

Accepting and including all abilities



People with physical, communication and developmental needs are often faced with stereotyping, stigma and discrimination in daily life. Much of the disabled community faces exclusion from parts of society other people take for granted. Everyone deserves to feel like they belong. Together, we can make our schools, workplaces and community more inclusive for people of all abilities. Our Ability Acceptance Program teaches you how to make a difference and become an Inclusion Ally.

Reducing barriers to inclusion

One of the biggest barriers to acceptance and inclusion is ableism. **Ableism** is defined as discrimination towards someone based on their abilities, often favouring those who do not have a disability and seeing less value in those who do. Ableism can be reflected in actions, words, behaviours and access issues.

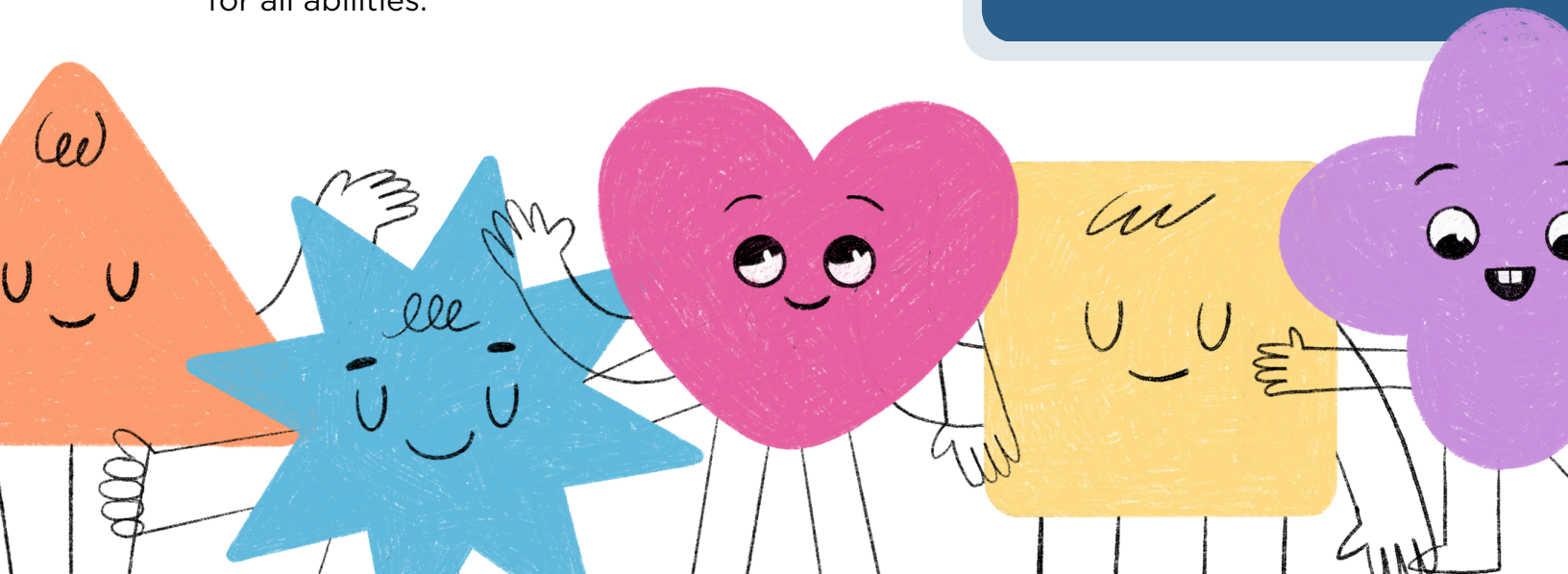
How can you avoid ableism?

- Educate yourself. Look things up. Ask questions.
- Talk about similarities and differences between people, including disabilities.
- Speak up if you hear other people being ableist. This helps educate others.
- Find ways to make activities inclusive for all abilities.



Key takeaways

- There are many types of disabilities.
- We should listen to, learn from and support people with disabilities and other lived experience.
- How we say things matters.
- We all must strive to make places as inclusive as possible so everyone feels like they belong.
- There are many ways to be an Inclusion Ally!

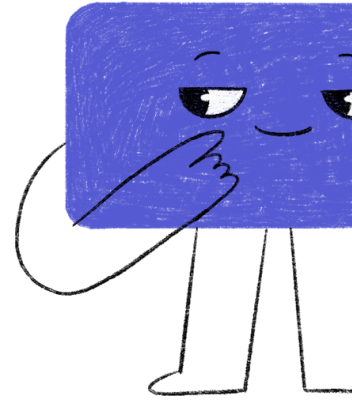


How you say things matters

People with disabilities are individual experts in the language and words they use to refer to themselves. That's why it's important to ask individuals with disabilities what language they like to use.

Unsure how to ask? Try these prompts:

- How do you like to refer to your disability?
- What language should I use to talk about your disability?
- Do you use people-first or identity-first language?
 - *People-first* example: Child with autism, person with a disability
 - *Identity-first* example: Autistic child, disabled person



How to be an Inclusion Ally

An Inclusion Ally is someone who listens to and supports people with different needs and abilities, but does not have this lived experience. It's not a label you give yourself. An Inclusion Ally is always learning and unlearning. An Inclusion Ally finds a way to make sure everyone feels like they belong.

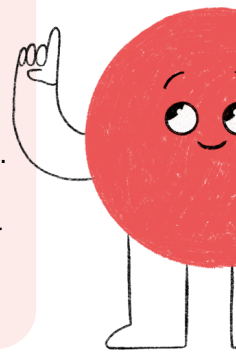
DO:

- Ask what language someone prefers to use to refer to their disability.
- Talk to a person with a disability like anyone else.
- Only help if asked or if someone accepts your offer to help.
- Change games, plans and activities so everyone can participate.
- Assume people are capable.



DON'T:

- Exclude someone from an activity because of their disability.
- Use harmful or outdated language.
- "Help" a person with a disability without asking if they need help.
- Make assumptions about what someone with a disability can or can't do.



Remember, sometimes disabilities are visible, but other times they may be **invisible**. This includes brain injuries, chronic pain, mental illness, gastro-intestinal disorders, and much more. Because they're not obvious to spot, invisible disabilities may be overlooked and misunderstood. That's why it's important to treat everyone with respect, kindness and understanding!