

What is disability?



Disability Awareness for All

Introductory starting questions to get people thinking.

What does the word disability mean to you? I wonder if you have anything you would consider a disability? What kind of restrictions does having a disability bring? I wonder if there are any positives that emerge?

Watch the video together and discuss your initial thoughts.

https://youtu.be/3F4Hp0N_A1Q?si=1lcJpEyfPur0nHWI

In groups or pairs brainstorm the sorts of issues which may arise for a person with a disability, use these headings as a stimulus.

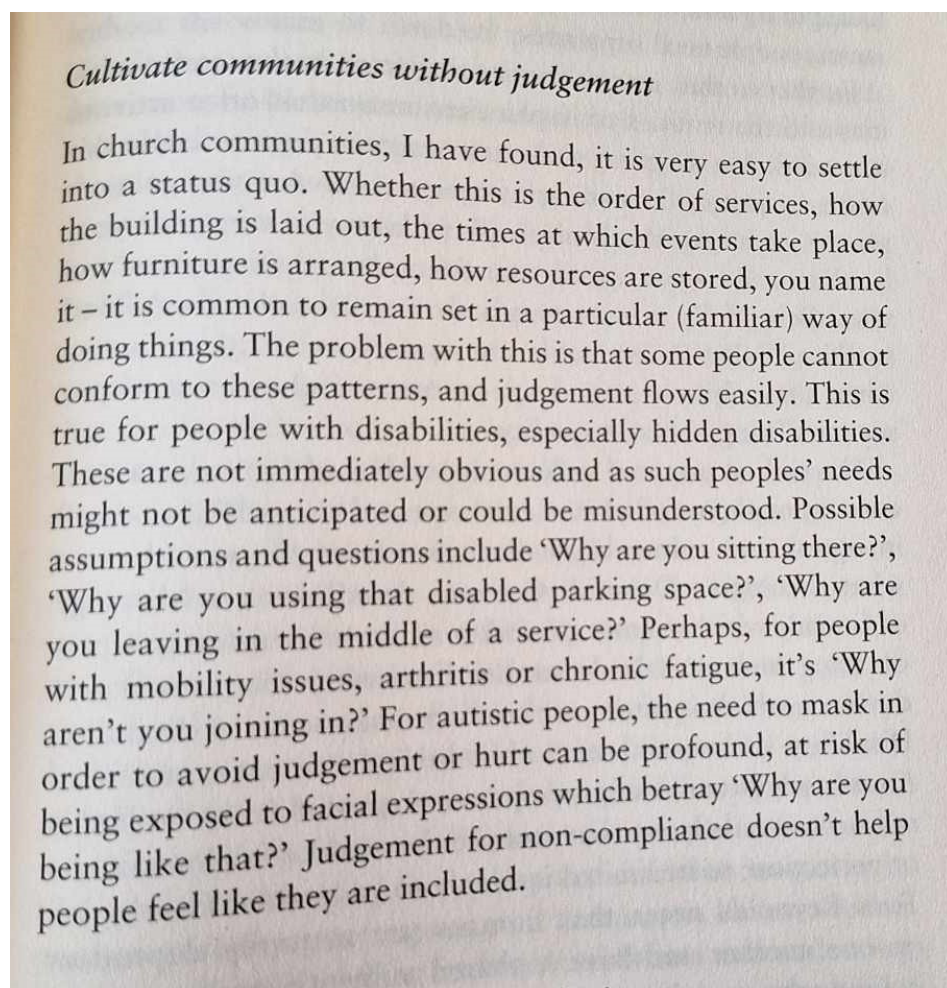
VULNERABILITY
VOCABULARY
ACCESSABILITY
EDUCATION
UNDERSTANDING
EXPECTATIONS
STRUGGLES AND CHALLENGES
POSITIVES

Feedback on the brainstorm



Consider reading the chapter 'Waking up to ableism in Christian communities' by Chrissie Thwaites in *Young, Woke and Christian* edited by Victoria Turner.

Read this excerpt from the chapter



What barriers are there for people of disability in your church context? How could they be addressed? How are those voices heard?

Read the case study below: what can we learn from Alanna's experience and how does it reflect the previous excerpt?

What are you taking away from this session? What are your priorities in your context? Make a list and set a time frame around them. What is the first thing you need to do?

Glossary of terms: <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/disability-inclusion-glossary>

Finish in Prayer



My Testimony – a case study - Alanna

I am hearing impaired. I have had sensori-neural hearing loss since birth in both of my ears. I prefer to attend noisy events, whilst I find them challenging, I enjoy challenging the misconceptions of deafness/ the idea that I shouldn't be invited to events since I struggle to hear. I want to show that we, the deaf community can overcome the adversity and difficulties that we face. However, I also acknowledge that I have found it embarrassing and tiring having to ask people to repeat themselves. But I use this to my advantage, I use these noisy and challenging events to try and overcome the stigma that it is embarrassing or shameful that I cannot hear everything or often mishear. I try to be patient with myself, as if I can't be patient with myself how can I expect others to be. Everyone has different communication needs, and the solution is creating an environment where everyone can be included, people should not be excluded from situations just because of their impairment.

I would like to highlight that my experiences are vastly different to others with more, less or the same amount of hearing loss, it even differs to those who have lost it as they have aged, through illness or if born with hearing impairment.

Even though I am deaf I still want to participate, it isn't for others to decide whether a situation is too challenging for me, it is up to me as the individual to decide if it is too difficult, I don't want to be excluded just because others think I will struggle.

I would like to note that many testimonies contradict each other, this is exactly what they are meant to do! It shows just how much disability can affect society as no two people are the same and no two people have the same experience. This is why it is so important to get people to start talking. If churches do not talk to individuals, how can anything be made better? For some, disability isn't something they like to talk about, but for others it is! And this is ok. To me, disability isn't a taboo subject, and it isn't shameful, but we must understand that for some, disabilities are deeply personal and can be a hurtful topic. Therefore, when doing these discussions and conversation starters, we must encourage churches to be inclusive but mindful.

