Disability Network Southwest Michigan



Four Levels of Ableism

# Personal (Ideas or Values):

1. I’m so glad my baby is “healthy” (wasn’t born with a disability).
2. People with disabilities are so “inspirational” and nice.
3. At least I can still walk (and not use a wheelchair)!
4. His body is breaking down, but his mind is sharp as a tack!

# Interpersonal (Between People):

1. She can’t be on this committee – she would have too much trouble understanding what’s going on.
2. We’re not going to hire her because I don’t know how a blind person could do this job.
3. He’s not working hard enough on his goals.
4. I’m not going to give him a reminder call about his appointment. He should make a note (Like I do)!
5. We can’t hire someone with schizophrenia – we work with “vulnerable” populations… (What makes a whole group of people “vulnerable”? Assumption of violence when not support by evidence).
6. If he would just cheer up and be more positive he wouldn’t have to take those pills. It’s all about self-control!
7. It’s so cute! He has a “girlfriend.”

*over 🡪*

# Organizational (In Organizations - Ways of Doing):

1. Our policy says that people have to come to our office to be eligible for services.
2. You must be able to lift 50 pounds for this job. (All the time? Can this be changed?)
3. We’d make our building more accessible but people with disabilities don’t really come here.
4. We’re going to choose an event location that works for “most people.” If people with disabilities can’t come, they can still get information another way.
5. Our intake paperwork is pretty complicated, but we can’t change it because of state law.
6. Staff don’t have time to go through everything. The person will have to get help from someone else if they don’t understand it.
7. We have separate programs for people with autism to accommodate their “unique needs.”

# Institutional (In Social Structures: Government, Education, Law & Media)

1. If you are receiving social security disability benefits and get married you lose some of your benefit.
2. It’s okay to build houses that some people cannot get inside.
3. Many religions say that disability is a punishment from God.
4. The health care system decides what equipment people with disabilities need and they often must pay for disability related equipment or services out of pocket.
5. There is a process where people with disabilities can lose their rights to make any decision about their life. This process does not exist for people without disabilities.

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