

Myth Busting

Busting commonly held perceptions

Objectives

- Become aware of your own perception biases and how they lead to the “tyranny of low expectations”
- Become aware of how common misconceptions about disability play out in the workplace
- Learn the basics of “disability etiquette”
- Learn how people with disabilities are often remarkable workers and colleagues

Questions

- What actions can you take to improve your current and/or future management of individuals with disabilities?
- How does unconscious bias affect our interactions with people with disabilities?
- How do our *misperceptions* influence our *misconceptions* about people with disabilities?
- What steps can you take to ensure accessibility for all team members?

Perceptions and Assumptions

We know from research that we instinctively categorize people based on observed criteria and then automatically assign “presumed traits to anyone we subconsciously put in those groups.” The advantage is that it saves time and effort, but, it can lead to erroneous assumptions about people.

Perception Bias

The tendency to form assumptions about certain groups that make it impossible to make an objective judgement about members of those groups

Stereotypes

Assumptions that are made about a person or groups of people based on a general image we have about that particular group

How do I avoid unconscious bias?

Recognize your own biases, increase your exposure to differences, and focus on people.

What is a Disability?

The Americans with Disabilities Act has a three-pronged definition of “disability”;

1. An impairment that substantially limits a major life activity
2. Having a record of an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity
3. A belief that a physical or mental impairment is present, whether or not that impairment substantially limits a major life activity

Did you know?

Zoom meetings are not accessible to people with disabilities who are deaf or hearing impaired without an individual who transcribes the conversation in real-time.

Common Questions for People with Physical Disabilities

“If you can’t see, how do you use a computer?”



Not everybody with a visual impairment is blind, but even for those who are, computer use is entirely possible with the help of a screen reader. A screen reader is an assistive technology that converts text, buttons, images and other screen elements into speech or braille. The first thing most people comment on when meeting a screen-reader user is the speed at which the synthetic voice speaks.

Did you know?

Experienced screen-reader users usually have their reader set at 400 words per minute while most sighted people only read at about 150 words per minute.

[Click to hear what a screen reader sounds like](#)



Researchers from the Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research in Germany have found that, through functional brain imaging, some blind people's brains rewire themselves, giving them extraordinary auditory comprehension.

Did you know?

Not all documents are screen-reader-accessible. In fact, many PDFs and PPT documents are not accessible.

“How do you use a phone if you can’t hear?”



While it might surprise some, people who are hard of hearing, deaf, or speech-impaired are fully capable of using a telephone.



A Text Telephone (TTY) or Telecommunication Device (TDD) is a special technology that enables people who are unable to hear or speak, to communicate. Like a direct messaging chat window on a computer, both users type on a keyboard and both users are required to have the technology. If you do not have this device but are trying to call somebody who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired, you can make the phone call using TRS (Telecommunications Relay Service). When using a TRS, an operator types whatever you say and the other person can then read the message on their TTY display.

Did you know?

Less than 3% of 911 call centers around the U.S. can receive text messages.



Did you know?

Many people who are deaf or hard of hearing do not know American Sign Language. With the new face mask requirements, those people cannot understand what’s being said. When speaking to somebody who reads lips in order to communicate, wear a clear face mask.

[Click to find out where to buy clear face masks](#) 

While some employers may say

“I can’t afford to hire somebody with disabilities”.

Actually you can’t afford *not* to...

1/3 of managers say employees with disabilities have 30% greater tenure and are 35% more dedicated to their work

2/3 of employers said the average cost of hiring people with disabilities is the same as hiring a person without a disability



“People with disabilities are incredible problem solvers, as they spend much of each day navigating daily challenges. We constantly show persistence, tenacity and adaptability.”
–Carol Glazer, President NOD

Busting Common Myths

MYTH People who use wheelchairs are chronically ill.

FACT A person may use a wheelchair for a variety of reasons, none of which are related to an illness.

MYTH It’s rude to ask a deaf person if they can read lips.

FACT It’s perfectly fine to ask a deaf person if they can read lips; it is only rude if you do not face them and give your full attention.

MYTH People without disabilities should be responsible for helping or “taking care of” people with visible disabilities.

FACT It is polite to offer help if you see someone struggling, but you should always ask first because most people with disabilities prefer to be responsible for themselves.

MYTH You should never ask a coworker displaying signs of mental health issues about their emotional state.

FACT If you suspect a colleague is experiencing mental health issues, you should always ask if they are ok the same as if they tripped and fell.

MYTH People with intellectual disabilities have a low IQ and you should communicate with them the way you would with a child.

FACT Intellectual or developmental disabilities do not always reflect a person’s intelligence or ability to communicate. They may be the smartest person in the room.