

Disability Awareness Tip Sheet

Access...

- Access is not a fragmented need.
- All people have access needs but society enables some over others.

Ableism is...

- A set of beliefs and practices that discriminates/devalues those with disabilities.
- The belief that people with disabilities need to be medically fixed.
- The belief that people with disabilities are inferior.
- Practices and beliefs that assign superiority and favouritism to non-disabled folk.
- Assumptions and practices, whether conscious or unconscious, that offer unequal treatment to those with disabilities.
- A society that limits the potential and devalues those with disabilities.
- The belief that people with disabilities are less than, less able to contribute, less productive, worth less, and valued less.

The Language of Disability...

- Don't try to soften the word "disability".
- Avoid words that make a negative judgement about living with a disability ("she suffers from arthritis", "he's a victim of polio", "they are afflicted with MS", "they are confined to a wheelchair", they succeeded in spite of their disability").
- Be conscious of your words; if you use a medical condition or disability to describe something negative, stop, correct yourself, and do the same for others. ("I was blinded to her flaws", "the economy is crippling me" "they are such a spaz", etc.).
- Be aware that terms change and evolve. If you are unsure about the most recent language, ask the disabled person you are interacting with.
- Not every person with a disability prefers the same language.
- Don't use medical diagnosis as adjectives (such as OCD, PTSD, ADD).
- Start with person first language, change to identity first or other if asked.
- If someone asks you to use specific term for them, do so.
- People without disabilities should never tell those with disabilities what terms they should use to describe themselves.

Disability Awareness Tip Sheet

Examples of Current Terminology:

- Blind, Partially Sighted, Vision Loss, Low Vision
- Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, Hearing Loss
- Mental Health Condition or Mental Health Issues
- Person first (person before the disability) or Identity First (Autistic, Deaf, disabled)

Everyday Life Tips

- Don't assume that disability means inability.
- Don't use ableist language. Ask others to do the same.
- Don't ask people with disabilities personal information unless it is pertinent to your interaction with them.
- Don't act entitled to personal details about people with disabilities.
- Don't help without first checking that the person needs and wants help.
- Don't assume disability is visible. The majority of disabilities are non-evident.
- Do your own research about Disability Justice.
- Follow people with disabilities on social media.
- Seek meaningful participation from those with disabilities.
- Add a Disability Justice lens to your work.

Gatherings Tips

- Send a slide deck in advance of a meeting.
- Provide a combination of live captioning and sign language interpreters.
- Designate a quiet rooms with dim lights for people to decompress from sensory overload at events.
- Be aware of who is creating the content.
- Ensure that you know what to look for with accessibility or hire someone who is a professional. Don't guess, it is vital to provide accurate accessibility information.
- Book events/meetings at accessible locations.
- Ask locations you are booking if they have had an accessibility audits done and if so, include that information in event listings.
- Accessibility protocols are vital, they are a package, an agreement, of how you will run all meetings and events. The protocol should be made with the paid help of a professional with a disability. Having protocols that all involved parties know in advance of events and meetings ensure that participants are not excluded or discriminated against and lessens the chance of inaccessibility.
- Ensure there is a mic and that it is used by everyone.
- If the mic doesn't travel and the audience asks questions, repeat every question into the mic before answering it. Don't assume that people

Disability Awareness Tip Sheet

don't need the amplification of a mic or that people will be comfortable declaring that they have a disability.

- It is important to describe images so those who are unable to see a presentation can still get the same information. I write my descriptions into my
- Nametags are important. Not everyone is good with names and some people may have difficulties hearing, remembering, or placing people. Ensure the name tags are worn in visible positions and that they are not covered by hair or clothing. If lanyards are used, offer safety pins to put them in easier to see positions and ensure they don't flip around.
- At the beginning of meetings, talk to people about what is allowed in the space. Create a safer space, allow people to move about as they need, to not need permission to eat or use the washroom, to stretch if they need to or to lay down.
- If you are facilitator, consider whether your exercises are universal. Think of ways to ensure everyone can participate. Add comments like "those who are able to stand, please do so" instead of saying "everyone stand up".
- Consider financial accessibility. Offer scholarships, discounts. Don't make it complicated or hard to access. Also, if possible look for ways they can volunteer or give back in return for the discount, such as setting up and taking down the chairs.

Meeting Tips

- Learn how to write accessibility information from a disability advocate.
- Commit to not booking events/meetings at non-accessible locations.
- Make it clear from the beginning what the accessibility of your event/meeting is.
- Have an accessibility protocol, follow it (we at CAN can help you create one).
- Don't try to make amends through performative accessibility.
- Always, always, always use a mic!
- Describe images in presentations so everyone gets the same information.
- Always use nametags, make sure they are visible. Lanyards are not a good idea as they tend to flip around and, when sitting, force people to look towards crotches.
- Consider the universality of any exercises in presentations/workshops.
- Include financial accessibility. Offer ways they can volunteer for discounts.
- Set up accessibility from the start so people don't need "accommodations".

Disability Awareness Tip Sheet

Social Media Tips

- Use content warnings.
- Include image descriptions and alt text on social media.
- CapitalizeEveryFirstLetterOnTwitter
- Place any hashtags or @mentions at the end of the social media posts.
- Avoid use of acronyms and initials.
- When creating video content, caption it and have a transcript.
- Follow and share disability justice advocates.
- Read and share hashtags like #AbleDsAreWeird #DisabilityJustice #WhatDisabledPeopleKnow to amplify the voices of the disabled.
- Remember "Nothing About Us Without Us" and #ActuallyAutistic; it is vital to center the perspectives and voices of people with disabilities.

Online Meeting Tips

- Let people know that they can turn off their cameras.
- If a speaker is more comfortable speaking to an audience, ask for volunteers to put their video on.
- Have presenters, speakers, and/or hosts give verbal descriptions of themselves and their backgrounds.
- It is important to describe images so those who are unable to see a presentation can still get the same information. I write my descriptions into my script to make it a seamless part of my presentations.
- Invite people to do what is needed for their body, mind, and senses.
- Let people know if questions will be answered as they are asked, at the end, or at another specific time. Let participants know whether they can put their questions in the chat box.
- Check to see if the program you are using has a closed caption option. If so, use it.
- Offer ASL interpreters.
- Don't expect participants to pay for ASL interpreters.
- If you can afford it, provide captioning/CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation).
- Ask people to share their pronouns (if they are comfortable doing so). Note that some may still be discovering their pronouns, trying new pronouns, or may be gender fluid and use different pronouns at different times. Some may choose to have no pronouns used, in this case use the person's name exclusively.
- Access needs check-in. Invite people to let you know whether their access needs are met or if there is anything that can be done to make the space safer or more comfortable.
- Use content warnings.
- Check the speech pace, don't talk too fast. This benefits those listening as well as the ASL interpreter. 120 words per minute is an

Disability Awareness Tip Sheet

interpretable speed. First language English speakers have a tendency to speed up when reading content outloud.

- Avoid use of acronyms and initials.
- Mute all non-speakers.
- Ask participants to use the raised hand option or put an asterisk in the chat box when they want to talk.
- Include a break for the group.
- Do not allow people to speak over one another.
- Don't play music during the break. People may need silence or quiet. If they mute, they may miss when the meeting readjourns.

Let us at CAN know if you have any questions.