

Disability Series: What You Say and Do Matter

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About me



- Joined Connecting for Kids in 2011 as a family looking for support.
- Worked on volunteer and contract projects until 2016 when I joined the staff.
- Parent to a teen daughter.
- Identify as a person with invisible disabilities.
- Started studying ableism two years ago as part of my degree in clinical social work.

An invitation to you

- This stuff is **not easy**, and **we're not going to get it right on the first try**. That's because we are going to challenge our core beliefs.
- **Others are going to mess up too**. No one can know your unique story and what you came through to get here.
- **We're going to handle this with grace** – both for ourselves and others.

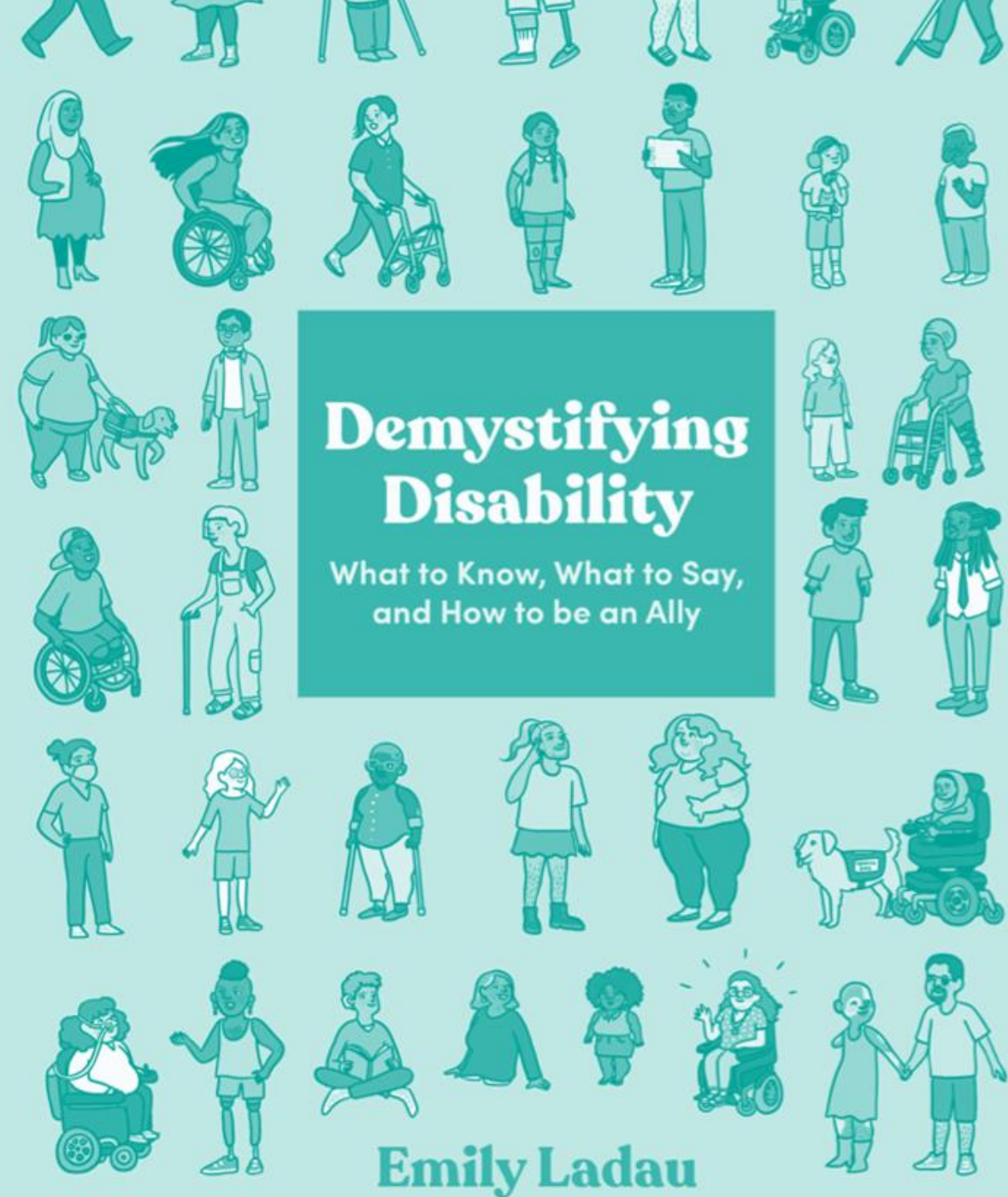
Which line is longer?



We can't always trust what we believe to be true!

What is ableism?

- “Attitudes, actions, and circumstances that devalue people because they are disabled or perceived as having a disability” (Emily Ladeu)
- **Simply Put:** Ableism is prejudice against people with disabilities (or people we believe to be disabled).



