Making SMART Recovery Accessible for the Disabled Community

- Empowerment for All - SMART Recovery's 30th Anniversary Conference April 5-6th, 2024

- Presenter: Nikki Fordey, MSW, MA, LCSW, LISAC
nicolefordey@gmail.com

"Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists, it is making a new space, a better space for everyone." – [Rachel Olivero (1982-2019)](...)

Our Ambitious Agenda:

- Language Considerations

- Medical Model vs. Social Model of Disability

- Disability Etiquette

- Tips for Inclusive and Accessible Virtual Meetings & In Person Services

- Accessibility Audit Questions
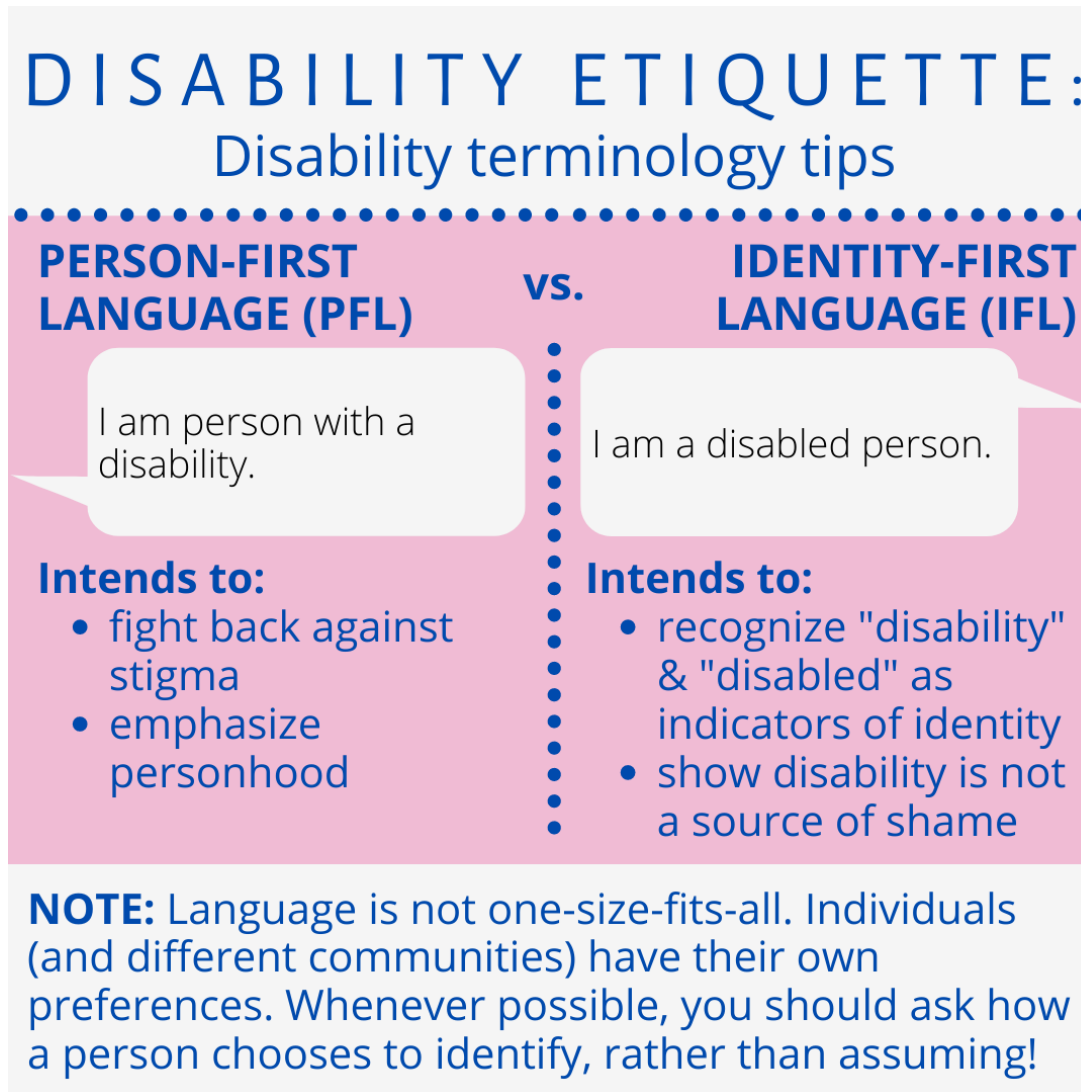
- Further Reading

First a note on language…

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE:
Disability terminology tips

PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE (PFL) vs. **IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE (IFL)**

I am person with a disability.

I am a disabled person.

