



**DirectEmployers
Association**

Interacting with Co-Workers with Disabilities and Avoiding Benevolent Ableism

Haley Moss

Accessibility Notes

This webinar strives to be as **inclusive** as possible!

No one person can grant or gatekeep access. Access is something we **create together**.

We should have **captions and transcripts** if you need them.

If you need to take a break, log off, answer phone calls, stand up, twiddle your fingers, fidget, or feel overwhelmed – **go for it!**

If you would like a copy of these slides, the images have **alt text** and should be **screen reader accessible** too. 😊

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What is Disability?

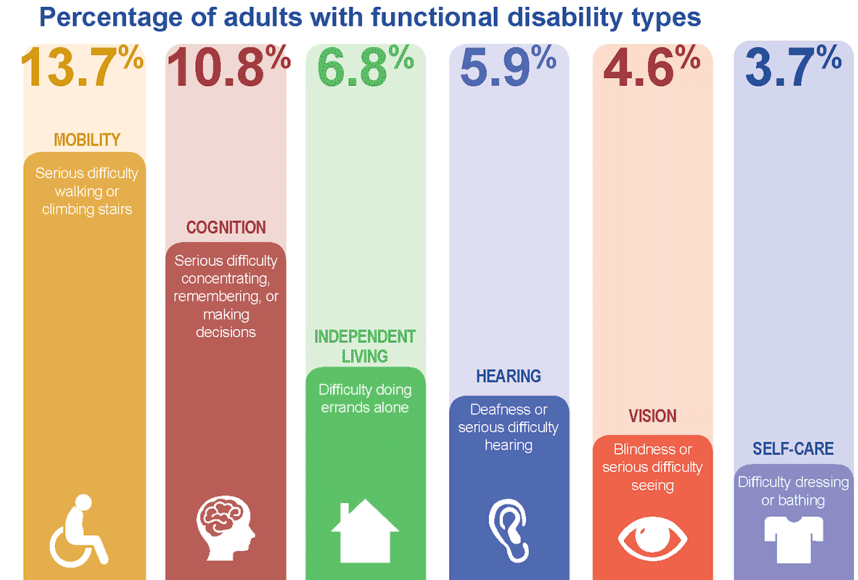
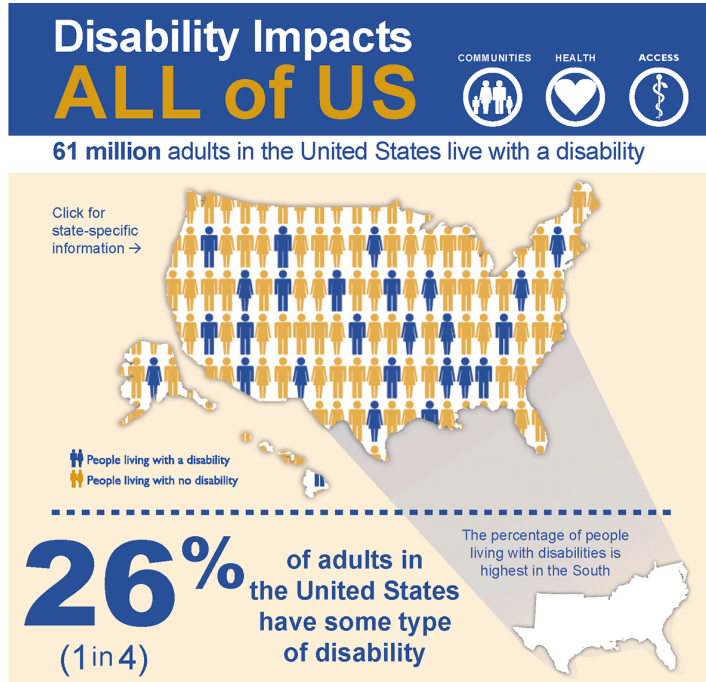
□ According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990:

- 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



Who are People with Disabilities?



Source: Center for Disease Control & Prevention



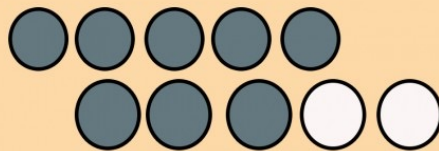
Disability Employment

THE NUMBERS

33% Percentage of the disabled
population employed
part-time in 2014
(Compare to 18 percent of those without a disability)

The unemployment rate for people
with disabilities in 2014...
More than twice the rate for people
without a disability, 5.9 percent.

12.5%



8 IN 10 Number of disabled people
NOT in the workforce in 2014

People with disabilities are self-starters.

