

Going from judgement to connection



Speaker
Trainer
Author

Agenda

Disability stats

Understanding invisible disabilities

Getting clear on needs of others

Adapting to meet their needs

Advocating for yourself and/or team members

2022 Stats Canada



Canadians impacted

8 million Canadians have one or more disabilities that limit their daily activities

Up from 6.2 million people in 2017

Largest increase has been in mental health-related disabilities



Ages 15 to 24

- 68% mental health related
- 46% learning
- 34% pain related



Ages 25 to 64

- 63% pain related
- 46% mental health related
- 36% flexibility related



Ages 65 and older

- 68% pain related
- 63% mobility
- 59% flexibility



Barriers

- 72% of people with disabilities reported experiencing 1 or more of 26 types of barriers to accessibility
- Barrier can be physical, architectural, technology or **attitudinal**



Most common barriers

- 56% entrances, exits, sidewalks
- 48% communications
- 37% behaviours, misconceptions or assumptions
- 17% online activities



Invisible disabilities



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Group Work

- What are some invisible disabilities that you have personal experience with – friends, family, colleague?
- Any personal thoughts on the strengths and stretches of the disability (not the person)?



Most common

Autism

ADHD

Dyslexia

Dyscalculia

Dysgraphia

Migraine

Bipolar

Depression

Anxiety

Chronic fatigue

Brain injuries

Chronic pain

Crohn's disease

Celiac disease

FASD

Schizophrenia

Sensory
processing
disorder

...and more



Strengths

- Thinking outside of the box
- Not following processes just because
- Asking why, looking for new ways
- Ability to hyper focus
- Going deep with special interests
- Creativity and innovation
- Increased emotional intelligence
- Empathy



Stretches

Executive functioning – processing information and steps

Sensory processing – overwhelming of senses

Communicating under stress or when feeling unwell

Understanding ‘that’s how we do it’ – needs to know the why

Meltdowns

Longer recovery time



Working together



Language matters

Autism not Asperger's

Avoid high or low functioning

Migraine not headache

Check your language before you speak!

If you don't know, ask

Grade 3 reading level



What's needed

Clear understanding of the disability

Appreciate uniqueness of how it presents in people – no one size fits all

Many adults are undiagnosed but still have limitations

Be curious vs judgemental



Individual approach

Embrace a curiosity mindset

Take time to ask questions

What information do they need

How do they want to be
communicated and
communicate – provide options

Be prepared to adjust your
approach to meet their needs



Stay focused

Break tasks into steps

Write them down

Don't assume heading nodding =
understanding

Use parking lots in meetings/conversations

Follow up

Be patient!



Grade 3 reading level

Short emails - less is more

Use of bullet points vs text heavy

Video, audio vs email

Meetings with 1-3 items to discuss vs shopping list



Group Work

- What's your preferred way to communicate?
- How can you adjust your communications to meet the needs of others? Any ideas shared here you'll implement?
- Other ideas?



How to advocate



Where to start

Get to know the individual

Start with curiosity vs problem solving mindset

Ask questions and take time to learn about their strengths, stretches, supports, accommodations they want

Put your personal opinions, connections aside

Each person has unique needs!



Where to start

Get clear on diagnoses

Letters of support from medical professionals

Research the diagnosis and why accommodations are needed

Reach out to provincial/national organizations – information is there!



Sample accommodations

Low sensory – decreased lights, noise, smells

Work from home – creating safe environment

Shift flexibility – starting day earlier or later

Communications options – email, phone, in-person, virtual

Work space – lighting, work station adjustments

...and more



Group Work

- What accommodations do you think would be easy to implement?
- Where do you think you'd require more support or would be a stretch?



How to advocate

Know your audience – who are you talking to

How do they connect

Tailor your messaging to meet their needs, interests, personality

Stay focused – get clear on what you want to communicate



How to advocate

Explain the person's diagnosis/es and how it presents in them – don't assume they understand

Clearly layout supports and/or accommodations requested

Use storytelling to explain what work is like with and without these accommodations for the person



How to advocate

To include:

Diagnosis/es

Needs

Accommodations

Provide any supporting documentation

- Letters
- Research
- Personal letter/video



Group Work

- What do you see your role being in advocating?
- Where do you feel confident?
- Where do you feel you need more support, training, knowledge?



Ongoing journey

Individual needs change

Check-in, ask questions, adjust

Is listening needed or problem solving?

Continue to listen, learn and adjust



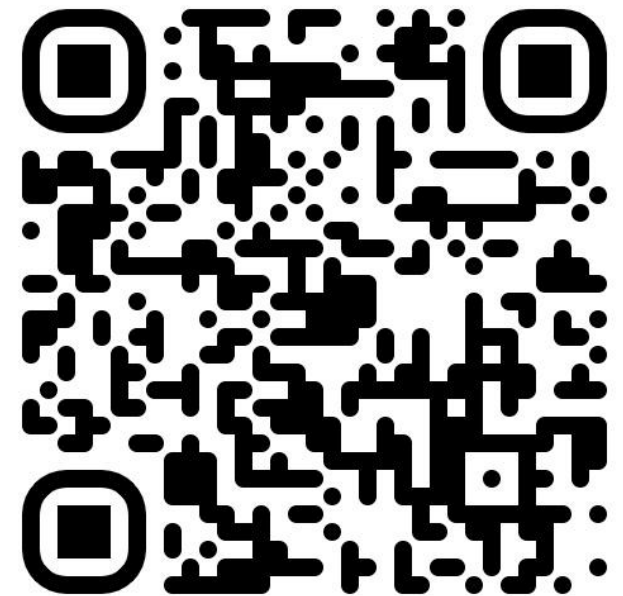
Stay in touch!

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