Intends to:
- fight back against stigma
- emphasize personhood

Intends to:
- recognize "disability" & "disabled" as indicators of identity
- show disability is not a source of shame

NOTE: Language is not one-size-fits-all. Individuals (and different communities) have their own preferences. Whenever possible, you should ask how a person chooses to identify, rather than assuming!

Image credit to @accessgrinnell
Grinnell College Office of Disability Resources

Which model is closer to the values of SMART Recovery?

Medical Model	VS	Social Model
The person is disabled by the abnormalities and deficits of their own body and/or brain.		The person is disabled by their environment and its physical, attitudinal, communication, and social barriers.
Disabled people are broken, abnormal, or damaged versions of human being and should be fixed, cured, and/or prevented.		Disabled people are normal, valid varieties of human being and should have equal rights and access to society, just as they are.
Since the disabled person's impairments prevent them from functioning normally, they need caregivers and professionals to make decisions for them. The disabled person is an object of charity and receiver of help.		Since the disabled person is inherently equal, they have a right to autonomy, choice, and free and informed consent in their own lives.
The disabled person should adjust to fit into society, since they are the one who is not normal. Being part of society means rising above disability.		The disabled person should be supported by society, because they are equal and have a right to inclusion. Their community should adjust its own barriers and biases.

https://eisforerin.com/portfolio/disability-101-social-model-pdf

Her **impairment** is the problem! They should cure her or give her prosthetics.

The *medical model* of disability

The **stairs** are the problem! They should build a ramp.

The *social model* of disability

Image by **UAA**: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/accessibility/topic/architecture.cfm

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE
A STARTING GUIDE

GENERAL DO'S AND DON'TS

- ☑ Get to know your colleagues as **people** and **professionals**!
- ☑ Don't assume other people's needs/wants.
- ☑ Use '**Disability Pride**' language:
  "**Wheelchair user**" instead of "confined to a wheelchair."

INDIVIDUALS WITH MOBILITY DISABILITIES

- Do not touch a person's mobility equipment.
- Be considerate of possible pain, balance, or post-traumatic stress concerns during physical contact.
- When engaging in a conversation, select a location where you can engage comfortably and that reduces distance between you.

INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE LOW VISION

- Identify yourself when entering a conversation and announce when you leave.
- When serving as a sighted guide, offer your arm or shoulder rather than grabbing or pushing the individual.
- Describe the setting, environment, written material, and obstacles when serving as a human guide.
- Resist the temptation to pet or talk to a guide or service animal.

INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation.
- If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter; keep your eyes on the individual and not on the interpreter.
- Face the person and speak in normal tones.

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE SPEECH DISABILITIES

- If you do not understand what the person is saying, ask the person to repeat what they said and then repeat it back to ensure you understood.
- Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish their sentences.

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE NON-APPARENT DISABILITIES

- Seek to understand their lived experience.
- Recognize that disclosing their disability comes with a risk and honor requested confidentiality.
- Engage in a dialogue to determine individual needs.
- Support accommodations.

https://disabilityin.org/resource/disability-etiquette/

Be Inclusive & Accessible: Virtual Meetings

- Ask all Participants whether they will need an accommodation (exs. sign language, live captioner, slides in advance for screen readers, alt text on images). *(My suggestion: don't wait for someone to ask, provide access as a standard!)*

- Enable **Captioning** for all meetings, including Breakout Rooms.

- **Identify yourself** each time you speak. Even better, provide a quick visual description of yourself so people know your perspective and identities.

- **Avoid Acronyms** or use complete words the first time. Not all participants may understand abbreviations due to hearing/audio issues, language/accents, differences in background, etc.

- **Limit use of idioms** that may be culture-specific, as participants from other backgrounds or non-native English speakers may not understand "think outside the box", "run that up the flagpole" or other expressions we take for granted.

- **Share information in more than one way** to allow for technical, situational, or sensory challenges, e.g., review on-screen graphics/spreadsheets verbally, since not everyone always sees them.

https://disabilityin.org/resource/six-tips-to-keep-in-mind-when-creating-accessible-virtual-meetings/

Be Inclusive & Accessible: In-Person Services

- Creating an environment that is welcoming and understanding of people with disabilities is one of the most important accessibility measures you can take. Start by:

  - Taking the free Disability Implicit Attitudes Test (available online through https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html) or a similar measure to assess your attitudes toward people with disabilities. Encourage others to assess their attitudes too.

  - Reviewing online resources listed at https://disabilityinpublichealth.org/communication-with people-with-disabilities-resources for tips on interacting with people with disabilities.

  - Improving your knowledge of specific disabilities with information at https://askjan.org/a-to z.cfm

Adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). Substance Use Disorder Treatment for People With Physical and Cognitive Disabilities. *Advisory.*

If you don't remember anything else...

