

DISH & DISCUSS

Ableism: Constructs of Ability

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CALTECH CENTER FOR DIVERSITY

Community Values

- Confidentiality
- Use “I” Statements
- Step up/Step back
- All questions are good questions
- Respect
- OK to pass
- Others?

Learning Outcomes

- Increase awareness of ableism
- Understand able-bodied privilege
- Recognize the range of how others experience ableism
- Discuss ways to be an ally to people who experience disability

Non-ableist Language:

- Divergent thinking about whether referring to themselves as "disabled" counts as internalized ableism.
- Prefer the terms "non-neurotypical" or "neurodivergent" for mental differences.
- Always respect an individual person's preference for identifying or describing themselves, even if that is not what the majority in a community prefers.

Non-ableist Language:

- The term "impairment" is sometimes acceptable and sometimes not.
 - Blind, low-vision, and limited-sight people may find "visual impairment" or "vision impairment" offensive. Likewise, Deaf people may find "hearing impairment" offensive.
- Other disability communities use the word commonly, as in, "learning impairment," "cognitive impairment," or "functional impairment."

Non-ableist Language:

When referring to people with disabilities, here are two methods:

- Person-first language:
 - Make the person the focus, and not their disability, as the idea behind this method is to focus on their personhood.
 - A person with at disability
- Disability-first language:
 - Referring to the disability first. This method may be preferred by people who feel their disability is part of their identity, and using person-first language separates disability as part of their identity.
 - A disabled person

Understanding Disabilities

- What is a disability?
- Who decides whether something counts as a disability?
- What problems might or might not people with disabilities face?

Understanding Disabilities

- Disability is defined by society and is given meaning by a culture. There are various perceptions of what disability is as there are a variety of cultures.

“A person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.” ~ ADA

“Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which they live. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.” ~ WHO

Ableism

- A pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people who have visible and invisible impairments.
- Examples of these are:
 - Physical Differences
 - Mental Differences
 - Emotional Differences

Temporarily Able Bodied (TAB)

Refers to people who are not disabled, but recognizes that most of us may become disabled at some point in our lives.

Privilege Activity

Medical Model of Disability

- The medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences.
- Under the medical model, the focus is on “fixing” or the impairments or differences .
- The medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person, not what the person needs.

Social Model of Disability

- The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment or difference.
- It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for people with disabilities.
- When barriers are removed, people with disabilities can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

Social Model of Disability

Central challenges for people with disabilities:

- Social Attitudes
- Sociopolitical Structures
- Cultural Phenomena

Social Attitudes

- Dehumanization
- Generalization
- Disempowerment
- Overprotection
- Exclusion
- Use of Oppressive Language

Sociopolitical Structures

Disability exists within and is created by a framework of state, legal, economic, and biomedical institutions.

Characteristics of systems organized around privilege:

- Dominated by privileged groups
- Identified with privileged groups
- Centered on privileged groups

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

A federal law passed in 1990 that requires public institutions to provide access to people who with disabilities.

Section 505:

- Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in federally funded programs
- In education, the child with a disability has equal access to an education (with modifications and accommodations, if needed)

Discussion:

- How is your privilege affected by your (dis)abilities?

Cultural Phenomena

○ Stigma

- Regardless of how a person with a disability may think of themselves, they are given an identity by society
- May be seen as outsiders, outcasts or in lower social classes
- May be seen as 'brave' or 'inspirational' rather than having a need to pay the rent and do something useful with their lives.

○ Media

- Stories, fairy tales and TV/movies tend to portray the villain as associated with physical, psychological, or mental abnormality
- Very few positive images of the disabled in the media
- Positive images displayed are mainly of disabled children and very rarely adults

Discussion

How have you been affected by or participated in ableism in your life?

Process of Action as an Ally

Recognize it!

- Admit that disability oppression and microaggressions exist.
- Take notice.
- Reflect on impact.

Listen!

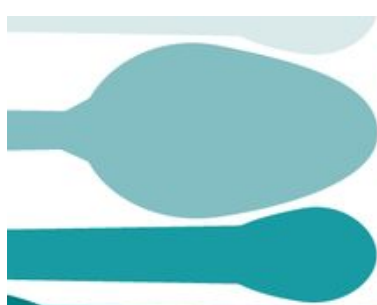
- Honor the experiences of disabled people.
- Do not get defensive. Check your personal biases.
- Honor outrage. Avoid invalidating or demeaning emotions.

Educate yourself!

- Read books; watch documentaries.
- Consume media with critical lens.
- Attend community events.

Take action!

- Consider ableism your problem to solve.
- Create professional practices and processes that are consistent with this value.
- Disrupt practices that are not.



Good morning! Here's to another brand new day!
In your hands are 15 spoons.
Each spoon represents the energy needed to complete a part of your daily routine.
Once you're out of spoons, you're out of energy. But don't worry,
Tomorrow always brings more spoons.

This is the spoon theory, an everyday reality
for those who live with a chronic illness.

UNDERSTANDING CHRONIC ILLNESS THROUGH THE

Spoon Theory

So, how would you like to use your spoons today?

  get out of bed <input type="checkbox"/>	  take a shower <input type="checkbox"/>	  visit your doctor <input type="checkbox"/>	  grocery shopping <input type="checkbox"/>
  call your parents <input type="checkbox"/>	  manage meds <input type="checkbox"/>	  walk your dog <input type="checkbox"/>	  take kids to school <input type="checkbox"/>
  get dressed <input type="checkbox"/>	  make dinner <input type="checkbox"/>	  socialize <input type="checkbox"/>	  go to work <input type="checkbox"/>

original 'Spoon Theory' written by Christine Miserandino

For more information please visit
www.MollysFund.org



Molly's Fund
fighting lupus

Caltech Resources

The following individuals have been designated as contacts for disability related issues, and as coordinators under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Individuals who wish to request an accommodation should contact the appropriate Institute representative.

Students

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Disability Services at Caltech

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Thank you!

“Normalized culture makes it impossible to know that it creates itself by Otherizing those at its margins.”

~ Phil Smith, 2005