



ABLEISM 101:
What is Ableism?
What is Disability?

Welcome!

1. Please make sure you sign in on the sheet up front
2. Create a name tag with your name and pronouns
3. Grab a workbook for the workshop

Guidelines

1. What is shared in this space, stays here. But what you learn here, can leave this space.
2. Please be mindful of how much you are speaking and if you are speaking over someone else. Please let folks finish their sentences and thoughts, only one person should be speaking at a time.
3. Acknowledge that discrimination and oppression exists in many forms (e.g. sexism, racism, classism, ageism, homophobia, ableism, transphobia, islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, fatphobia etc.)
4. We will assume people are doing the best that they can. We all make mistakes despite our intentions. However even good intentions can have harmful impacts, therefore when someone says something offensive or inappropriate we will call them in. This is a learning environment and we are all constantly learning and (hopefully) trying to do better.
5. We will share information about our groups with other individuals and we will never demean, devalue, or in any way put down people for their experiences.

Access Statement

Please exist in this space in ways that are most comfortable for you. You can stand up, sit down, lay down, stretch, walk around, leave the room, stim, use your electronics as needed. Understand that everyone exists in spaces in different ways, and how someone can best engage and listen might look different than how you do.

Gendered bathrooms & drinking fountains are located just to the left of here after the elevator.

If you need a quiet space, we have two offices that you are welcome to use.

We will have a set break during this workshop, but can take additional breaks if needed.

Anything to add?

Introductions

- Name
- Gender Pronouns (She/Her, He/Him, They/Them, Xe/Xem, Ze/Hir, X, your name, etc.)
- (Briefly) Why did you choose to take this workshop?

Guided Self Reflection

“ *How comfortable do you feel talking about disability?*
How comfortable do you feel talking to disabled people?



What have you been taught about disability (by school, parents, family, media, religious institutions, medical providers etc.)? What have they taught you about the need to be productive and self-sufficient? What values/morals are placed on being abled and productive? What have you internalized?

One-on-One Discussion

- Turn to the person next to you
- One of you will be the speaker and the other will be the listener. The listener will actively listen without interrupting.
- You will share some of your responses and thoughts about the guided questions with your partner for two minutes.
- After two minutes you will switch roles

Large Group Reflection

- How did this exercise make you feel?
- Was there a specific question that stood out to you?

5-10 minute break

Stretching, Bathroom, Brain Break

Defining Disability

Disability: someone who is not able-bodied or able-minded; not a definitive definition or group.

Includes physical, sensory, mental, cognitive, intellectual, developmental, and psychiatric disabilities and chronic illnesses/chronic diagnoses.

Individuals can be born with their disability/disabilities or they can be acquired later in life.

Often disability is only conceptualized as a "loss-of-function," a "lack," or as *abnormal* and *unnatural*. This is functioning from a **deficit perspective** & from the **medical model of disability**.

Medical Model & Social Model of Disability

Social Model: social barriers (physical, social, financial) disable us

Medical Model: disability is an individual issue that needs to be “cured” or “fixed”



Image description:

An image of someone in a wheelchair in front of stairs and a sign that reads “Way in → Everyone welcome!”

Two speech bubbles are on either side. The medical model of disability “Her impairment is the problem! They should cure her or give her prosthetics!”

The social model of disability “The stairs are the problem! They should build a ramp.”

Disability Identity

- Person with a Disability (PwD)
- Disabled Person
- As a specific diagnosis/disability (e.g. blind, Deaf, autistic)
- Neurodivergent or Neuroatypical
- Chronically ill, Chronic pain
- Spoonie
- Crip or Cripple
- (Dis)ability Dis/ability
- They **do not** identify as disabled

Defining Ableism

- **Ableism:** discrimination and oppression of disabled people; societal belief that being abled is “normal” and is preferred.
- **Ableism:** A system of oppression that favors being ablebodied/ableminded at any cost, frequently at the expense of people with disabilities. (via Stacey Milbern “Ableism is the Bane of My Motherfuckin’ Existence”)

Defining Ableism Continued

Ableism a·ble·ism \ 'ābə- ,li-zəm \ noun: “A system that places value on people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence and excellence. These constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence and excellence are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable or worthy based on people's appearance and/or their ability to satisfactorily produce, excel & “behave.” Importantly, you do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.” -a working definition by Talila "TL" Lewis

Internalized Ableism beliefs that being able-bodied/able-minded is preferable, either weaponized toward yourself or toward other disabled people; modifying, shaming, or policing your own behaviors and actions to appear more “abled”.

