Changing Perspectives and Opening Doors: The Impact of the ADA on the lives of individuals with disabilities

ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility
Who we are!

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Take Away: Goals for Today

- Significance of ADA

- Perspective of disability as diversity

- Actions steps toward creating a climate of inclusivity
OPENING QUESTIONS

- What does the term “disability” mean to you?

- What three words would you use to describe an individual with a disability?

- Why?
Before ADA

- 1967 - 200,000 individuals with disabilities lived in state institutions

- Prior to 1970 – no legal requirement that public schools serve children with disabilities
ADA

- July 26, 1990 signed by President Bush

- Comprehensive Civil Rights Law

- Goals: Equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, economic self-sufficiency

- Employment, Public Services, Public Accommodations, Telecommunications

- Congressional Findings: physical or mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society, yet many people with physical or mental disabilities have been precluded from doing so because of discrimination; others who have a record of a disability or are regarded as having a disability also have been subjected to discrimination;
ADA Did....... 

- Change society – provided rights for individuals with disabilities
- ADA created anti-discrimination federal law
- Right to equal opportunity, equal benefit
- Full inclusion - from “bother” to a right
- Created class, united in discrimination and empowered by law
Disability is Diversity

“Disability is a diversity classification that transcends all ethnic, racial, age, gender, education, and socioeconomic lines. It represents the only minority group that anyone can join at any time.”

-Employer Assistance and Resource Network
Laws change behaviors: Difficult to address unconscious implicit biases and/or beliefs such as ........

Disability....

- Is a lesser status, bad or unfortunate condition that people should hide

- Punishment for immorality or a curse

- An opportunity for others to pity, give charity, obtain self-worth

- A condition to be fixed by doctors or to be avoided

- Great admiration for individuals with disabilities
Microaggressions

- Outward manifestations of unconsciously held stereotypes, biased thinking on the part of often well-meaning people or groups

- Creates and reinforces significant barriers to equality
MICROAGGRESSIONS

“Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership”

- **Microassaults** – explicit attacks resembling transitional discrimination (i.e., name calling, avoidance)
- **Microinsults** – insensitive and demeaning remarks
- **Microinvalidations** – negating an individual’s personal experience of their reality.

Understanding different themes:

- Denial of personal identity
- Denial of disability experience
- Denial of privacy
- Helplessness
- Secondary gain
- Spread effect
- Infantilization
- Patronization
- Second-class citizen
- Desexualization
Examples of Microaggressions

- Being treated like something is wrong with you

- Regarded as less capable/intelligence, inferiority (i.e. giving a person with a disability a lesser task)

- Acting like a person with a disability is simply exaggerating obstacles; invalidation (i.e. telling a person with a mental illness to “just think happy thoughts” or “mind over matter”)

- Treating an adult person with a disability as a child (i.e. using a soft, cutesy tone, or a loud voice when speaking with an adult person)

- Associating mental illness with being dangerous

- Viewed as second class citizen or a burden

- Assumed helplessness
Examples

- “You’re so inspiring/amazing/capable”
- Talking to an individual’s attendant/interpreter instead of the individual
- Referring to a person as “high or low functioning”
- “I don’t even think of you as disabled.”
- “You’re really brave to speak about your mental illness and not be worried others will see you as weak.”
- Assumption that an individual diagnosed with mental health disability has a lower intelligence or less competent, or lacks control
Impact of microaggressions

- Lower self-esteem, feelings of self-worth

- Low outcomes in employment, income, college participation

- Individuals with/without disabilities act more favorably toward individuals with physical disabilities, sensory disabilities than either traumatic brain injuries, or mental illness.

- Others?
Microaggressions?

- A student with Autism reports that he is never asked to work on group projects and that his roommate is never around.

- A woman using crutches is carrying something to her car. A passer-by asks to help her. She says, “no thank you.” He says, “Are you sure? I haven’t done my good deed for the day.”

- Someone remarks to a man with a vision impairment that his outfits always match so nicely!

- A person with depression finds it frustrating when people tell her it’s “mind over matter.”

- A wheelchair basketball team is practicing in a public gym. Folks gather to watch and one says, “You guys are such inspirations. I don’t know how you do it.”
Foundation for inclusivity:

- Promote the concept of disability as diversity
- Recognize disability as contributing value to society
- Be aware of personal biases
- Respect the experiences of Individuals with disabilities
- Education yourself and others on microaggressions; be open to discussions
- Make concrete efforts to avoid microaggressive comments & behaviors
- Create opportunities to educate others about diversity
- Create professional practices/models that are consistent with inclusive climate and stop practices that are not
KU’s Commitment to Inclusion

- KU’s charge is to endorse a campus climate that will sustain attention to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the spirit in which it was designed and to provide a campus community of inclusiveness.

- Ways you can be a leader in creating a campus climate of inclusiveness.

- The words you use matter in creating a culture.

- *Your Words, Our Image* poster
Using "Person First" Language

You are in a unique position to shape the public image of people with disabilities. By putting the person first and using these suggested words, you can convey a positive, objective view of an individual instead of a negative, insensitive image.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do say</th>
<th>Don’t say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Differently abled, challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>The disabled, handicapped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with spinal cord injury</td>
<td>Cripple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with autism, on the autism spectrum</td>
<td>Autistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with Down syndrome</td>
<td>Mongoloid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Person of short stature</td>
<td>Midget, dwarf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user</td>
<td>Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has a learning disability</td>
<td>Slow learner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has chemical or environmental sensitivities</td>
<td>Chemophobic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has a brain injury</td>
<td>Brain damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind, low vision</td>
<td>Visually handicapped, blind as a bat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaf, hard of hearing</td>
<td>Deaf-mute, deaf and dumb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>Retarded, mental retardation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amputee, has limb loss</td>
<td>Gimp, lame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congenital disability</td>
<td>Birth defect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burn survivor</td>
<td>Burn victim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-polio syndrome</td>
<td>Suffers from polio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service animal or dog</td>
<td>Seeing eye dog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychiatric disability, mental illness</td>
<td>Crazy, psycho, schizo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How should I describe you or your disability?</td>
<td>What happened to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible parking or restroom</td>
<td>Handicapped parking, disabled restroom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Creating culture of inclusivity

- Replace the outdated term, “handicapped,” a word laden with pity, with the term, “accessible.”
Action steps: Education & Advocacy

- Treat individuals with respect, dignity, and courtesy
  - Use People-First Language
  - Don’t Make assumptions
    - Ask before helping
  - Talk directly to the individual, not the interpreter, friend, attendant
    - Be polite in greeting, shake hands
  - Listen carefully, wait to reply until individual has finished speaking.
    - Be sensitive about physical contact and space
      - Respect an individual’s privacy
  - Don’t make a decision on behalf of a person with a disability regarding what they can/cannot do
    - Place yourself at eye level when speaking with an individual that uses a chair.