
Ableism



What it is, and how we can strive for a more inclusive society

What Is Ableism?

“Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior.”

- accessliving



What is Ableism (2)?



Ableism is:

- Oppression based on physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, sensory or other ability or perceived ability.
- The belief that not having a disability is superior to having a disability.
- The belief that non-disabled people are superior to disabled people.

- Melissa Marshall

Ableism is manifested by the absence of:

- Representation
- Perspective

What is Ableism (3)?



Historical treatment of people with disabilities:

- Institutionalization
- Forced sterilization
- Euthanasia
- Denial of transplants
- Sheltered workshops
- Holocaust
- Denial of citizenship
- Discrimination
- “Duty” to die



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What is ableism (4)?



Ableism can be expressed at multiple levels:

- **Institutionally**
 - For example: medical ableism, which is rooted in the idea that disability of any kind is a problem that needs fixing.
- **Interpersonally**
 - Occurs in social interactions and relationships
 - For example: A friend tries to recommend ways to “cure” their friend’s disability, rather than accept it
- **Internally**
 - When a person consciously or unconsciously believes in the harmful messages they hear about disability and applies them to themselves.

Different forms of Ableism



- **Internal ableism**

- Consciously or unconsciously believing in harmful messages about disabilities and apply them to themselves

- **Cross-disability ableism**

- When disabled people are agents of ableism
- This happens especially since we:
 - Work in ableist systems
 - Are struggling with internalized ableism

- **Hostile ableism**

- Bullying, abuse

Different Forms Of Ableism (2)



- Saneism

- “Oppression and bigotry that relates to a neurological trait or variance a person has, or is judged by” on a societal or individual level.”

- Audism

- The notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears.

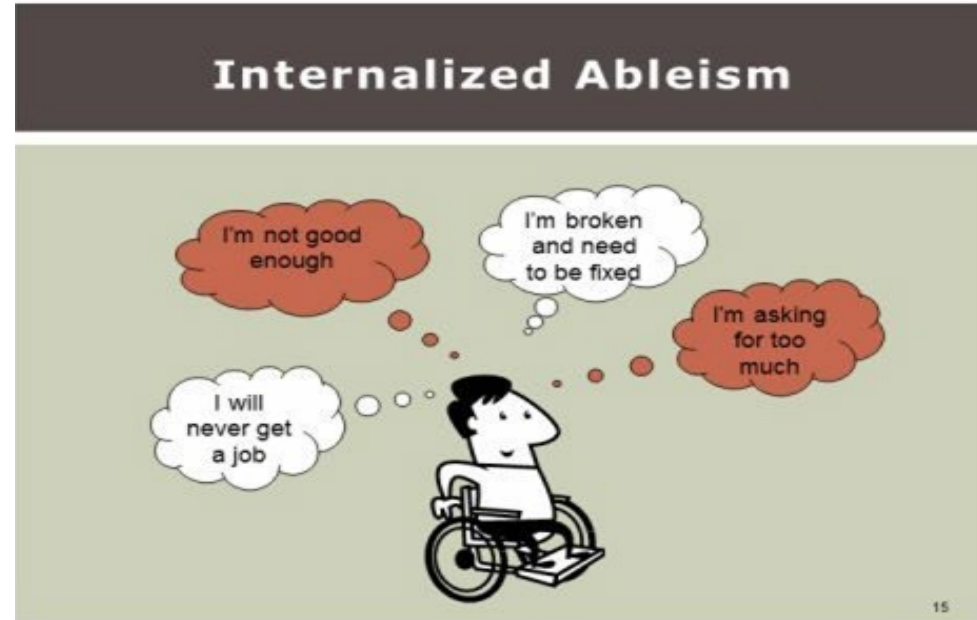
- Benevolent ableism

- Views people with disabilities as vulnerable, weak, and in need of saving

Internalized Ableism

Can manifest in many ways:

- Not asking for or turning down an accommodation that you need
- Masking
- Concealing aspects of your disability
- Feeling ashamed or embarrassed about your disability
- Separating or distinguishing yourself from people with your disability or people with disabilities in general
- Needing to prove yourself
- Being an agent of ableism toward people with your own or differing disabilities



Who Does Ableism Affect?



