

FAST FACTS



6+
People



60
Minutes



\$0



Low

Universal Design – Environmental Survey

Adapted from UA Leadership Programs Equiss Social Justice Retreat

Purpose of Activity: This is an introductory level activity to get participants thinking about the definition of “disability,” and learn about the concept of universal design.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will understand issues surrounding ability
- Participants will be exposed to new information to break down stereotypes of people with disabilities
- Participants will learn to create a more inclusive environment for people with disabilities

Materials Needed:

- 4 pieces of butcher paper
- Markers
- Handouts with definitions of “Disability-Dictionary” and “Disability-ADA” (see facilitation guide)

Ground Rules:

- Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.
 - Follow up - What does it mean to be “fully present”?
 - Follow up - What does “challenge by choice” mean?
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone – the most learning happens when we are a little bit uncomfortable.
- Listen respectfully, share air time, and encourage others to participate.
- It’s ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.
- Show respect for one another’s beliefs, values, and experiences.
- Respect and maintain privacy.

Disclaimer:

- If as facilitators you do not have any disabilities, be sure to acknowledge that. Frame the conversation that you do not understand what it means to have a disability from personal experience, nor are you an expert because this is the topic of the program. You are simply trying to be an ally to the disability community by doing education on the topic.
- If someone DOES attend the program who has a disability, be sure not to single them out for the “disabled perspective,” stare at them to judge their reaction, or basically put them on the spot. They should be treated like every other student, and invite everyone to share/participate as much as she/he/ze is comfortable.

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Facilitation Guide:

- Begin by introducing the concept of ability and let them know that they will be learning more about individuals with disabilities and how society impacts what people define, think of, or judge when it comes to disabilities.
- Have one volunteer read aloud the Definition of Disability-Dictionary from their handouts.

Definition of Disability-Dictionary: The American Heritage Dictionary defined disability as, “the condition of being disabled; incapacity.” Also, “A disadvantage or deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that interferes with or prevents normal achievement in a particular area; something that hinders or incapacitates.”¹

- Then, have another volunteer read aloud the Definition of from their handouts.
Definition of Disability-ADA: The Americans with Disabilities Act defines disability as, “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of the individual.” Additionally, the “individual must have a record of such an impairment.”² This definition also prohibits discrimination based on a past disability that no longer exists (i.e. addiction).
- While the ADA is a piece of legislation, it is the **ONLY** one specifically in place for individuals with disabilities. In order to be protected under the ADA, one must constantly prove their disability and accept inequitable accessibility or “reasonable” accommodations.

Ask for initial feedback. (10 minutes)

- Do you think the definitions are generally positive or empowering?
- What are some of the more powerful words in the definition?
- What images/perceptions/stereotypes come to mind when you think about “disability?”
- Consider what messages individuals with disabilities have internalized throughout their lives. What comes to mind?
- Is it stigmatizing to have a disability? Why?
- Brainstorm disabilities and images that come to mind when thinking about disabilities.
- How are disabilities portrayed in the media?
- How have you been taught to think about disabilities?
- What type of internalized messaging, language, images, stigmas have you been socialized to and why are these prevalent in society?

Discussion (10 minutes)

Go over the 3 models of disability.

1. Charity Model³ refers to those with disabilities as if something is wrong with them and they need to be fixed. Telethons and charities to raise money to treat those with disabilities are one of the facets of the Charity Model. These charities can also

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discourage people from accepting disabilities because the focus is on the person with a disability needing help.

2. Medical Model⁴ involves a disability being seen as a diagnosis and the focus is on finding a way to help people with disabilities be cured to lead normal lives.
3. The Social Model⁵ focuses on the social and physical barriers faced by people with disabilities so as to enhance access, belonging, and value of people with disabilities. The core of this model is that society should be restructured and not the individual.

- Can you think of examples of the Charity or Medical Model used today?
- Can you think of examples of the Social Model used today?
- What model does the cochlear implant reflect? (Cochlear implants are HIGHLY controversial in the Deaf community - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cochlear_implant#Controversy_in_Deaf_culture)
- Are there other controversial issues you can think of in the disability community? Why are they controversial?

Discussion: Universal Design (5 minutes)

Ask the participants what they think “universal design” is.

Universal design is the method of design of environments, objects, etc. that make them universally accessible (such as a ramp in the front of a building for everyone to use, grips on all utensils, activities that everyone can participate in, websites everyone can access, etc.).

Activity: Universal Design (20 minutes)

- Have participants get into groups of 3.
- Have them take a moment to consider the space (could be lounge, floor, wing, whole building, etc) they are in for this session as well as objects in the space.
- Based on a concept of universal design, have each group note any aspect of the space and the objects in it that could create barriers for any group of people and how to change the space to be universal.
- If participants are moving outside of the room you are in, encourage them to use a digital camera/camera phone to document the accommodations (or lack there of).
- You could then have the students share the pictures with one another by connecting to a computer and projector.
- Have them look at accessibility symbols posted, access to the room, doors being easily opened at no smaller than 32 inches, flooring having non-slip surface, space wide enough for a person in a wheelchair to move freely about, fixtures and controls within reach for a person in a wheelchair, fire alarms able to be heard and seen by all people, tables and chairs accessible for all people to use, etc.
- Ask participants to write their observations down on the provided newsprint.
- After they have all generated a list, have each group report out what barriers exist in the space and how they would change the space to be more universal.

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Processing Questions:

- What did you notice?
- Was this easy to do? Hard to do? Why?
- Do you normally think of universal design when you are in different places? Why or why not?
- What did you observe as you were doing the activity?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What have you learned from this activity?
- Has this activity changed your perspective of others?
- What did it feel like to do this activity?
- Can you think of other spaces or objects outside of this room that you think are good examples of universal design? How about others that are not universally designed?
- How accessible/universally designed is the University of Arizona campus?
- What is the purpose of the activity?

American Heritage Dictionary. Disability.

Americans with Disabilities Act. Disability

Center on Human Policy. (2006). Toward a Social Model of Disability.

<http://www.disabilitystudiesforteachers.org/files/TowardSocialModelofDisability.pdf>

Center on Human Policy. (2006). Toward a Social Model of Disability.

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