

# FIGHT ABLEISM



This guide is for all people.  
It provides guidance on respecting human diversity

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**Naturalizing the exclusion of persons with disabilities is unethical. And it speaks against the humanity of those who do this.**

## **ABLEISM REPRODUCES BELIEFS, PROCESSES AND PRACTICES THAT NORMALIZE A CERTAIN STANDARD BODY TYPE AS PERFECT, WITHOUT CONSIDERING ALL HUMAN DIVERSITY (CAMPBELL, 2001).**

**Ableism is any kind of discrimination against a person due to their disability. This discrimination can be defined as:**

...any form of distinction, restriction or exclusion, by action or omission, with the intent or effect of harming, hindering or negating the recognition or exercise by persons with disabilities [PwD] of their fundamental rights and liberties, including the refusal to make reasonable adaptations and provide assistive technologies.

Brazilian Inclusion Law (BIL), Law 13.146, 2015, art. 4.

**Attention!** To discriminate, induce or incite others to discriminate against a person due to their disability is a crime.

**Punishable** by 1 to 3 years imprisonment and a fine (BIL, 2015, art. 88).



**Discrimination based on disability is a crime.**

## INSTITUTIONAL ABLEISM

This is a form of discrimination that manifests itself through discourses which reinforce conceptions of passivity, oppression and invisibility. Ableism results in exclusion and suffering. It can take the following forms:

- **Lack of interest in studying** the unequal and inhumane conditions imposed on PwD.
- **Poor accessibility** of information content produced.
- **Exclusion of PwD** from the benefits of **universal actions**.
- **Presumption of incapacity**.
- **Reproduction of myths and stigmas**.
- **Lack of practices** that take into account human diversity.
- **Failure to recognize the characteristics** and needs of persons with disabilities.
- **Deny information** about their healthcare.
- **Do not guarantee professional secrecy** in healthcare.
- **Lack of permanent anti-ableism education**.
- **Denying a person with disability in their entirety** by disregarding gender, sexuality, race, color and ethnicity.
- **Make it difficult for them to occupy spaces for participation and representation**.

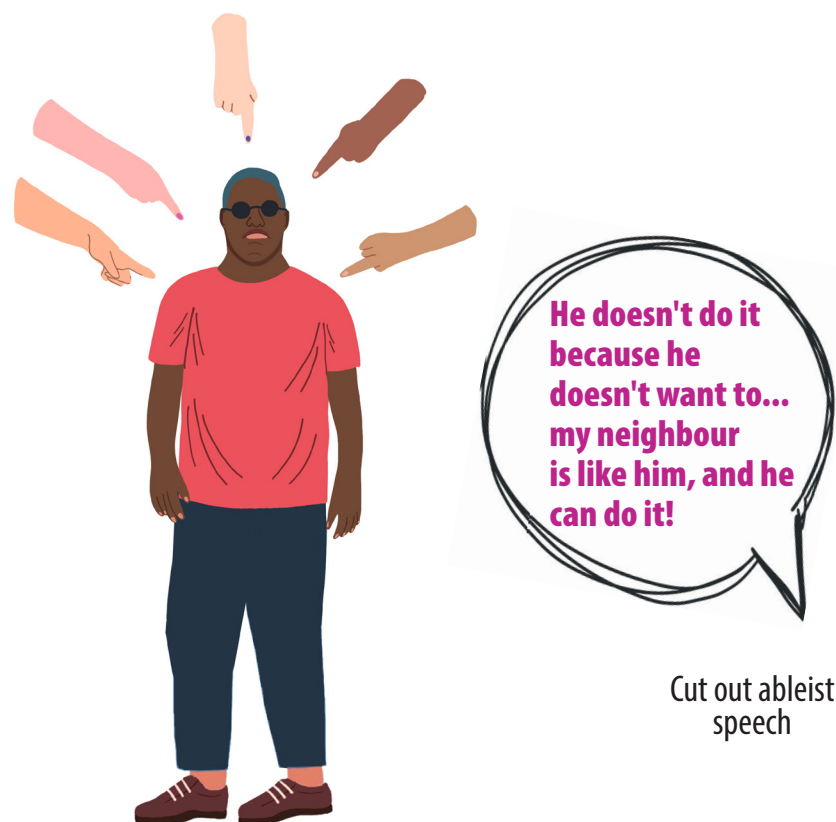
The lack of content produced about health-illness processes for persons with disabilities demonstrates institutional ableism in healthcare.

