



# A-B-C on people with disabilities

(VERSION A and B)





## MAIN GOAL

Raise awareness on people with different abilities

## OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSIONS

- Participants become aware of people with different abilities
- Participants are familiarised with terms and definitions of people with different abilities
- Participants deal with micro- and macro-aggressions towards people with different abilities and deal with possible solutions.

## DURATION FORESEEN

3 hours 30 minutes

## NEEDS (FOR THE SPACE)

- One big room with chairs
- The possibility of using a projector

## FOR WHOM

Staff and active volunteers of organisations

## STEP BY STEP DESCRIPTION

### Arrival and Introduction (20'):

Participants arrive and are asked to sit in a circle. The trainer team welcomes all participants and introduces themselves. After the team introduction, the participants are asked to introduce themselves. This can be done by a round of names and pronouns + by sharing their personal and professional experiences or connection to the topic.





## **Terms and Conditions (40'):**

**Material: flipchart, pens, sticky notes (post its).**

In this first activity, participants are asked to collect terms and definitions related to people with different abilities on a flipchart, by using post its. Facilitators therefore hand out post its and pens to participants. Participants now have to write their associations and definitions on the post its and put it on Flipchart.

### Note to trainers:

This method is about collecting knowledge in the room - associations and definitions of: disability, impairment, visible disability, invisible disability, chronic illness, internalised ableism.

After participants put a post it on the flipchart, trainers collect the results from the post its and cluster, followed by a group discussion.

### Note to trainers:

To have/to support the discussion, explain and compare already collected terms/definitions on flipchart with key points from list of terminology and if necessary, add definitions also from list of terminology.

We do not add a list here, as the terminology and discourses around the use of certain words is different in all languages. Please do the research before you start.

### Considerations for trainers:

Being sensitive to language is important, the power of definition always lies with those affected. "Ask, don't assume" also applies here. There is no fixed, perpetual language rule, language is always changing and in flux (for example, cripples and the cripple movement). Language is also important, in some languages or local contexts certain terms are okay and others are not. What is relevant is the intention and not just the words - be open to correction and criticism - always remain open to learning and unlearning.

If discussions become too intense, it is good to refer to the unit afterwards. If terms are not mentioned but are important to us: name them and raise the question in the room.





### Important terms:

Visible/invisible disability  
Chronic illness  
Impairment vs. disability  
Illness is not the same as disability and vice versa  
"Normal"  
Special needs  
Need for support  
Possibly also deaf (instead of deaf-mute)  
Person with short stature  
Simple language

If there is a person with a disability in the room, make it clear that this person should not take on the role of representative of all people with disabilities. If there is a trainer with a disability, the same applies here as well.

### **Break (15')**

#### **Microaggressions against marginalised groups (15'):**

**Material: Definition on Flipchart or PPT, Examples on Flipchart/A3 or PPT.**

##### 1) Definition

Within the first session of this workshop part, the trainer introduces the participants to the definition of microaggressions. Therefore, the trainer first asks participants if they have heard the term or if they maybe know/can assume what it could mean. After collecting some ideas by the flashlight method (anyone who wants to say something can do so), the trainer shows the definition to the participants, by showing a PowerPoint slide or on a flipchart/A3 paper.

*Definition: "Microaggressions are defined as verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial statements and insults toward the target person or group."*

After showing the definition, the trainer has to make sure that participants understand the meaning of microaggressions and answer the questions that might arise.





## 2) Examples

Now the trainer gives examples on microaggressions against different groups of marginalised people. These examples can be shown by a PowerPoint slide or be written on a flipchart or on A3 papers. Examples:

- *"why don't you understand? It's easy!"*
- *"I'm so OCD about my desk"*
- *"You are so inspiring"*
- *"oh you look so normal" or „you don't look disabled"*
- *"Have you tried this remedy or this medication/exercise – it worked for a friend/family member"*

The Trainer now asks participants to think about the microaggressions/the message of these sentences individually and after, share it with the group.

### Note to trainer:

asking „why don't you understand? It's easy!"

why? Signalling to a neurodivergent individual that they're not understanding because they're not thinking in neurotypical ways

saying „I'm so OCD about my desk" – making casual remarks that trivialise disability

saying -"You are so inspiring." patronising and condescending, assumes a person is not normal and was not considered competent enough to overcome hardship

saying „oh you look so normal" or „you don't look disabled" – Not all disabilities are visible, People with disabilities do not need to look unwell. You do not decide what counts as a disability

saying „My friend is deaf too, do you know her?" - assuming it is a community where everybody knows each other

asking „Have you tried this remedy or this medication/exercise – it worked for a friend/family member" – assuming someone with a disability wants your advice or suggesting that they did not look enough for "solutions to their problem".

asking „but you can walk – why do you need a wheelchair?" - assuming someone is being lazy and not trusting them





**PICTURE GALLERY - Microaggressions against people with different abilities (25'):**  
*(Material: pictures incl. speech bubbles printed, post its, pens)*

For this exercise, different pictures of people with different abilities connected to statements in speech bubbles will be distributed around the room, on an A3 paper. You can create images based on the sentences from the previous exercise or new ones but with the same spirit. Include which are not to be considered microaggressions.