Ableism Beyond the Individual

■ Individual

- ▶ Rhetorically and through language such as slurs
- ▶ Through individual discrimination or cases of inaccessibility

■ Structural

- ▶ Physical barriers
- ▶ Design barriers

■ Cultural

- ▶ Representation of disabled people in media
- ▶ Invisibility of disability culture and community
- ▶ Forced segregation of disabled people in society

Ableism Beyond the Individual

Medical

- ▶ Medical Industrial Complex
- ▶ Insurance
- ▶ Institutionalization
- ▶ Forced/Coerced sterilization
- ▶ Push for cure at any cost

Financial & Legal

- ▶ Employment rate & pay per hour
- ▶ Accessible housing
- ▶ Marriage inequality
- ▶ Financial constraints of receiving benefits
- ▶ Precarity of ADA, ACA, Disability & Social Security
- ▶ Immigration & Detention Centers
 - ▶ Who is allowed to immigrate to the U.S.
 - ▶ Refusal of medical services and care to individuals who are detained or deported

Ableism Beyond Disability

Ableism set the stage for :

queer & trans people to be institutionalized as mentally disabled

communities of color to be understood as less capable, smart & intelligent, therefore “naturally” fit for slave labor

women’s bodies to be used to produce children, when, where & how men needed them

people with disabilities to be seen as “disposable” in a capitalist & exploitative culture because we are not seen as “productive”

immigrants to be thought of as a “disease” that we must “cure” because it is “weakening” our country

violence, cycles of poverty, lack of resources & war to be used as systematic tools to construct disability in communities and entire countries

(Mia Mingus)

Image description: A quote that reads “Ableism set the stage for:

Queer & trans people to be institutionalized as mentally disabled → mentally ill/sexually deviant/”unfit”

Communities of color to be understood as less capable, smart & intelligent, therefore ‘naturally’ fit for slave labor

Women’s bodies to be used to produce children, when, where & how men needed them

People with disabilities to be seen as ‘disposable’ in a capitalist & exploitative culture because we are not seen as ‘productive’

Immigrants to be thought of as a ‘disease’ that we must ‘cure’ because it is ‘weakening’ our country

Violence, cycles of poverty, lack of resources & war to be used as systemic tools to construct disability in communities and entire countries”

By Mia Mingus

Ableism & Intersectionality

Intersectionality & Kimberlé Crenshaw

"Intersectionality is just a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and they create obstacles that often are not understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti-racism or feminism or whatever social justice advocacy structures we have"

"If we can't see a problem we can't fix a problem"

Therefore, because of ableism's roots in eugenics, anti-Blackness, racism, classism, xenophobia etc. we inherently need an intersectional lens when viewing and discussing the impacts of ableism. And the reaches of ableism go far beyond those who we may understand as disabled or who may identify as disabled.



Image description: a photo of Kimberlé Crenshaw, she has her eyes closed and is smiling

Ableist Stereotypes

- Lazy
- “Inspiration Porn” or a “Supercrip”
 - Pitiful and Tragic
- Dangerous or Violent
- Maladjusted and Angry
- Predatory
- Monster or Super Villain
- Unintelligent
- Childish or Child-like
 - Helpless, Incompetent, Socially Inept
- Asexual OR Sexually Deviant
- Better off Dead
- Only want to be “Cured”
- Disability “Spread”

Content Warning

- We will be discussing ableist language, this means terminology and phrases that may be hurtful to hear.
- If you need to step out for this activity you are welcome to use one of the offices or to wait downstairs or outside.

Ableist Language Activity

You will be split into four groups, you will work together to briefly discuss each of the terms or phrases on your list.

Questions to answer:

- Why is it harmful?
- What alternative words or phrases could I use?

Ableist Language Activity

Group 1:

- Retarded
- Stupid/Dumb/Idiot/Imbecile
- Handicapped
- "I'm so OCD"
- "Trump is such a sociopath/psychopath!"
- "Ugh I wish I had the discipline to be anorexic!"
- "If I ever became disabled, I'd just have them pull the plug"

Group 2:

- Crazy
- "Deaf, Dumb, and blind"
- "Handicapable"
- "The weather has been so bipolar"
- "Lol are you triggered"
- "wow you got to park so close! I wish I could use handicap parking"
- "If you could cure your disability/disease would you?"

Ableist Language Activity

Group 3:

- Lame
- Insane
- My son isn't disabled he's "Differently abled"
- "Wow is that ref blind?" "Blind faith" "Blindly following" "double blind review" etc.
- "They've been all over the place today, they're such a schizo"
- "You're so lucky you get extra time on tests!"
- "Oh you're depressed? you should really try yoga"

Group 4:

- "Special needs" "Special accommodations"
- "Wheelchair Bound"
- Normal people/ Normal bodies
- "Slow"
- "You wouldn't believe the number of people at the airport who could get out of their wheelchair when it was time to board!"
- "I wish I could bring my dog to school!"
- "Wow someone forgot to take their meds today"

Alternative Words & Word Charts

- Select one word or phrase from your list and make a word diagram for alternative words or phrases you could use.
- Example:



Reminders!

- Our next workshop in **Tuesday, January 28th**
for (Brief) History of Disability Activism &
Disability Rights