



THE LANGUAGE OF DISABILITY AND THE INCLUSION REVOLUTION

ROADMAP TO REVOLUTIONIZING INCLUSION

1

Encourage
Disability
Conversations

2

Reframe and
Rethink Differences

3

Show Allyship and
Solidarity



1

Encourage Disability Conversations

WHY WE FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT DISABILITY

- ❑ Fear of the unknown
- ❑ Unsure of what to say
- ❑ Preconceptions surrounding accommodations
- ❑ Afraid to offend someone and say the “wrong” thing
- ❑ Unsure what is – and is not – considered a disability



SO, WHAT EVEN *IS* DISABILITY?

□ According to the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- A **physical or mental impairment** which **substantially limits** a **major life activity**. Major life activities are functions important to most people's daily lives, which can include:

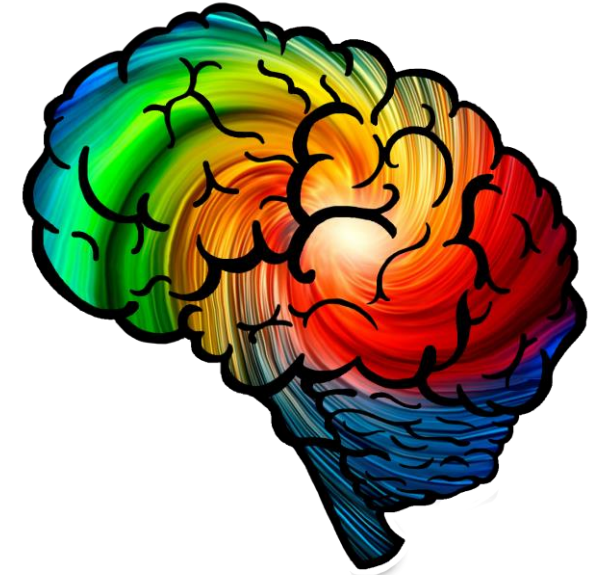
- Concentrating
- Communicating
- Reading
- Moving



NEURODIVERSITY

Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation.

- All brains work differently – whether you are **neurotypical** or **neurodivergent**
- Many forms of neurodivergence include differences in communication & thinking
- 1 in 7 people can be considered neurodivergent



Neurodivergent individuals include those with Autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, Tourette Syndrome, intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and acquired cognitive disabilities.

STIGMA & MICROAGGRESSIONS

“Everybody’s a little autistic. We’re all on the spectrum.”



“Why don’t you understand that? It’s so easy!”

“I never would have known if you didn’t tell me.”

Microaggressions are rooted in ableism. **Ableism** is prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination against people with disabilities. A lot of ableism is entrenched in the belief neurodivergent people are “broken” and need to be “fixed” and act more neurotypical.

UNPACKING ABLEISM

“A set of beliefs or practices that **devalue and discriminate** against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other.

Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many **limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean**, how nondisabled people learn to **treat people with disabilities** and how we are often **not included at the table for key decisions.**”

– Center for Disability Rights

THE LANGUAGE “DEBATE”

Person First Language

- Puts the person before the disability or condition
- Examples: “blindness”, “has autism”

