

Disability 101

Medical Model vs Social Model



what is a "model" of disability?

In this case, "model" means a certain way of thinking about disability.

what is the Social Model of Disability?

To understand this concept, it's useful to compare it to the "medical model" of disability.

Medical Model

vs

Social Model



The person is disabled by the abnormalities and deficits of their own body and/or brain.



Disabled people are broken, abnormal, or damaged versions of human being and should be fixed, cured, and/or prevented.



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.



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 person is disabled by their environment and its physical, attitudinal, communication, and social barriers.



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 is inherently equal, they have a right to autonomy, choice, and free and informed consent in their own lives.



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.

the Social Model of Disability matters...

because disabled people are your equals. We can't achieve true inclusion in society if we are seen as lesser, even in a seemingly benevolent way!

ALL disabled people have a right to autonomy, no matter how much support they need to communicate their choices.

