

Attitudinal Barriers

appreciate ability * 2023

what are attitudinal barriers

Attitudinal barriers are negative perceptions that focus on a person's disability, rather than recognizing the whole person. They are dehumanizing as they assume everything in one's life revolves around their disability. Attitudinal barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, causing misconceptions that discriminate against people with disabilities.

examples of attitudinal barriers

https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/handout_attitudinal_barriers.pdf

disempowering and dehumanizing

- assuming that people with disabilities **don't know what's best for them**
- holding **lower expectations** towards people with disabilities
- assuming the **need to help** people with disabilities and imposing "help" rather than offering
- withholding information / authority that would allow a person with disabilities to make their own decision
- Not listening to people with disabilities

exclusion

- not including people with disabilities in activities
- seeking the opinion from someone with disabilities only on disability related issues
- not shaking hands
- choosing activities or locations that are inaccessible
- avoiding people with disabilities in fear of saying or doing the wrong thing

overprotection

- holding lower expectations for people with disabilities
- downplaying negative feedback
- making decision for people with disabilities with the intention of protecting them from failing or getting hurt

segregation

- assuming people with disabilities should only be surrounded by other people with disabilities
- scheduling special activities for people with disabilities rather than making all activities accessible
- hiring people with disabilities to only work in handicapped services

generalizing

- denying people's uniqueness due to their disability
- assuming the one person represents and understands everyone with disabilities
- being ignorant to the diversity of disabilities and the diversity of people who may have the same disability
- assuming that there is a "general right answer" on how to act with all people with disabilities

how to foster change

- reflect and be aware of attitudinal barriers you may have subconsciously developed

- always focus on one's abilities and capabilities and start with the assumption that everyone can independently make their decision and participate in any activity
- never assume the need to assist, rather ask for people's preferences
- talk directly to a person with a disability, not through his parent or caretaker
- as you would to anyone, extend common courtesies to people with disabilities and try not to feel ashamed or upset if one is unable to reciprocate
- when communicating with someone with a speech impairment, if you are unable to understand what they are saying, kindly ask for them to repeat themselves rather than pretending like you understand. educate yourself in alternative modes of conversation as well

It's okay and normal to feel nervous or uncomfortable when interacting with people with disabilities, but by recognizing "person first" rather than their disability, you empower both yourself and the people you are interacting with.