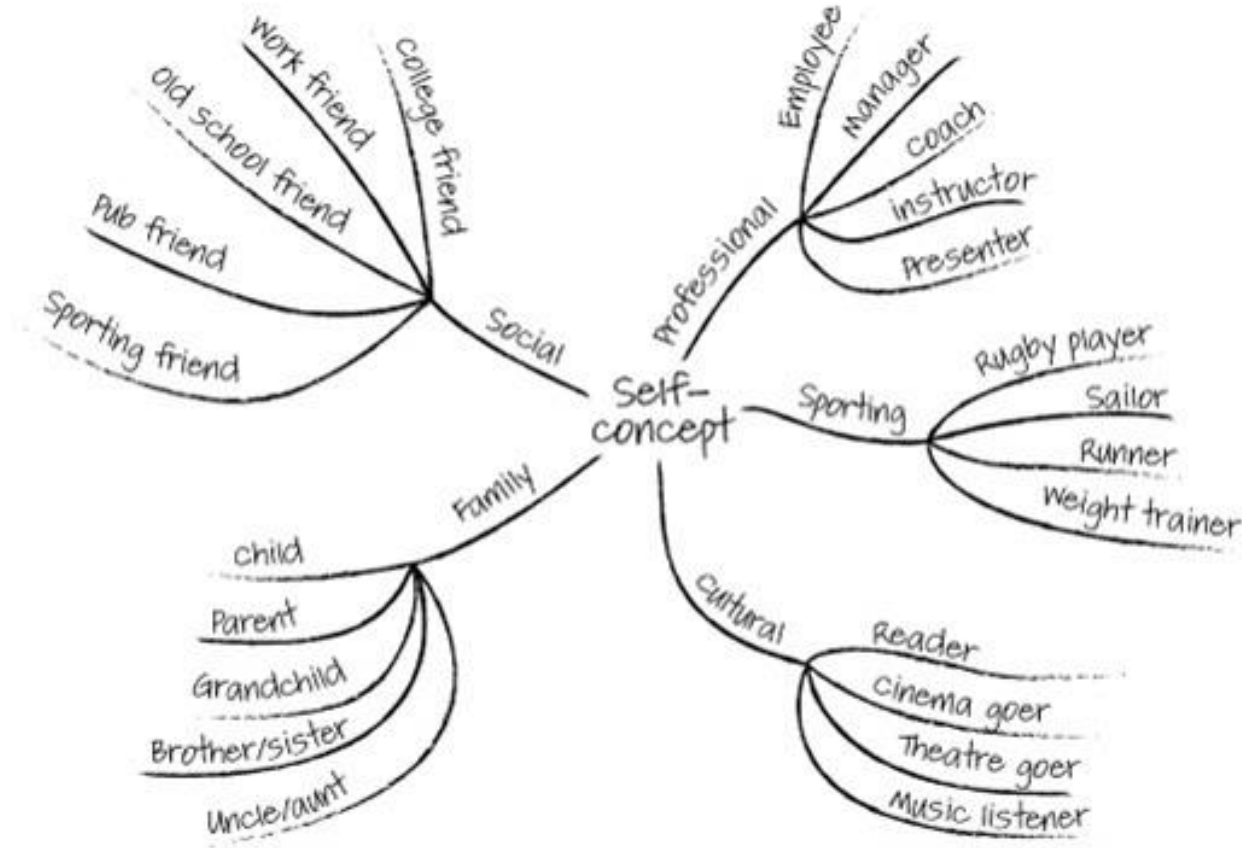
Identity First Language

- The disability is described as part of the person
- Examples: “Deaf”, “autistic”



DESCRIBE YOURSELF!

- Do you describe these things as separate from you or as part of your identity?



ANYTHING WE SHOULD BE AVOIDING?

- Slurs are harmful terms geared towards a group of people
 - The “r-word”
 - What if the group reclaims that word? (i.e., “queer,” “crip”)
- **Euphemisms** are phrases or words used to say something else.
 - They are viewed by many disabled people as **outdated** and/or **offensive**.
 - Some examples:
 - Special needs
 - Different abilities
 - Special abilities
 - Handicap-able and handicapped



1

Encourage Disability
Conversations

2

**Reframe and Rethink
Differences**

DISABILITY CULTURE AND CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES

- ❑ Many people identify as “disabled” or “neurodivergent”
- ❑ Active sense of community
- ❑ “Different, not less” and other shifts towards acceptance



SOME NON-DISABILITY RELATED CHALLENGES WE FACE

- ❑ You might have neurotypical or able-bodied privilege if:
 - People don't stare at you because of your disability
 - People talk to you in a typical manner, not like a little kid
 - You get in the car to "just go somewhere" without anxiety, distraction, physical inability, etc.
 - Not being viewed as a burden to your family because of your disability
 - Choosing a life partner and having children without fear of discrimination or worrying about losing disability benefits
 - Being in control of your life