## ABLEISM IS STRUCTURAL AND STRUCTURES SOCIAL RELATIONS

Barriers to participation are naturalized and go unnoticed.

As with all structural prejudices, you are either part of the problem or the solution.

People need to reduce the barriers to participation to combat ableism.



Take responsibility for getting rid of ableism.

## DISABILITY IS A SOCIAL PRODUCT

Disability is not something inherent to the person.

It results from certain bodies encountering barriers to their participation that have become naturalized.

Do not view disability as a tragedy or an individual issue.

Society as a whole must commit to breaking down barriers.



**Disability is a social product that places functional difference as a synonym for inequality.**

## DISABILITY DOESN'T DEFINE A PERSON'S PERSONALITY

Get rid of the myth that persons with disabilities are tender or aggressive. They are diverse, just like everyone else.

A person isn't defined by their disability. It is only one facet of the person among many others.

Recognize and value the different ways of being in the world.



**Persons with and without disabilities are diverse, so avoid generalizations.**

## CAST OUT PREJUDICIAL EXPRESSIONS FROM YOUR VOCABULARY

Terminology that features characteristics of persons with disabilities cannot be used as a reference to incapacity, limitation or disadvantage.

Never use offensive, prejudiced or condescending words like invalid, ill, special, angel.

Always use person with disability or other characteristic, e.g. blind person, deaf person, autistic person.

If in doubt, ask people what they prefer to be called.



Cut out ableist speech

**You must be a friend of my neighbour. She's a special little person like you!**

**The idea of abnormality comes from an exclusionary standard of normality that defines what is typical and normal. Terms that reaffirm the standard body should be avoided.**

## TIPS TO REPLACE ABLEIST TERMS IN YOUR EVERYDAY SPEECH

| Wrong ✕                                       | Correct ✓                                       |
|---|---|
| Fall on deaf ears                             | The advice was ignored                          |
| The family was crippled by debt               | The family was ruined by debt                   |
| She is blind to the suffering of other people | She ignores the suffering of other people       |
| Retard/retarded                               | Immature, joker, has learning difficulties etc. |
| You're acting bipolar                         | I don't understand your action                  |
| Cripplingly/crippled by/a crippling degree of | I'm scared about/at/of/that                     |
| Turn a blind eye                              | To ignore something                             |
| He has to be insane to want this              | He has to be clueless to want this              |
| She was muted by the situation                | She didn't know what to say                     |

Source: DAKESSIAN, Drew. Ableist Language & Phrases That You May Unknowingly Use. WID - World Institute of Disability, October 27, 2021. Available in: <https://wid.org/ableist-language-phrases-that-you-may-unknowingly-use/>

**Don't use ableist expressions. They reinforce stigmas and cause suffering.**

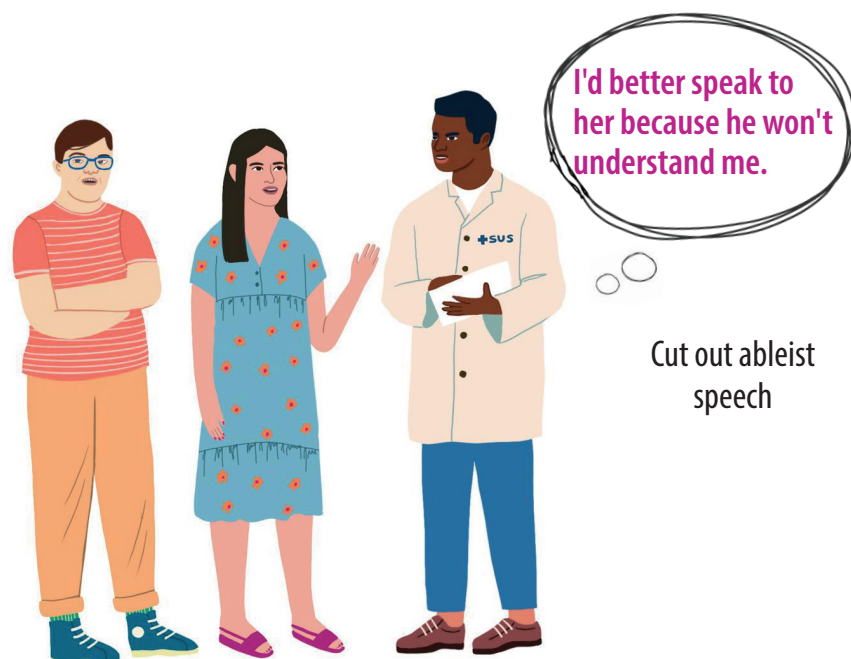
## RESPECT PEOPLE'S PROTAGONISM

Direct questions to the person with disability when requesting information.

