

Understanding Disabilities



Disability

Any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). Tee Monet, an autistic adult and advocate, notes that autism is a disability because a “disability is anything deviating from what society considers a ‘normal’ ability. Autism is considered a disability because society commonly functions another way. Disability is not a bad word.” They also remind us that “everyone has some autistic traits because autistic traits are human traits.” But we are not all autistic so it would be harmful and wrong to suggest that. To read more of their writings, follow them on Instagram @unmasked.



Accommodation

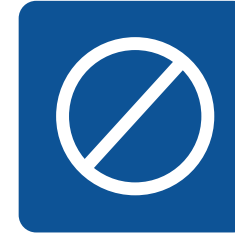
An arrangement made to help a disabled person thrive in an environment that was not created with their needs in mind. Some examples of accommodations are wheelchair ramps and handicapped parking, but other helpful ones that anyone can do could be as simple as warning a sound-sensitive person before turning on a loud appliance like a blender, or providing necessary rest breaks when working on a difficult task. It’s important to determine what type of accommodations would best help you or your loved one succeed. If a stim is dangerous, then finding a safe accommodation is imperative.



Ally

Someone who joins forces with another. If you want to help others, you want to be an ally. When someone needs help, the best allies believe the person who is asking, or demonstrating that they need help. Then the ally thoughtfully assists. If you want to be an ally, the best thing you can do is listen to people and honor their unique needs.

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Ableism

Ableism. Discrimination in favor of able-bodied people based on the false belief that an able-bodied person is more valuable than a disabled person.



Masking

In this case it means to hide things that might be viewed as socially unacceptable. Many people are commonly asked to mask their stims. It’s not good to mask and, over time, it can cause great trauma to the person masking. It is harmful because it means someone must hide their sensory needs in order to make others who are otherwise unaffected, more comfortable. Masking/ableism implies that there is something wrong, when in truth, being who you are is never wrong. Asking others to mask sounds like, “don’t move that way because I don’t like it,” in order to be socially acceptable, but prevents another from stimming. This is an example of ableism. An ally never asks friends to mask.



Worldview

A way of seeing and understanding the world based on your unique life experience. We don’t all have the same worldview for many reasons and that’s ok. Asking people about their needs and experiences is a very positive way to learn, especially about a disability, if you choose to listen and honor their worldview.