

DISABILITY, ABLEISM & SELF-ADVOCACY

THE BARRIER MAY BE IN THE ENVIRONMENT - NOT IN YOUR WORTH

People with disabilities can experience barriers created by environments, systems, attitudes, communication, and inaccessible design.

ABLEISM CAN BE SUBTLE OR DIRECT

- Being treated as incapable, childlike, inspirational simply for existing, burdensome, unreliable, or less entitled to privacy and choice.
- Being excluded because a space, process, website, or service was not designed for access.

HELP IS NOT OWNERSHIP

- Needing assistance does not transfer decision-making power to the helper.
- Ask before helping. Speak to the person directly. Respect privacy and consent.
- Support should increase access and autonomy.

ACCESS IS PART OF PARTICIPATION

- Access can include ramps, seating, transportation, interpreters, captions, large print, screen readers, plain language, sensory supports, flexible scheduling, or more processing time.
- Different people need different supports.

CHALLENGE INTERNALIZED ABLEISM

- Notice beliefs such as 'I am lazy if I rest' or 'I should be able to do this without help.'
- Ask whether the standard assumes an able body or mind.
- Replace shame with an access question: 'What would make this doable?'

COMMUNITY CAN BE STRENGTH

- Disability identity and community can offer knowledge, advocacy, humor, technology, history, belonging, and practical problem-solving.
- A person may prefer person-first or identity-first language; follow the individual's preference.

SELF-ADVOCACY

- State the barrier, the access need, and the requested change.
- Document requests when useful.
- Use disability-rights, ADA, healthcare civil-rights, or advocacy resources when needed.

Access needs do not reduce dignity, intelligence, adulthood, or the right to direct your own life.