathrooms? Always know how far away they are. For some people with disabilities, a bathroom within 15 minutes may not be okay. They may need to know and have ready access at all times. For people with bladder control issues, that's incredibly stressful and embarrassing. Making sure that's not something they have to discuss and ask for, as far as special accommodations, in the middle of the session is very important to respect them.

Let's talk about a few of the pictures we have here. On the top left we have a picture of the same accessible path we had earlier, with a man on the bottom left in a wheelchair, looking back up to the right as people in and mix of wheelchairs and walking move toward him. On the top right we have three people lined up, sitting in chairs, working with training their dogs. In each case, the person is

sitting in a chair and the dog is sitting in front of them. They're about to hand reach out and hand treats to the dogs. The first one is an English Cream Golden, and then there's a hound, and then the small one off in the distance is a smaller terrier.

The bottom left picture shows a parking lot from an overhead aerial view, to give you an idea of how much distance you may have to navigate to cross the parking lot. Keep in mind, even if there's handicapped-accessible parking, many of our clients may not have handicapped placards, and even if they do, there may be just a limited number of spaces.

On the bottom right is a picture of just an irregular wooded path. Think about dog parks, which are not required to be accessible to the general public. All areas of the park are not required to be accessible. So keep that in mind when you're planning outings.

Another thing to think about when you're meeting in an area that's a bigger location, like a park or mall, is to give really good directions on where to meet the person. If you're saying to meet at a park with multiple parking lots and multiple entrances, give very clear directions on where to meet, because you could end up 15 minutes apart, and then the person's used up all their energy just to come and find you. And that extra stress of not knowing where to meet may zap the few spoons they have, so you're not able to have a productive training session. So make sure you're giving clear clear directions.

Similarly, if you're meeting in a mall, make sure you're looking for exactly the right spot. Think about how you can get exposure for the dog that they need without it being an undue burden on the person. For example, if you're going to have a dog outside, maybe you're going to a track where they can work on a motor scooter while the dog walks alongside them. So really think about what you can do to make things accessible as you're moving and about with your clients.

Agnesa Redere: With that, we've come to the portion of the talk where we have to wrap things up. It was a pleasure to put together these materials for you, and we hope we've inspired you to become part of the solution in improving accessibility and disability inclusivity. We hope the information we've provided you will move your accessible training journey forward.

Jennifer Kolar: Let me tell you just a little bit about how to find out more. There's lots of options for you, through us with Atlas as an organization, as well as many others.

First, a great opportunity to get more hands-on experience is by volunteering with us as one of our team facilitators, who work hands-on to train our clients, with mentorship from professional service dog trainers. You can become an Atlas-certified trainer and go through our program completely online and learn about how to work with people with disabilities, that will benefit you whether you're looking to do service dog skills or to work with pet dog trainers who have their own disabilities.

Discover our Team Set in Motion course, a self-paced online program that is accessible for individual clients, as well as for trainers to use as a handy reference for their clients, to help anyone learn how to give their dog a great foundation, whether they're wanting an emotional support animal, a therapy dog, or some day to go towards service dog training.

You can contact us at www.atlasdogs.org, or email us at info@atlasdog.org, to get more information.

Agnesa Redere: There's one last thing. On this slide, there some links for you to review. These resources represent only the tip of the iceberg, so feel free to reach out to us to learn more, and to tap into your own creativity as you

implement accessibility from the start. We're looking forward to hearing more from you, and hope to answer your questions in the Q&A session.

Melissa Breau: Sarah, Molly, and Jennifer, do you want to turn your mic and camera back on and we'll switch over to Q&A? I see Jennifer. We'll sit tight and let Sarah and Molly turn on their mics and cameras, too. I see Sarah. There we go. Now we have everyone back. We're just waiting for questions to come in. I'll just stick those up as they come in. Here we go.

Molly Neher: "During the intake process, should there be a question on disabilities the client may have, or what accommodations can be made? Or should we let the individual open that dialogue?"

First, one tip we want to encourage for those who have pre-intake forms, like a lot of trainers do on their websites, is to have an open box for, "Do you need any special accommodations, or is there anything else you'd like to mention?" so that you have that in the back of your mind when you go to the first meeting with the client, and they can already have mentioned something if they wanted to. You don't necessarily need to flat out ask them, "Hey, do you have a disability?" But you can open up the conversation by asking if they need any accommodations. That makes it a little easier.

Jennifer Kolar: "Do you have any tips for clients with mobility issues to prepare to bring home a new young one-year-old high energy dog?"

This is definitely a challenge, depending on the mobility issue, with dogs who need a lot of training and have a lot of energy. This is where helpers are great. You can find a neighborhood kid who will take your dog for a walk for \$5. And flirt poles are a great way to exercise a dog when you have limited mobility. Make sure you're taking advantage of some of those cooperative care and targeting skills that Sarah talked about, so the dog has those techniques on board. As

you're trying to get them to move certain ways, they understand a cue for a paw target, or a cue for moving to a certain place.

Obviously, setting up your environment will be really important, because if someone is in a wheelchair, it's going to be hard to run over and grab a stuffie away from the dog. There's just a handful of things, including making sure the dog will get enough exercise and access. Also, make sure the dog gets used to any mobility equipment, and that they have enough room to maneuver around. Those are just some ideas I would bring up.

Melissa Breau: Melissa did clarify it was beginning, and "I hope I will."

Sarah Indano: She asked, "I missed the beginning, and I hope I will be able to watch the beginning, as I'm very curious about different reward delivery options for those with limited dexterity."

We did cover this in the presentation, but I'll mention them again. We talked about accessible dome-shaped clickers and ring clickers, that don't require as much dexterity or pressure to push. We also talked about different treat delivery methods, such as squeeze tubes, which are great for arthritic hands, because they don't make a mess, and you don't have to worry about picking up small pieces of kibble. You can also deliver small rewards on a wooden spoon that you present, while the dog is working on down, heeling, etc. We also talked about leashes that can be configured in different ways, so your client -- or yourself -- doesn't have to juggle the leash, clicker, treats, and everything else.

And you can definitely go back in the webinar and look through those again. Those are just some of the things we covered.

Jennifer Kolar: "Would you ever use verbal markers for a person with limited physical mobility, who has excellent verbal ability ?"

Absolutely. The clicker is just an option. It's not required at all. Some people like to make a click sound with their tongue, or they can just say "Yes!" So absolutely. A lot of people use whistles, or flashing lights. There are many ways you can let your dog know, "Hey, you've done what I asked you to do." Great question.

Sarah Indano: "Can you describe how alt text works? I never knew the difference between alt text and photo descriptions, so that was helpful!"

I don't use screen readers personally, but I have used them on my phone. If you have an iPhone, you can turn on those accessibility features and see and hear them for yourself, which I find to be really helpful. But let's say we're scrolling through Instagram, which is a photo- or video-based sharing process. Instagram, Facebook, and many other social media will go through, and when it focuses on the object that's the image, it will read the alt text, which you can access through the advanced settings in Facebook or in Instagram. It's different for everything.

Alt text is read, so you want it to be short and sweet, so a person using a screen reader can swipe through quickly and decide if it's something they're interested in or not. Then when a person swipes onto the object that corresponds to the description you've written, and where your photo description should be, that's where the detailed information comes in. The alt text gives you a quick blurb, and then the person can dive deeper into your picture or video to hear what's happening throughout it.

Jennifer Kolar: "Is there an easy way to produce closed captions for video?"

Yes. It depends on the platform. YouTube does auto-captioning. In this case we wanted to embed it in the video, and we wanted to make any corrections or

clarifications. Some tools will do a first pass, and then we can go through and clean it up.

Molly Neher: Oh, I just wanted to restate the question. But it depends on the platform, as Jen said. On YouTube and Facebook you can turn on automated captions, but you often have to go back and double check that all the words are right. Sometimes, depending on the video and the length, it may not automate it for you. But you can go in and manually do it. There are plenty of tutorials you can find online about how to do that.

Jennifer Kolar: "I just want to say thanks heaps! I came to learn about some additional accessibility options for some of my school students with disabilities. I am a high school teacher who has therapy dogs and runs a dog training class. And now I have heaps of ideas on how to make my training business (part-time on the side of school work) more accessible. Thanks!"

Awesome, thank you! Thank you! And definitely, come check us out at www.atlasdogs.org, for other ways to get involved.

Melissa Breau: This question has two parts. They added some additional information afterwards. It's about a client who can't bend down to lure with a cookie.

Sarah Indano: "Does anybody have any links or recommendations for spoon-type treat delivery systems, probably kitchen or cooking gear I don't know about, where you can open and close the end of the spoon like a grabber combined with a tea ball? I've been having a hard time with luring "down." Capturing works, but it's too infrequent thus far to get progress, because the dog is being rewarded by licking the spoon on the way down."

I'm presuming tennis ball here is what's meant by tea ball. I don't know of any videos of this currently, but it's certainly something I can make a video of!

Jennifer Kolar: We have seen some clients who are going through our Set in Motion program who have taken a spoon and then the end of a mixing cup, that they can reach down and flip over right then so it's accessible, so they can time it so the dog has access to it. I've seen people do that pretty successfully.

Sarah Indano: And maybe this is what you're describing, and I've just mistaken it, but you can put a grabber with a cup, with your treats covered and left underneath the cup, and then you can remove the cup with the spoon that's taped to it so you don't have to bend down. But when the dog lays down, you can open up the cup to reward the dog.

Jennifer Kolar: And this is where capturing or using a mat or things like that can be super helpful for teaching down.

Melissa Breau: And this question is very similar to some other ones, but I wanted to show it in case you had anything else to add.

Sarah Indano: "Is there a video or something of how to lure a dog down with a wooden stick while not letting the dog eat everything before they get into the down position?"

Another option for this is semi-luring, but you might teach a nose target. Then have it on a target stick that you lure them down with, but the treat comes afterwards. The treat is dropped onto the ground.

Melissa Breau: All right. That was the last question in my queue, but I'll have you hang around for a second while I do my closing bit. And I'll put up any other questions that come in in the meantime.

We do ask for up to 72 hours to get this in your webinar library, although it doesn't usually take that long. And we'll email you once it's up. In addition to the recording, you will have a PDF of the slides, including that last slide with all the references and links for you. We will also include a PDF of the downloadable transcript. So all of that will be ready in a couple days, and we'll email you once that's ready.

We had a couple comments come in, brainstorming ideas for how to do that last question. Someone found an Amazon link, and there's some other things.

So thank you, all three of you, for being here to present and share this with all of us. Thank you to the rest of your team who put this all together. And thank you, everyone, for joining us. I hope you have a great rest of your evening.

Jennifer Kolar: Thank you, everyone.

Sarah Indano: Thanks!

Melissa Breau: All right. Take care, everyone.

[End of transcript.]

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