Ableism affects everyone!

- Ageism **impacts our society at large and people as individuals** in many ways
 - Affects our health, employment, financial security, & self-perceptions; regardless of whether you are able bodied or disabled.
- Existing systems are inherently ableist and are built to foster dependency
 - Examples: benefits programs, government agencies and systems, etc.

What does everyday ableism look like?



- Framing disability as either tragic or inspirational in news stories, movies, and other popular forms of media
- Talking to a person with a disability like they are a child, talking about them instead of directly to them, or speaking for them
- Assuming people have to have a visible disability to actually be disabled
- Questioning if someone is 'actually' disabled, or 'how much' they are disabled
-<https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/>

How Is Ableism Presented?



- *Ableism is presented in a multitude of ways, including:*
 - In language or how we speak
 - In assumptions
 - In health care
 - In the workforce/financial security
 - In obtaining equitable supports
 - Within ourselves
 - In obtaining equitable opportunities and education
 - In microaggressions

How is Ableism Presented (2)?



In Language

- How we speak can lead to domino effects in our society
- Changing biases and attitudes can take time, changing language is a great place to start
 - Be sensitive to systemic devaluation
 - Avoid negative language
 - “Victim of” or “suffering from”
 - “Frequent flyer,” the R word
 - “Psycho”
 - “You don’t look disabled”
 - “What’s wrong with you?”



<https://www.freepik.com>

Remember: Disability is not a bad word!

How Is Ableism Presented (3)?



In Healthcare

“Ableism can cause people to prioritize the health and independence of nondisabled people at the expense of those with disabilities.” -Medical News Today

- Ableism is a barrier to proper medical attention and care
- Internalized ableism can prevent us from seeking medical attention and from using proper supports such as using mobility aids or accommodations, applying for services and supports



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How is Ableism Presented (4)?



In Misconceptions & Incorrect Assumptions Such As:

- You must be always unable to walk to use a wheelchair
- A person who is walking does not need disability parking access
- Young people cannot become disabled
- Older populations are just old, not disabled and/or chronically ill
- If you are working you can't be disabled
- Disabilities are not dynamic

How Is Ableism Presented (5)?



In The Workplace/Financially

- True accessibility in workplaces is rare
- Incorrect assumptions that all people with disabilities can't work, therefore there is no need to create space for them
- Disability benefits access is inequitable
- “Employers may be biased against those with disabilities, believing they make less productive workers. They may also refuse disability accommodations to existing employees or allow workplace bullying to go unpunished.”-
medicalnewstoday

How Is Ableism Presented (6)?



In The Workplace/Financially

- People with disabilities earn \$6,500 less than people without disabilities
- In nonprofit organizations people with disabilities earn about 33% less than non-disabled peers doing the same work
- Household income goes down by about \$25,000 when there is a disability in the household
- Before COVID the poverty rate of ALL disabled people was 22.1% in Colorado and 8.3% for people without disabilities



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How is Ableism presented (7)?



In Education Discrimination

- “Schools refusing to make disability accommodations, failing to understand a disability, or trying to “teach” a child not to have their impairment are all examples of ableism in education. For example, a teacher might punish a child for their [dyslexia](#) rather than adapt how they teach.” -medicalnewstoday



Image by vectorjuice on Freepic.com

How is Ableism Presented (8)?



In Society & Culture

- Inaccessible spaces: Designing buildings, public spaces, products, and technology that only caters to nondisabled people is an example of ableism. This includes websites that have no text enlargement feature, buildings that have no ramp for wheelchairs, and sidewalks with obstacles that make walking more difficult. - medicalnewstoday
- Incorrect representation in media and film
- Microaggressions are very common in society

How Is Ableism Presented (g)?



Microaggressions are everyday verbal or behavioral expressions that communicate a negative slight or insult in relation to someone's gender identity, race, sex, disability, etc. -[accessliving.org](https://www.accessliving.org)

- The micro aggression equation:
 - Alienation
 - Frustration
 - Low self-esteem
 - Ableism
 - Internalized ableism
 - Potential death

Micro aggression + micro aggression =

How Is Ableism Presented (10)?



