Models of Disability, Culture & Identity

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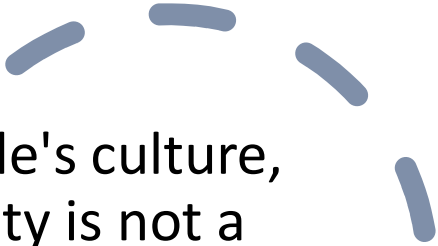DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS, CITY OF MADISON

What to expect

Access Check

We are all here to learn

Ask questions, even if you are not sure about the right words to use

This is not a legal training, this is about unpacking ableism and developing a culture of inclusion

"People with Disabilities" or "Disabled People?"

Language is a part of people's culture, identity, and pride. Disability is not a bad word. Much of the language people with disabilities use is rooted in different social movements.

When in doubt, ask the person how they would like to be described.

People-First Language

The People-First movement began in the 1970's. It literally puts the person first

"person with a disability"

"employee who is bi-polar"

Identity-First Language

Rooted in the social model of disability.

It uses the term "Disabled" to mean disabled by society.

Identity-First language is a political terms and way disable people express pride.

Examine Basis

What comes to mind when you hear the word disability?

When you see "abnormal" or "a-typical" behavior, what do you feel?

When someone communicates differently, what assumptions do you make about them?

If someone appears to take longer to do something than you do, what do you feel or think about them?

When you see someone who is struggling to navigate access barriers, what do you feel or think about them?

Ableism is...

"A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable and worthy based on a person's language, appearance, religion and/or their ability to satisfactorily [re]produce, excel and "behave"" (T.L. Lewis).

Addressing ableism...

Must go beyond legal compliance and involve collaborating with those most impacted to root out ableist practices in all City planning, programs, services, and facilities.

Models of Disability

Tragedy/Charity model: Views people with disabilities as victims of circumstance, deserving pity. This culture of 'care' is potentially dangerous as it leads to medically classifying, segregating and institutionalizing people with disabilities.

The Medical Model of Disability

Is housebound

Needs help and carers

Confined to a wheelchair

Has fits

The problem is the Disabled person

Can't walk

Is sick
Looking for a cure

Can't get up steps
Can't walk

Can't see or hear

This is a diagram of the traditional Medical Model of Disability, which the Social Model was developed to challenge.

Economic model: Disability is defined by a person's inability to participate in, work and contribute to the economy.

Customer/Empowering model: The professional is viewed as a service provider to the client with disability and the client decides and selects what services work best for them.

Rights-based model: Disability is viewed as a social-political construct within a rights based dialogue. Emphasis shifted from dependence to independence as people with disabilities have sought a political voice and led social movements.

Models in Language

Medical Model – "She suffers from mental illness."

Charitable Model – "Isn't it sad that Jose is losing his sight? It's so inspiring that he shops for his own groceries."

Economic Model – "We would make our business accessible, but we don't have customers with disabilities who shop here."

Consumer Empowerment Model – "Shantel will be turning 18 soon. We should really talk to her parents and service providers about where she will live and what she is going to do for money."

Disability Rights Model – "Our services are 100% accessible because we comply with the ADA."

The Social Model of Disability

Badly designed buildings

Poor job prospects

Stairs not ramps
No lifts

Isolated families

The problem is the disabling world

Special schools

Inaccessible transport
No parking places

Discrimination

Few sign language interpreters

The Social Model of Disability states that the oppression and exclusion people with impairments face is caused by the way society is run and organised.

Disability & Intersectional Identities

A Disability Justice Framework

All bodies are unique and essential.

All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met.

We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.

All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them.

- Sins Invalid

My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7r0MiGWQY2g

- Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern

Disability Culture & Identity

Influences on Disability Identity

Apparent or not apparent disability

Acquired or present since birth

Type of disability

Stigma and social perceptions

Experiences of discrimination

Engagement in advocacy

Community

Cultures and Sub-Cultures

Not all disabilities are the same.
Not all people with the same disability are the same.

People's experiences of the world differ based on
Impairments
Age
Socioeconomic status
Race
Gender
Relationships with other people with disabilities
And more

All of these things impact how people with disabilities identify their shared cultures and subcultures.