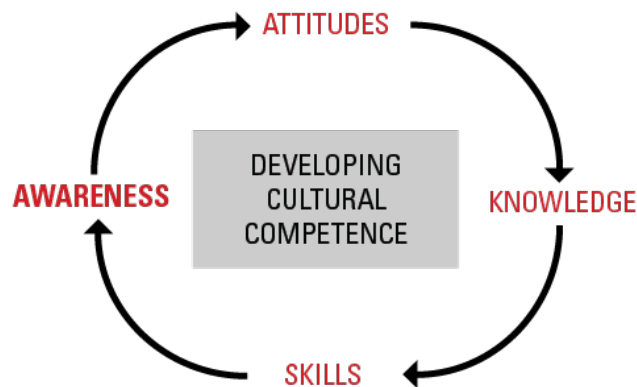
11% are self-employed,
compared to 6 percent
of those with no disability

Source: The U.S. Dept. of Labor

Graphic by: Lily Altavenna, National Center on Disability and Journalism, ASU

Cultural Competence

- ❑ **Cultural competence:** our ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people who have different cultures and belief systems than our own.
- ❑ What is our cultural competence on disability?
- ❑ How do we treat our disabled colleagues?
- ❑ Do we unintentionally reinforce a **disability hierarchy**?

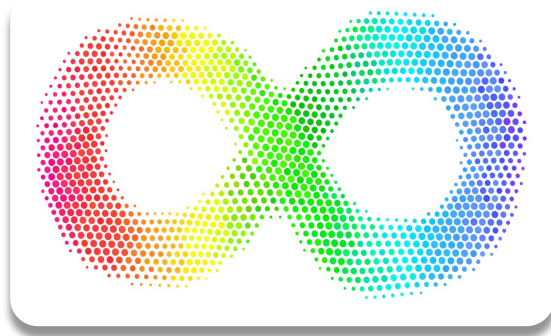


The Disability Hierarchy

- ❑ Disability hierarchy is “**a social construct that makes certain kinds of disabilities more acceptable than others.**”
- ❑ The more nondisabled someone appears to be, the “higher up” on the hierarchy they are
 - Implies that evident physical disabilities are more “valid” than non-evident disabilities.
- ❑ Disability hierarchies are tools used by nondisabled people and disabled people alike to separate themselves from disability
- ❑ Stifles unity without our communities

Disability Cultural Competence

- ❑ Re-evaluate explicit and implicit bias
- ❑ Disability communities have **unique cultures**.
- ❑ When referring to disability, **avoid euphemisms**.
- ❑ Respect boundaries and treat us like anybody else.
- ❑ Communicate **directly** and **consider leaving small talk behind**
- ❑ If you offer extra assistance, be prepared for a **“yes”** or a **“no.”**



Disability Culture and Celebrating Differences

- ❑ Many people identify as “disabled” or “neurodivergent”
 - Many also do not. Identity is a personal journey!
- ❑ Active sense of community
- ❑ “Different, not less” and other shifts towards acceptance



Disability Language 101

- ❑ Person-first language: puts the person before the disability
- ❑ Identity-first language: is part of the person
- ❑ **How do we choose what to say?**
- ❑ “Special needs”, “handicapped,” – what do we say instead?
- ❑ Best practices



able·ism

/ˈābəˌlizəm/ noun

A system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.

This systemic oppression that leads to people and society determining people's value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, "health/wellness", and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, "excel" and "behave."

You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.

working definition by @TalilaLewis, updated January 2022, developed in community with disabled Black/negatively racialized folk, especially @NotThreeFifths. Read more: bit.ly/ableism2022

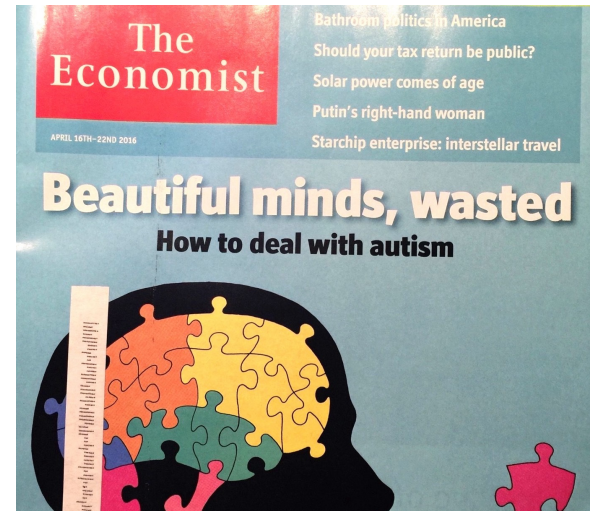
Understanding Ableism

- ❑ **Ableism** is a prejudice against people with disabilities
- ❑ Can also be stereotyping and discriminating against people or treating them negatively because of their disabilities
- ❑ You do not have to be disabled or neurodivergent to experience ableism
- ❑ Ableism can be internal or external, conscious or not
 - Think about your events, places you go, what is and isn't accessible for disabled folks



Benevolent Ableism

- ❑ Actions or attitudes that occur when you mean well but are still harmful in some way
 - Ex: offering help to a person with a disability — without considering their actual needs or asking them first



Unlearning Benevolent Ableism

☐ Recognize why you are offering assistance

- Rescuer/helper mentality? Perception that the person needs help?

☐ Treat the person as a full person

- Often, benevolent ableism reduces people to disability

☐ Be kind to yourself, too



Being an Effective Ally

"To me, being an ally looks like asking yourself 'Who's at the table? It's a constant learning process and that can be challenging, but when we know better, we can do better.'"

– Emily Ladau

Actionable Steps to Allyship

- ❑ 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
- ❑ Join an ERG
- ❑ 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?”

Let's Stay in Touch!



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