- Have conversations about disability in your personal and professional lives
- Respect peoples' lived experiences and preferences
- Ask what would be helpful – don't assume
- At the same time, learn about common access needs and provide as much as possible
- If your language or behavior is corrected or called out – learn from it and move on
- When you know better, do better! – We are all works in progress

Digital Accessibility Audit Questions

Does your website have an accessibility statement including information on who to contact with access needs/requests?

Does your website/social media use plain language and avoid figures of speech, idioms, and complicated metaphors?

Do images on your website/social media include alternative text AND image descriptions?

Does your website/social media provide a text alternative for complex images such as charts, graphs, and maps?

Are the fonts and colors used on your website/social media accessible? Is your website free of flashing or strobing elements?

Is your website compatible with a screen reader?

Do videos on your website/social media display captions?

Are transcriptions of audio content made available?

Do videos on your website/social media include audio-narrated descriptions of the video's key visual elements?

Are downloads available in alternative accessible formats (ex. Large font)?

Physical Accessibility Audit Questions

Is the main entrance accessible? If not, is there an alternative entrance that is accessible?   Is that alternative entrance open at the same hours as the main entrance? Can it be navigated independently?

Are carpets or mats at the building entrance no higher than ½ inch?

Do ALL of the external AND internal doors of your location have automatic buttons for accessible entry? Are they in working order?

Is there accessible parking requiring a disabled plate or placard? If so, are any of the spaces accessible for a van with a retractable ramp?

Does your meeting space have accessible restrooms? Is there an accessible space for the toileting and drinking needs of service animals?

Is there a route of travel throughout the space that does not require the use of stairs? If so, is this route of travel stable, firm, and slip-resistant?

Are there elevators or platform ramps to all floors? If the building has an elevator, are the call buttons no higher than 54 inches from the ground? Are the floor numbers designated with raised characters and braille? Is there an audible signal as the elevator approaches or is about to stop on a floor?

Can locks, light switches, intercoms, and alarm boxes be operated with one hand and without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist?

Do fire alarm systems use BOTH flashing lights and audible signals?

Does your location have a TTY machine?

Is all signage clear and in simple language?

In-Person Event Accessibility Questions

On RSVP forms for events, is there space to request accommodations for disability needs?

Is there a ramp to get up on any stage or raised platform?

If a screen, TV, or projector will be used during an event:
- Do you have designated seating for individuals who use lip reading?
- Is there adequate closed captioning and alternative text?
- Is slide content provided in digital format in advance to attendees?
- Is the area well-lit and equipped with proper acoustics?

Are assistive listening devices and interpreters available on demand?

Is there a separate space provided for rest or quiet for those who are neurodivergent or have physical disabilities that allows them to still view the event?

Is seating for people with disabilities clearly marked and dispersed throughout the space to provide multiple options?

Are participants reminded before and during the event to avoid wearing strong fragrances?

Further Reading

- *Accessible America: A History of Disability and Design* by Bess Williamson

- *Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist* by Judith Heumann

- *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

- *Disability Pride: Dispatches from a Post-ADA World* by Ben Mattlin

- *Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally* by Emily Ladau

- *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* Edited by Alice Wong

- Alt-Text as Poetry https://alt-text-as-poetry.net/

- Disability Etiquette – A Starting Guide https://disabilityin.org/resource/disability-etiquette/

- Checklist for Creating Inclusive & Accessible Social Media Content https://disabilityin.org/resource/24-hours-of-gaad-accessible-social-media-best-practices/

- 12 Tips to Create Inclusive & Accessible Hybrid Meetings https://disabilityin.org/resource/12-tips-to-create-inclusive-accessible-hybrid-meetings/

- Six Tips To Keep In Mind When Creating Accessible Virtual Meetings https://disabilityin.org/resource/six-tips-to-keep-in-mind-when-creating-accessible-virtual-meetings/

- Disability Inclusion Posters & Social Graphics with Examples of Alt-Text https://disabilityin.org/resource/disability-inclusion-posters-social-graphics

- Directory of Centers for Independent Living https://www.ilru.org/projects/cil-net/cil-center-and-association-directory

- Explanation of how the ADA protects people in recovery and the limitations of coverage https://adata.org/factsheet/ada-addiction-and-recovery

- History of Disability Discrimination and the Disability Civil Rights Movement and How You Can Fight Ableism and Enhance Allyship https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/about-vice-provost/student-affairs-initiatives/stanford-against-hate/fighting-ableism

- What funding assistance is available for removing barriers and accommodating customers with disabilities? https://adata.org/faq/what-funding-assistance-available-removing-barriers-and-accommodating-customers-disabilities

- Abled Privilege Checklist https://autistichoya.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/brief-abled-privilege-checklist-mar-2016.pdf