Disability Identity

"When I say that I am 'Disabled,' I am not reducing myself to my disability... Being disabled is one part, albeit an important part, of my multifaceted identity. Each of these parts overlaps with each other, blurs into each other, and intersects with each other; they are not separated or disparate. It is important for me to define who I am, and being Disabled is an important part of how I define myself""

- *Lydia X. Z. Brown*

Disability Pride

Embraces disability as part of a personal identity.

Fosters a sense of community amongst people with disabilities.

Actively rejects shame and stigma.

Values disabled people as whole and complete, worthy of love, support, and success.

Is one way that people with disabilities celebrate diversity and lived experiences.
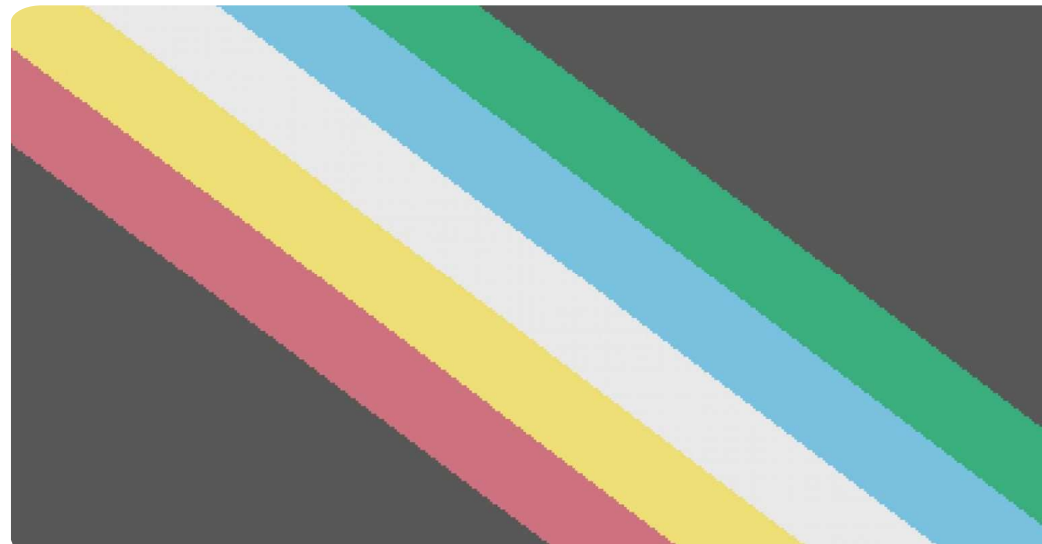
Treating People with Dignity and Respect

Dignity and Respect are not always a given

People with disabilities experience many forms of ableism and oppression. Treating Disabled people with dignity and respect is not just a nice thing to do,

It's a basic human right.

Dignity

Increased safety, less stress, greater work satisfaction, enhanced job performance, and improved relationships.

collaboration, rapport, and treat you well in return.

Respect

- Assume independence rather than limitation.
- Don't anticipate needs or "help" to make yourself feel more comfortable.
- Reasonable accommodations are a legal obligation. People with disabilities are entitled to them. It is not charity.
- Respect privacy and body autonomy.
- Treat adults like adults.
- Speak directly to people. Listen, even it takes time. Ask questions if you don't understand.
- Give options and respect choices, even if someone changes their mind.

Respectful Practices

- Offer assistance in the same way you would to a non-disabled person.

- Accept the answer in the same way you would a non-disabled person.

- Never touch someone's body, service animal, or device without their consent.

- Assist only in the manner someone asks. You might think you are being helpful, but you could risk injuring someone or invading their personal space.

- Be flexible, patient, and collaborative.
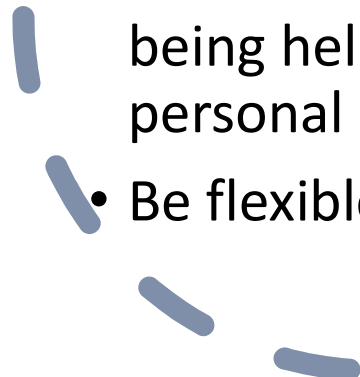
Thank You

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