Don't use diminutives or an infantile voice.

Don't dehumanize or talk down persons with disabilities.

Seek information and listen to what the person with disability has to say.



**Don't infantilize persons with intellectual disabilities.**

## COMMUNICATION: A RIGHT EVERYBODY ENJOYS

Communication must be effective to discover and respect people's choices.

Ensure accessible communication with audio description, subtitles, sign language, simple and easy language, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

The use of large fonts, high contrast, little information on the screen and descriptions of images aid communication.



**Accessible communication is a right guaranteed by law.**



Access our accessible communication guide using the QR Code



## YOU ARE NO BETTER THAN ANOTHER PERSON WITH DISABILITY

Don't use the achievements of a person with disability for personal motivation.

Don't assume that having a disability is a reason for despondency and for an inferior, subordinate life.

Don't assume inferiority due to disability. A person with disability may, in fact, have more skills than you, just like other people.

Don't hope for a cure for the disability. Disability is not an illness.

Avoid strange and pitying looks, or thinking about a miracle, associated with the idea of a happy life in the absence of disability.

Cut out ableist speech



**Don't use a person with disability as an example of overcoming. What makes life hard for persons with disabilities is the infringement of their human rights.**

## TIPS TO EDUCATE ANTI-ABLEIST CHILDREN

- Promote co-existence: create opportunities for children with and without disabilities to make friends. Affectionate contact deconstructs stereotypes.
- Show situations where prejudice/exclusion occurs, e.g. playing games that aren't compatible with all children.
- Explain noticeable differences: don't ignore children's curiosity. If you're not sure what to say, ask for help from the other child's family.
- Use books, films and other material to help children understand diversity as part of life.

Cut out ableist speech



**Cut out comments and praise from your everyday speech that reinforce notions of difference between persons with and without disabilities.**

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN BRAZIL

Brazilian families with at least one person with disability were more affected by hunger post-Covid.

Persons with disabilities have fewer opportunities to work and tend to have lower education attainment. Access to education is even worse for black and indigenous persons with disabilities.

Vulnerability to violence depends on the type of disability.

Persons with intellectual disabilities rank worst on social indicators.

Persons with disabilities face many barriers to occupy the same spaces as persons without disability. These barriers vary depending on the type of disability, race, colour, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic condition.

The participation of a person with disability in social spaces does not mean that other persons with disabilities could be there if they wanted.

Don't romanticize the effort persons with disabilities make to be able to occupy social spaces.

Recognize the existence of social markers and act to eliminate barriers to participation.

Sources: PNS, 2021; IPEA, 2021; Bird, 2021.

**DIAL 100\*** to report any human rights violation, **including ableism.**

If the complaint is about violence against women, **DIAL 180!\***

**Reporting is everyone's duty!** \*Brazilian reporting channels

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

This work was developed with the support of the Healthcare Public Policy Programme and Management Models – PMA, from VPPCB, the Scientific and Technological Development Applied to Public Health Program, from Ensp/Fiocruz, and the project “The experience of disability in vulnerable territories”, from Ensp and Coordination of Social Cooperation/Fiocruz. It results from a collective effort with the participation of several institutions and people.

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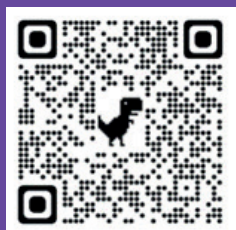
### TRANSLATION

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## WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HEALTHCARE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY?

Read the Brazilian Inclusion Law (Law 13,146/2015) and access our series of guides using the QR codes below:



Fight  
ableism



Educumunication - healthcare  
for Persons with disabilities

**If you witness discrimination due to disability, report it!**



**acolhe**  
acessibilidade  
direitos e saúde



**SIMPLES  
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