

Learning about Power, Privilege and Oppression

Ableism

Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as 'less than,' or 'other' and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities.

Examples include:

- The assumption that people with disabilities want or need to be 'fixed,' using disability as a punchline, or mocking people with disabilities.
- Choosing an inaccessible venue for a meeting or event, therefore excluding some participants.
- Using someone else's mobility device as a hand or footrest.
- Using the accessible bathroom stall when you can use the non-accessible stall without pain or risk of injury.
- Talking to a person with a disability like they are a child, talking about them instead of directly to them or speaking for them.
- Asking invasive questions about the medical history or personal life of someone with a disability.
- Questioning if someone is 'actually' disabled, or 'how much they are disabled or asking, "How did you become disabled?"

Additional reading and resources:

- [*"Words Matter, And It's Time to Explore the Meaning Of "Ableism."*](#) by Andrew Pulrang, Contributor *Forbes*
- [*"Disabled People Have an Ally Problem: They Need to Stop Talking for Us"*](#) by Imani Barbarin, blogger
- [*"Educate & Activate Series: Ableism"*](#) by Claudia Neu, educator

For more resource and reading, see our [Anti-Oppression Reading and Discussion Resource List](#).