Note to trainers: Make sure that the pictures are representational and also thought provoking. Try to include diverse situations and disabilities. If you know that there is a specific focus, you can also select more situations for this focus group.

Trainers now ask participants to go through the pictures and ask themselves the following question:

*"What do you recognize on the pictures + speech bubble"*

Participants should write their ideas and associations on post its and put them next to the pictures.

Debriefing:

Trainers read the post its to everyone, followed by a group discussion on the microaggressions that can be experienced on the pictures + speech bubbles + on whether everyone sees it that way and who interprets it how.

Note to trainers:

If necessary, give context to affected communities (blind people, people with physical impairment etc.).

**Dealing with Microaggressions (15'):**

To conclude the session on microaggressions, trainers ask participants for a quick feedback round on solutions on how to deal with microaggressions. To do so, facilitators ask participants to think about the following question:

- *How would you deal with microaggressions? (if you or another person (in your private environment or in your organisation) were affected).*

Participants think about the question individually and after, share it with the group. Trainers collect keywords on solutions on a flipchart.





### Note to trainers:

If the group is too big, put participants into small groups.

Afterwards, trainers can indicate the 3 main ways to deal with microaggressions, for affected persons (address directly, address later, leave it alone). Make sure to clarify that these 3 ways are for affected persons, but can also be helpful in case you notice microaggressions. Here it is important to know that it is never a good idea to talk over the affected person, but try to talk to the person first, in case you notice something. "Ask, don't assume" also applies here.

### Note to trainers:

Three main ways, to deal with microaggressions:

1. Let it go
2. Respond immediately
3. Respond later

Link to article on how to deal with microaggressions: [When and How to Respond to Microaggressions \(hbr.org\)](#)

### **Macroaggressions and connected terms (20'):**

#### **Terms/Definitions written on A3, Flipchart or PPT**

After talking about microaggressions, in this session it is now important to talk about macroaggressions and its connected terms, which are Ableism, "Inspirational Porn" and "Pitty Porn".

#### *Ableism:*

To explain the term ableism, trainers first asks participants what they understand by the term "ableism" and collects inputs, followed by the derivation of the word "ableism": Within the literature, the term is explained like this:

*"(...) abgeleitet vom englischen Begriff <ableism>, in dessen Kern sich wiederum das Wort **Fähigkeit**, <ability>, befindet." (Campbell 2009, p.5f; Goodley, 2014, 78).*

English translation:

*"(...) derived from the English term <ableism>, which in turn has the word <ability> at its core."*





Afterwards, the trainers introduce a definition of “ableism” to the participants and have a quick discussion on it. The definition can be shown on a PowerPoint or can be written on a flipchart or A3 paper:

Definition:

*Ableism is a form of discrimination and represents social prejudice against people who have or are perceived to have a disability. It can take the form of ideas and assumptions, stereotypes, attitudes and practices, physical barriers in the environment or oppression on a larger scale.*

*It is often unintentional, and most people are completely unaware of the impact of their words or actions. It devalues and limits the potential of people with developmental, emotional, physical or mental disabilities or impairments.*

After the introduction of the definition of ableism, trainers should also talk about the fact, that ableism also represents a trivialization of the need for:

- Mobility aids
- Disabled parking spaces
- assistive devices or interpreters
- the need to take medication
- medical appointments
- other considerations that people without disabilities don't normally have to think about, but people with disabilities do.
- If you know someone with a disability or live with a disability yourself, you are not immune to ableism.

*“Inspirational Porn”*

In connection to the definition of ableism, trainers subsequently should talk about the term “Inspirational Porn”, with the participants, by asking them, if they have ever heard of the term and if they have an idea of the meaning.

After collecting a few inputs, the trainer introduces the definition on the term:

*People with different abilities call this phenomenon "inspiration porn" when they are asked to make others feel better. When they are repeatedly asked to tell their story to strangers so that their problems fade into the background. The term was coined by the Australian activist Stella Young.*







The definition can again be shown on a PowerPoint or be written on a Flipchart or A3 Paper.

