

Changing Faces was founded in 1992 by Dr James Partridge OBE, who was severely injured in a car fire when he was 18 years old. The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees, is managed by an experienced team of professionals and has a network of officers working in the English regions and in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Our work is underpinned by academic research and informed by our Young People's Council and other service users.

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Changing faces
the way you face
disfigurement

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This leaflet is also
available, on request, in
plain text and on CD

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Face to face interaction – top tips to becoming disfigurement confident

When meeting someone with a disfigurement

Don't know where to look?

Look them in the eye, just as you would anyone else – or if it's hard to look – look at the bridge of the nose – it has the same effect.

Worried you might be staring?

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

Don't know what to say?

Say 'hello'. Talk about the weather, what's happening in the news – engage in normal casual conversation.

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

Don't make 'what happened to you?' be the first question you ask – wait until you know someone better or they bring it up in the conversation.

If you are still curious, ask 'do you mind if I ask what happened?' – but be prepared for the fact that they may not choose to answer.

Don't know what to do?

Shake hands, if appropriate. Nod your head in acknowledgment.



Piers Allardyce

If you have a disfigurement

Is someone staring?

Try one or more of the following:

- make eye contact
- smile or raise your eyebrow in acknowledgement
- distract them through casual conversation, 'Hi, it's warm out today don't you think?' 'William carries his teddy bear everywhere; does your daughter have a special toy too?' 'Hasn't the price of petrol gone up?'
- if they continue to look, say assertively, 'I'd prefer it if you did not stare at me'
- say in a joking way, 'I've obviously attracted your attention!'

If someone asks a question about your disfigurement

Depending on how you feel:

- give a brief statement and move the conversation on, 'I was bitten by a dog when I was younger. It was a long time ago and I don't talk about it now. So, how did you meet John?'
- talk in more general terms, 'I have a birthmark but it doesn't cause me any pain'
- if you are happy to discuss more personal details say, 'I was burned when I was younger. Surgery was pretty successful but the scars have taken a long time to settle down.'

If you overhear someone making a remark about you

Depending on how you feel:

- give them a firm assertive look to let them know you have heard what they said
- say, 'very original'
- say, 'actually my name is...'
- say, 'does my face bother you? It doesn't bother me'
- say, 'I would much rather you speak to me directly!'

For more suggestions, please contact Changing Faces.

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Oliver Charafin and Adam Broomberg | Jim Hodson

www.changingfaces.org.uk

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The challenge of disfigurement

Over one million people in the UK have a significant disfigurement to the face and body. Because of other people's reactions, living with a disfigurement can be very difficult.

People who have disfigurements can experience staring, intrusive questions, teasing, prejudice and discrimination. Everyday situations like walking down the street, making friends, using public transport and finding jobs can feel challenging and even overwhelming.

Changing Faces is the UK's leading charity supporting and representing children, young people and adults who have disfigurements. We are about enabling everyone to face disfigurement with confidence, whether or not they have a disfiguring condition.

- we provide professional support for those who are finding it hard to live with their disfigurement and for their families
- we work to influence policy and practice in health, education, employment and the media
- we campaign for fair treatment and equal opportunities.

Some causes of disfigurement

- birthmarks, neurofibromatosis, cleft lip and/or palates, cranio-facial conditions
- accidents – scars from accidents, burns, mistakes in cosmetic procedures
- injuries from warfare and violence, for example, acid and knife attacks
- cancer and its treatment, for example, surgery for head and neck cancer
- paralysis including strokes and Bell's Palsy
- skin conditions such as acne, eczema, vitiligo and psoriasis
- eye conditions, loss of an eye.

It wasn't being in hospital that scared me most. It was walking down the street afterwards. People stared at me, called me names or crossed over to avoid me. I could tell they were embarrassed but their reactions really upset me. I felt so lonely and it was easier not to go out.



What we do

1 We support and empower people with disfigurements

If you need someone to speak to about how your scar, mark or medical condition is affecting you, your child or family, our experienced team of psychologists, psychotherapists, play therapists, youth workers, teachers and specialists can help. They can work with you or your child to develop effective skills and strategies for handling your concerns and building your self-esteem and self-confidence.

2 We improve policy and practice in organisations

If you are a professional or policy-maker in the NHS, a school, a business or the public sector, we can offer you staff training and consultancy. This will ensure that you create a fair and inclusive environment for children, young people and adults who have disfigurements whether they are students, employees, patients or customers/clients.

3 We campaign for social change

Our Face Equality campaign aims to promote a society in which people with disfigurements are treated fairly and equally. We also campaign for more positive and informed attitudes, behaviour, language and portrayals of people with disfigurements in the media, advertising and film.

I was able to talk to a specialist who really understood how I was feeling. She showed me how to deal with other people's reactions and I slowly began to gain confidence in myself.

Our Face Equality campaign

A public attitudes survey conducted in January 2008 revealed that 90% of the general public find it difficult to attach positive qualities to people with disfigurements. It showed that whilst not thinking they do this, they implicitly judge people with disfigurements as being less attractive, less likely to succeed, less socially skilled and less likely to lead happy lives.

Three cultural assumptions about disfigurement

- 1 People with disfigurements live a second-rate life as good looks are believed to be the key to success.
- 2 People with disfigurements are different, outside of the normal – or as in horror films, even scary or nasty.
- 3 People with disfigurements should and can get their disfigurement fixed by a surgeon. Such thinking and assumptions can have a negative impact on the lives of people who have disfigurements and lead to prejudice and discrimination. Our Face Equality campaign is a social change movement which aims to create a society in which everyone is valued for the unique contribution that they can make regardless of their facial appearance.

For further information, please go to www.changingfaces.org.uk

Your donation counts

Changing Faces relies on donations. Your gift can make an important difference to the lives of people with disfigurements:

- with £10 we can help a child, young person or adult with a disfiguring condition to build their skills to face public situations with confidence
- with £50 we can provide one person with counselling to help them deal with the consequences of an accident that has left them with severe facial scarring
- with £100 we can provide a place for a teenager to attend a specialist workshop to help them tackle bullying and teasing.

I would like to support *Changing Faces* today

Please accept my cheque/postal order made payable to *Changing Faces*. I would like to donate £

Title (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr, other)

First name

Surname

Address

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Email

Signature

Date

Please send this form together with your donation to: *Changing Faces*, The Squire Centre, 33 – 37 University Street, London WC1E 6JN

To make a credit or debit card donation please telephone 0845 4500 275

giftaid it Using Gift Aid means that every pound you give is worth £1.28 to *Changing Faces* (at current tax rates, subject to change)

Yes, I am a UK tax payer* and I would like *Changing Faces* to reclaim the tax I have paid on this donation (please tick box)

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