A short story from grad school

“Hi There,

I am thinking that you maybe overthinking this and being very literal - these two paragraphs don't really say different things, but I agree that you could read them that way.”



We all want to be better, right?

WHAT WE DO

- The “actions” and “circumstances” from the definition.

A

Autonomy

I

Inclusion

D

Dignity

WHAT WE SAY

- The “attitudes” from the definition.

F

Functioning labels

O

Outdated & offensive language

E

Euphemisms

Autonomy & access

- Autonomy is a human need -- It means being in control of your choices and what you do
- Ableism blocks autonomy in 2 ways:
 - Access
 - Assumption



Public Instagram post, shared with permission from Courtney Johnson of Just Keep Stimming

Assumptions

“My third wheelchair and the first one to deliberately not have handles. I’ve been moved by strangers before and it’s bloody mank.

This one still pushes me when I get tired though. He places the palms of his hands on the edge of my back and his fingers wrap round onto my sides just enough that it’s hot as you like.

A delicious intimate moment that only exists because I’m disabled...”



Public Facebook post, shared with permission from Nina Tame

Inclusion

- Inclusion means inviting people with disabilities to join – even if you have reason to believe they won't accept.

To access Haben Girma's address on YouTube, visit:
youtu.be/61HzFPs2LXQ



Photo by Pete Souza, official photographer to President Barack Obama.

Dignity

- We all deserve dignity.
- Ableism can impact dignity in two ways:
 - Access
 - How we communicate

Actress, Broadcaster, Writer,
Disability Rights
Campaigner, Diversity &
Inclusion Consultant,
Keynote Speaker, based in
Central London.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Screenshot from the home page of
Samantha Renke's website

Next up: FOE

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Functioning labels

“High-Functioning”

What others see: A person who doesn't need support because they function at a high level.

What we see: A person who struggles in some areas and needs help (but often doesn't get it).

“Low-Functioning”

What others see: A person who functions at a level that is less than human.

What we see: A person who has likes, dislikes, needs, and wants and who is very much human.

Fixing functioning labels

○ Strengths + Needs (but only what's relevant!)

Example:

My child can understand what you are saying but he needs extra time to respond.

Example:

My child loves being around other people. She needs help to move and see you.

Example:

My child is good at math, but he can get frustrated easily. He needs some help to remember his coping skills.

Outdated & offensive language

Obvious Language

- Retarded (aka, “the r-word”)
- Idiot/Moron
- Cripple
- Spaz
- Psycho
- Lame
- Handicapped

More Subtle

- Victim of
- Suffers from
- Wheelchair-bound
- ... was blind to...
- ... was deaf to...
- Impaired/impairment
- Normal/regular



Lydia X. Z. Brown has a dictionary of ableist terms on their website, autistichoya.com

Euphemisms

“The substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant” – Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

DEATH

“Passed away”
“Met his/her maker”
“Went to heaven”
“Put down”

ILLNESS

“Under the weather”
“Tossed his/her cookies”

JOB LOSS

“Let go”
“RIF” (reduction in force)

DISABLED PEOPLE

“Differently Abled”
“Handicapable”
“Challenged”
“Special Needs”

#SayTheWord

- Lawrence Carter-Long created the #SayTheWord campaign in response to Obama's State of the Union Speech.
- Carter-Long noticed that Obama mentioned many types of diversity in his speech but failed to mention disability even once.



Lawrence Carter-Long is Director of Communications at Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

A man in a light blue shirt and jeans is standing in a kitchen, leaning over a young child. The child is wearing a black and white striped shirt and is looking down at a wooden cutting board. The man is using a knife to slice a banana on the cutting board. To the right, there is a white plate filled with various fruits, including oranges, apples, and bananas. In the foreground, there are several glass jars with metal lids. The background is slightly blurred, showing a kitchen setting with a white wall and a potted plant.

Above all, respect differences

Voices



Courtney Johnson
[Web](#) | [Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)



Nina Tame
[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)



Haben Girma
[Web](#) | [Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)

Voices (continued)



Samantha Renke
[Web](#) | [Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)



Lydia X. Z. Brown
[Web](#) | [Facebook](#)



Lawrence Carter-Long
[Facebook](#)

Articles

- More on Self-Determination Theory: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-self-determination-theory-2795387>
- Consequences of Ableism: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2022/02/17/ableism-is-more-than-a-breach-of-etiquette---it-has-consequences/?sh=62a78e877b7f>
- Disability Microaggressions: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2022/02/26/5-disability-microaggressions-and-why-they-matter/?sh=dcf9ea47e17b>

Books

- *Demystifying Disability*, by Emily Ladau
- *Ableism*, by Michelle R. Nario-Redmond
- *Far from the Tree*, by Andrew Solomon
- *Disability Visibility*, edited by Alice Wong