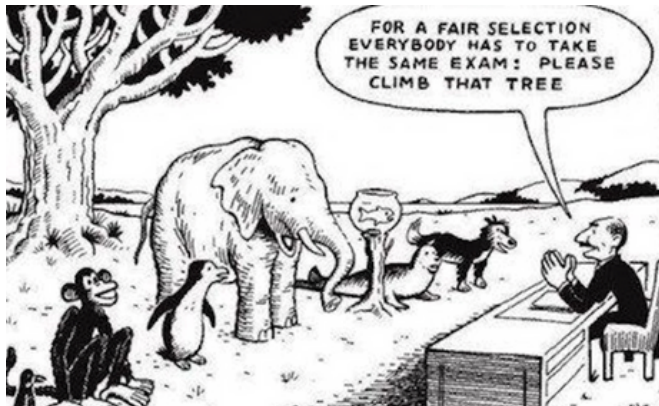




Miriam-Webster's meaning of **ABILITY** is the quality or state of being able to do something, especially physically, mentally, but also legally. In short, a capacity to do.

The term '**DISability**' means "without ability". This has led to misconceptions and assumptions about the capabilities of anyone with a disability. Of course a person with an impairment of any kind may have a reduced capacity to do particular things, but for any person, the context and the specific task end goal will determine the ability to complete it.



Ableism is a form of discrimination, stigma, bias, and prejudice against people with disabilities.

Ableism is when people with *typical*, full abilities are considered "normal" and that people with *atypical* abilities are not.

Ableism leads to someone with disabilities deemed *incapable* and therefore less valuable.

Ableism may be unconscious, based on exposure.

For people with disabilities, ableism can be part of everyday life for their entire lives. The following video, *Ableism Across a Lifetime* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMSj7Jx5Qmo>) illustrates the vast differences in treatment between persons with a disability and a person with typical abilities. As can be seen in the video, ableism is present at all facets of a persons life: social, institutional, and cultural.

As a general rule: Don't make assumptions about one's capabilities or need for help. And, ask if a person *wants* (not needs) help before helping!

Ableism, like many -isms, is deeply ingrained at many levels

At an *institutional* level, ableism has taken the form of segregation, inaccessible design of buildings, job discrimination, and eugenics and attempted eradication.

At a more *personal* level, there are everyday acts of ableism seen in our communities due to a lack of awareness or empathy.

These include things like:

- parking in a designated accessible spot;
- using the accessible stall in a washroom;
- wearing scented products in scent-free environments;
- infantilizing, in speech and actions;
- assuming that episodic or invisible disabilities are not 'real' disabilities;
- common microaggressions, including phrases and words like: lame, crazy, OCD, crippled.

For more examples, visit <https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/>

For some first-hand experiences, see <https://www.invisibledisabilityproject.org/ableism> where examples are given through videos entitled:

"Can You See Me? My Disabilities may be unseen but they are not unfelt"

Laura was rear-ended while stopped at a traffic light, knocked unconscious and acquired a **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** which led to life with an invisible disability. She has PTSD, high anxiety, headaches, trouble understanding, is sensitive to light and has trouble reading or focusing for what used to be 'normal' periods of time. Friends say "Come on out. It'll do you good!"

Dan lives with a late diagnosed **Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome Plus**. Many doctors didn't take him seriously or know what to do. Six months of testing led to withdrawal symptoms once back home. He actually ended up in the psychiatric ward due to suicidal thoughts. He now carries a sense of loneliness as he cannot be as active in the community as he had been, and friends stopped asking him to go out, as he typically turned them down.

Take home messages from these stories: Listen when people talk about their mental health. Most people won't make this stuff up and mostly want to be heard and taken seriously. They also want and need friends even if that looks a little different than what you're used to. Being aware and listening is a first step in being an ally.



SPECIAL AWARENESS DAYS

April - Autism Acceptance Month
April 2 - World Autism Day

April 18 - 19 Anniversary of Nova Scotia Mass Shooting