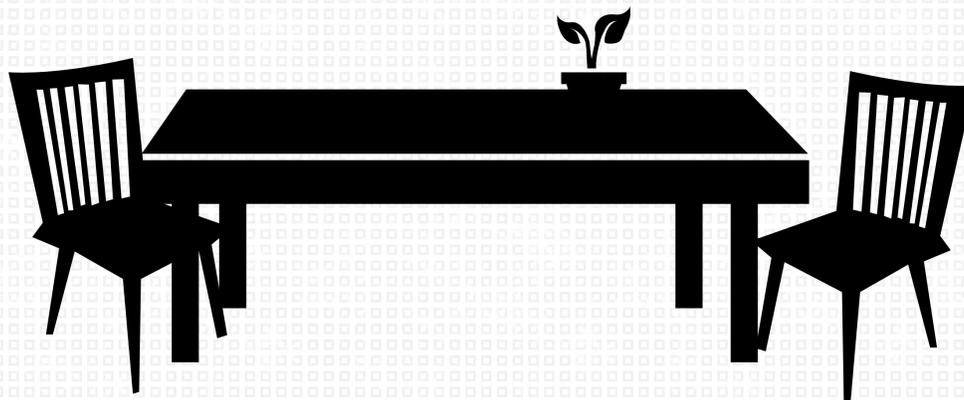


Difficult Conversations

About Ableism and Disability.



Just like other forms of discrimination such as sexism or racism, ableism (discrimination based on disability) can be deliberately hurtful or more subtle and unintentional. It can be individual or also systemic.

Sometimes ableism shows its face when people who don't have a disability assume that life with a disability is a compromised, bad life.

Consider this: you're at Thanksgiving dinner and you overhear a family member talking about a new TV show. In the show, a lead character has recently acquired a disability through some very emotional plot line.

Your family member says "If that ever happens to me, take me out of my misery. I don't want to have to live like that."

How would you respond? Here are some options:

1

Listen Up. Speak Up.

Noticing ableism in everyday life takes practice. Listen for moments where life with a disability is devalued, pitied, or looked down on. Speak up.

2

Challenge the Obvious.

People without disabilities tend to rate the quality of life of people with disabilities lower than people with disabilities rate their own lives. What assumptions are being made about life with a disability?

3

Make Space for Suffering and Frailty.

When pointing out our discriminatory views about disability, we aren't trying to hide suffering and frailty; these are very human experiences. Instead, we want to point out that suffering, frailty, and a good life can coexist!

4

Innovate. Learn from Others.

What aspects of life with a disability are concerning? Many people are scared of losing agency and dignity. How can agency and dignity be preserved? Learn from others' experiences.

5

Model Person First Language.

Throughout your conversation, model person first language. In doing so, you'll show respect and challenge stereotypes.

6

Be Patient.

It's okay if you don't witness an "aha!" moment. The more somebody has positive experiences talking about disability and ableism, the better.