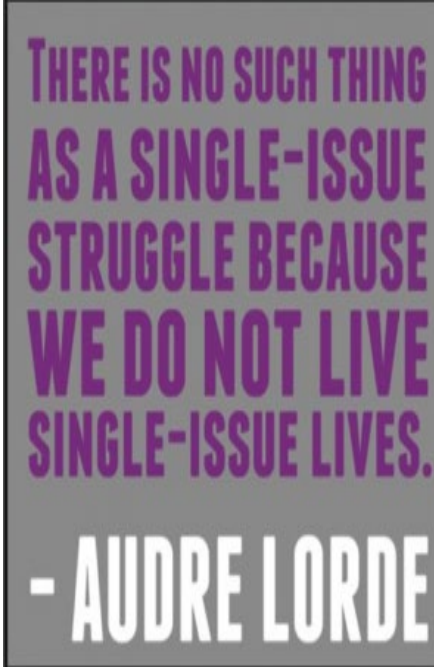
Micro-aggression examples:

- Pulling back slightly when a mental health condition is disclosed
- Touching someone's durable medical equipment/assistive technology without their permission
- Assuming a disabled person cannot consent
- Inaccessible architecture
- Patronizing tones
- "That guy is crazy."
- "You're acting so bi-polar today."
- "Are you off your meds?"
- "She's such a psycho."
- "I'm super OCD about how I clean my apartment."
- "Can I pray for you?"
- "I don't even think of you as disabled."

Intersectionality



Intersectionality is a framework to analyze the interlocking effects of oppressed people with multiple marginalized identities experience.



**THERE IS NO SUCH THING
AS A SINGLE-ISSUE
STRUGGLE BECAUSE
WE DO NOT LIVE
SINGLE-ISSUE LIVES.
- AUDRE LORDE**

Intersectionality Example

- In 2015 15% of whites have a Bachelor's or beyond while only 9% Black or Latinos with disabilities have this level of education. 35% of whites without disabilities have this level of education, 20% of Blacks and 15% of Latinos without disabilities have a Bachelors or beyond.
- Black students with disabilities lose 77 days of instruction more a year compared to white students due to racist discipline policies. This leads to the school to prison pipeline and inability to advance in education which affects employment and skill development.