A RE-IMAGINING OF DIFFERENT TRAITS

- Unique ways to **communicate** and **experience the world**
- “Different is neither better nor worse”



Attention to Detail

- Thoroughness
- Accuracy



Deep Focus

- Concentration
- Freedom from distraction



Absorb & Retain Facts

- Excellent long term memory and recall



Expertise

- In-depth knowledge
- High level of skills



Integrity

- Honesty, loyalty
- Commitment



Creativity

- Distinctive Imagination
- Expression of ideas

BEYOND STEREOTYPES AND BEING OURSELVES

- ❑ Disability is not a monolith, but a collection of communities
- ❑ Avoid making assumptions and **presume competence**
- ❑ Ditch the “inspiration” narrative
- ❑ Learn about disability history and culture
- ❑ Creating psychological safety
- ❑ **“How can I support you?”**



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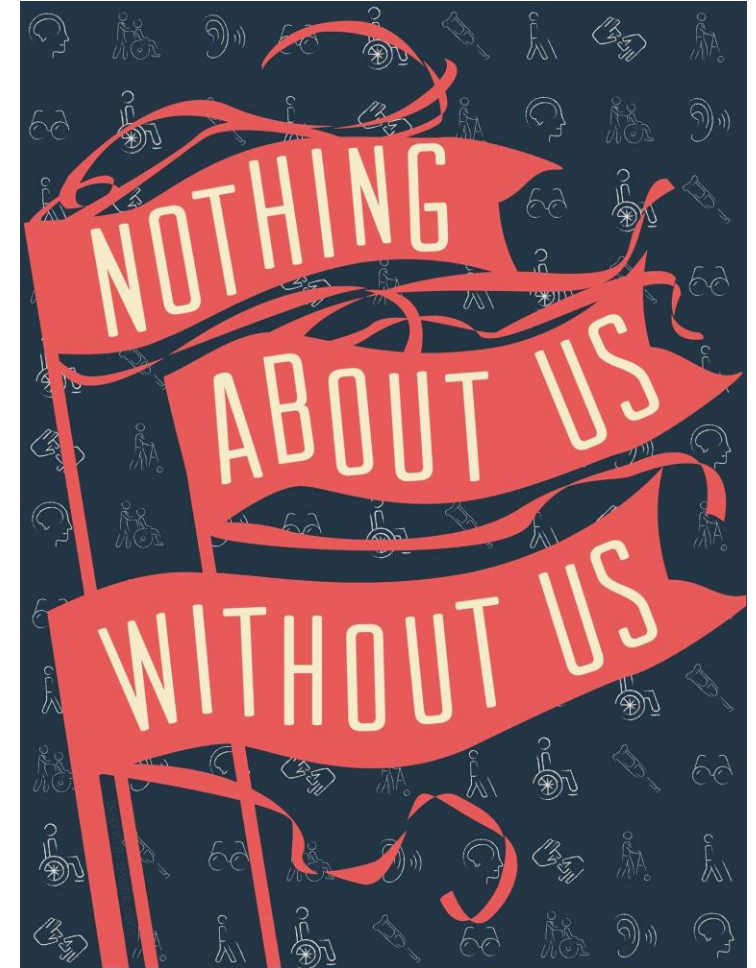
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**Show Allyship
and Solidarity**

SHOWING ALLYSHIP

- ❑ "Nothing About Us Without Us"
- ❑ Listen and learn from people with disabilities
- ❑ Speak up against injustice
- ❑ Use your power for good

LEARNING
IS A BLESSING
BLAIRIMANI



ACTIONABLE STEPS TO ALLYSHIP FOR ALL

- Acknowledge the whole person!
 - This includes disability. “I don’t see your disability” isn’t the answer
- Learn more about disability culture, rights, and community
- Address your own fear and bias. Why do you feel this way?
- Expand who you follow on social media
- Avoid making assumptions based on disability
- **“How can I support you?”**



SAY HELLO!



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