The same thing (see point 3) should be done with the term “Pitty Porn”

Definition on the term:

*“Pitty Porn” is a term that is used when people with disability(ies) & or impairment(s) are portrayed as "pitiable, poor sufferers”*

*Macroaggression:*

Definition on the term:

*“Macroaggressions are large-scale systematic oppression of a target group by society's institutions, such as government, education, and culture, which can all contribute or reinforce the oppression of marginalised social groups while elevating dominant social groups.”*

**PICTURE GALLERY - Macroaggressions against people with different abilities (25’):  
(Material: pictures incl. Speech bubbles printed, post it’s, pens)**

For this exercise, different pictures of people with different abilities connected to statements in speech bubbles will be distributed around the room, on an A3 paper

Note to trainers: Make sure that the pictures are representational and also thought provoking. Try to include diverse situations and disabilities. If you know that there is a specific focus, you can also select more situations for this focus group.

Trainers now ask participants to go through the pictures and ask themselves the following question:

*“what do you recognize on the pictures + speech bubble”*

Participants should write their ideas and associations on post its and put them next to the pictures.

Debriefing:

Trainers read the post its to everyone, followed by a group discussion on the macroaggressions that can be experienced and whether everyone sees it that way and who interprets it how.





### Note to trainer:

Give input and context to affected communities - “*which group is affected by prejudice in the pictures*”?

Groups of people with different abilities:

- Blind people
- People with hearing impairment
- People with physical disability(ies)
- People with learning disability(ies)
- People with intellectual impairment(s)

Here trainers can again connect the terms and definitions to the first session.

### **Dealing with Macroaggressions (15’)**

To conclude the session on macroaggressions, the trainer asks participants for a quick feedback round on solutions on how to deal with macroaggressions. Therefore, facilitators ask participants to think about the following question:

- *How would you deal with macroaggressions? (if you or another person (in your private environment or in your organisation) were affected).*

Participants think about the questions individually and after, share it with the group (Note to trainers: If the group is too big, put participants into groups). Trainer collects Key words on a flipchart.

### **Self-assessment for own organisation (15’)**

After the individual Feedback round, trainers ask participants to now think about their own organisational contexts and connect it to everything the participants experienced and talked about within the workshop:

Participants should think about following questions (in groups or individually – depending on the group size)





- *Have you ever recognized situations that were discussed and experienced within the workshop, in your work environment?*
- *Have you already defined measures or a culture against ableism in your organisation?*  
*If YES, what does it look like?*

Afterwards, the participants (individually or in groups) have to present their results.

### **Evaluation and Debriefing (10')**

1. Check out:

Within the check out round, participants are asked to answer the following questions.

Method Flashlight, Questions:

- *How do you feel now after the workshop?*
- *What are your main points that you take away from this workshop?*

2. Evaluation:

create a menti, google form, or hand out a paper version, depending on your needs.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

- Flipchart
- Pens and Paper (A3)
- Sticky notes (post its)
- Pictures in combination with speech bubbles (printed in A3)
- Definitions on PPT or Printed in A3
- Optional projector

### **TIPS FOR TRAINERS**

Versions A and B are the same in this workshop. Make sure that the participants understand that in case one person with disability is present in the workshop (whether as participant or trainer), the person is not a representative of all people with





disabilities. The person can only talk about their individual experiences and cannot talk for everyone.

Like already noted within the workshop sessions, in any case being sensitive to language is important. "Ask, don't assume" is a very important message to tell the participants. Participants must understand that it is important that language is changing and is in flux and that it can always change (for example, cripples and the cripple movement). Language is also important, in some languages or local contexts certain terms are okay and others are not. What is relevant is the intention and not just the words - be open to correction and criticism - always remain open to learning and unlearning. Tell participants not to be afraid but ask.

## FURTHER READINGS AND LINKS:

- Microaggressions: [When and How to Respond to Microaggressions \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org)
- Mikroaggressionen: [Wann und wie man am besten reagiert - manager magazin \(manager-magazin.de\)](https://manager-magazin.de)
- Microaggression examples: <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/inclusion-diversity/microaggressions>
- Diversity: [Wie gehe ich mit Behinderten um – und darf ich das sagen? - Rundschau Online \(rundschau-online.de\)](https://rundschau-online.de)
- Antidiskriminierungsberatung: <https://adis-ev.de/beratung/antidiskriminierungsberatung>
- Tipps for companies hiring staff with disabilities: <https://www.wko.at/oe/news/einstellung-machts.pdf>
- definitions in German: <https://leidmedien.de/begriffe-ueber-behinderung-von-a-bis-z/>
  
- Goodley (2014): Dis/ability Studies. Theorising disablism and ableism
- Campell (2009): Contours of Ableism. The Production of Disability and Abledness
- Goodley (2011): Disability Studies. An Interdisciplinary Introduction
- Waldschmidt (Hrsg) (2022): Handbuch Disability Studies (german)





- Schöne (2022) Behinderung und Ableismus
- Watson/Vehmas (2020): Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies