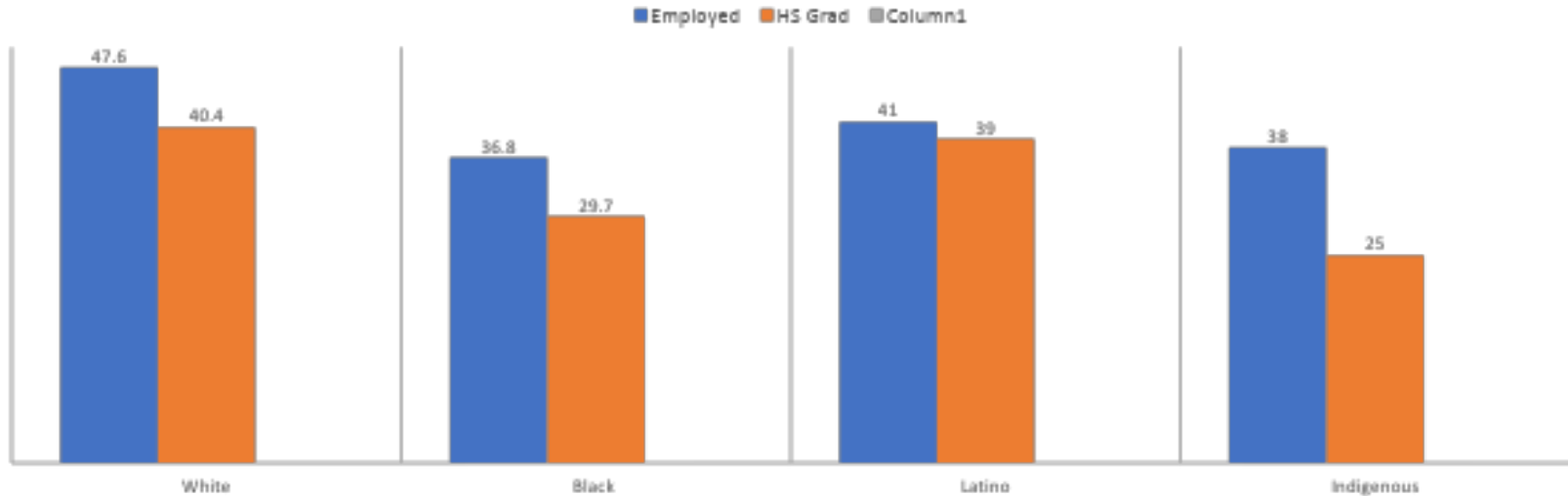


Intersectionality -Economic

In 2017 45.7% of Coloradans with ANY disability were employed



Employment/Education by Race



Intersectionality in Practice

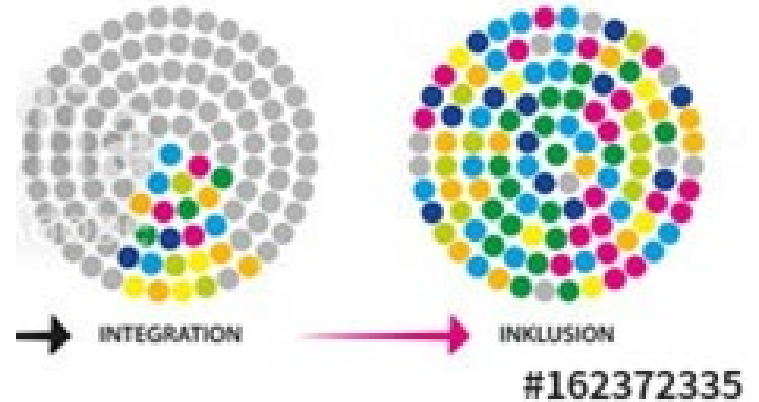


- Creating educational materials or trainings that prioritize the experiences of multiply marginalized people throughout the document
- Ensuring materials or trainings are available in multiple languages or formats
- Creating or supporting legislation that specifically helps multiply marginalized disabled people
- Thinking “who isn’t in the meeting, at the table, etc.?” and ensuring they are invited

Equity vs equality



Inclusive vs exclusive



Confronting Ableism



In deciding how and when to confront ableism, consider:

- Context:
 - Who is engaging in ableism?
 - The audience witnessing the ableism
 - Is it systemic or individualized ableism?
- Your role relative to the ableist behavior:
 - Do you have a professional responsibility?

Confronting Ableism Continued

Center Multiply-Marginalized Disabled People's Experiences

- **Hire and Support BIPOC leaders:** When disabled BIPOC make decisions, we create powerful initiatives.
- **Listen to Disabled BIPOC:** Disabled BIPOC have amazing contributions – be open to receiving them.
- **Ask “who’s missing?”:** Who is not “at the table?”



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Disability Justice

- Disability rights law exists to mitigate the status quo which is ableism.
- Disability Justice exists to change these systems.
- Leadership of those most impacted
- Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
- Interdependence
- Collective liberation



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The Impact of Ableism

Ableism affects everyone. It shapes how people think about physical or mental differences, which anyone can acquire during their lifetime. It also damages society as a whole by:

- reducing access to transport, education, and the i
- increasing levels of unemployment
- increasing poverty
- fueling bullying, harassment, and violence
- causing unnecessary institutionalization

-Medical News Today



Anti ableism in practice



- Believe people when they disclose a disability
- Don't accuse people of 'faking' their disability
- Listen to people when they request an accommodation
- Don't assume you know what someone needs
- Never touch a person with a disability or their mobility equipment without consent
- Keep invasive questions to yourself
- Don't speak on behalf of someone with a disability unless they explicitly ask you to
- Talk about disability with children and young people
- Incorporate accessibility into your event planning

-Access living.org

References



<https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/ableism#ableism-and-health>

<https://www.freepik.com>