

Ableism in Academia: The Staff Student experience disconnect

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*Content warning: Ableist language described

This session we will cover:

- What does disability look like?
 - Ableism, intersectionality and ethics of care.
 - Disclosure and support services.
 - Accessible and universal design.
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- Throughout consider how staff (including GTAs) and student needs intersect. Some staff are also student (PhDs)

My background

- Support worker students with physical, learning and behavioural difficulties/disabilities (Secondary and FE)
- BSc Social policy (Health, welfare, education.
- MA SEN and Inclusive Education
- PhD Education – Maths anxiety
- Research/published – Maths anxiety
- Speak on disability
- Train GTA's on student learning and support / HEA Accreditation assessor
- Previous UoM Disabled Staff network member / Humanities EDI group
- Director Women in Academia Support Network WIASN www.wiasn.com
- Secretary and Steering group National Association of Disabled Staff Networks NADSN www.nadsn-uk.org
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Manager: The Christie NHS Trust

It's me I'm disabled student and staff

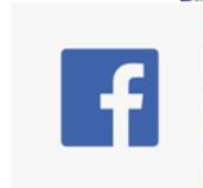
Home blood sugar monitor: Gestational Diabetes



Fibri Check phone app:
Heart arrhythmia



Facebook groups: B12, IST, CMPA,
Gestational diabetes.
WIASN mental health
WIASN cancer survivors



Portable ECG at my local GP



GP video phone consultation
Non driver
Useful when isolating with sick kids



Patient Access App
Heart meds/prescription ordering
Test results
Book appointments (B12 injection)

Activate Windows
Go to Settings to activate

Some stats

- **Global:** 15% have some type of documented disability.
 - **UK:** Around 1 in 4.
 - **HE staff:** Only 3.9% declared a health condition or impairment (Brown and Leigh, 2018)
 - **HE students:** increased by 106,000 or 47% since 2014/15. Increased reporting of mental health condition(s) Worse degree and employment outcomes. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8716/>
 - **UoM:** Disabled students make up aprox 19% of students
- *Covid and long Covid expected to increase these numbers.

Disconnect between Student and Staff Support: Staff working conditions are student learning conditions

- What are your needs to support you to support the student?
- Do you have disability you would like or need support with in the supervisory relationship/process from the University or your students?
- Do you feel empowered to express those needs?
- Disabled academics are often forgotten/overlooked and are chronically under-supported in academia. Your experience matters because your work conditions are also student learning conditions.
- Representation matters.

Visible or invisible? Activity

- Visible Disability
- Invisible Disability

What even is disability?

- Physical
- Chronic health condition
- Visual
- Hearing
- Learning disability / difficulty
- Cognitive
- Neurodivergence
- Mental Health

- Paroxysmal - a sudden recurrence of symptoms or an intensification of existing symptoms
- Progressive
- Sporadic

“nearly as much ill health is mental illness as all physical illnesses put together” (CEPMHP, 2012, p.1)

Disclosure

- Point out uni support services to **all** students
<http://www.dso.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Ask all students their support needs.
- Don't assume support needs.
- Don't assume disclosure.
- **Believe disclosure.**
- Disclosure can be exhausting, triggering, traumatic, emancipating, relief.
- Don't be scared of emotions.

Things to consider

- Medication can cause as many problems as it solves - side effects.
- Energy levels can fluctuate.
- Conditions can fluctuate.
- Stigma.
- Processing our disability/health and learning needs.
- Getting diagnosis can be exhausting and time consuming – support required regardless of diagnosis status.

Ableism: Definition

- Discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities and/or people who are perceived to be disabled.
- Characterizes people who are defined by their disabilities as inferior to the non-disabled.
- Constructs systems and environments that privilege and benefit abled persons and are not accessible by design.

Overview: Ableism in Academia

Persistent under
declaration

Personal responsibility
rhetoric through
'resilience' and
'recovery' models

Social model disability
addresses systems of
'selfish capitalism' and
'workaholic ethics'

Education: beneficial
and detrimental to
wellbeing.

Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw 1989

- Disability is intersectional.
- Intersectionality identifies multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage. Examples of these factors include **gender, caste, sex, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, disability, weight, physical appearance, and height.**

Examples:

Women over diagnosed with anxiety and under diagnosed with heart conditions.

Black women 4 times more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth

Ethics of Care approach

- ‘... the central focus of the ethics of care is on the compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility’. (p.10)
- [...] in the ethics of care, the values of trust, solidarity, mutual concern, and empathetic responsiveness have priority; in practices of care, relationships are cultivated, needs are responded to, and sensitivity is demonstrated. (p.16)
- **Virginia Held’s *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (2006)**

Designing services

Accessible Design

- Design process in which the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered.
- Accessibility sometimes refers to the characteristic that products, services, and facilities can be independently used by people with a variety of disabilities.

Universal Design

- A broader concept where services, products and environments are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Designing learning

Environment/Equipment



Inform students about the space.
Make adaptations.
Secure equipment.

Course materials



Language check.
Representation.
Accessibility.
Alt text images.

Assessment



Vary summative and formative
assessment methods.

Disability is not a metaphor!

Activity - alternatives

Negative language can reinforce oppression and discrimination

Fallen on deaf ears

Making a “dumb” choice

Turning a “blind eye

I’m a bit OCD

Crippled by fear

My workload is crazy busy

Your environment: Activity

Think about a room you teach in. What experience might a student have in that room with the following disabilities

- (a) Mobility (wheelchair / crutches etc)
- (b) Communication (deaf / blind)
- (c) Learning disability (dyslexia, dyscalculia)
- (d) Sensory/processing disability (light, noise, smell sensitivity)

Would you need to make adaptations?

How might these also improve the experience of other students?

What do you need from the room set up /environment?

Resources

Trauma informed leadership -

https://citationsy.com/references/WLN_Trauma_informed_leadership?fbclid=IwAR3554EaXdNOsI9MGTgGUrIaW3RIbXRbNDwY9x5wTxkFJibqXKsohvmBo6c

ADHD - A Radical Guide for Women With ADHD

https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/product/9781684032617?gC=5a105e8b&gclid=EAlaIQobChMlo7SSsfrv7AIVRrTtCh3I-AtYEAQYASABEgLR2PD_BwE&fbclid=IwAR2GdVhruxMdyY6-W-Ht7UV2OeYbOhU69h2Xf4BZvXI62Js71y_g2jd4ocw

Disabilities in academic workplaces: experiences of human and physical geographers

- <https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/tran.12009?fbclid=IwAR2CnqS-MQZ9Lp0AMTcDaJxCWnkkzc0DluznhiFPp8G4ixRwrkHQdjWvYGQ>

Ableism in academia: where are the disabled and ill academics? -

<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/TNKmvGUKi4WgvA98p33J/full?fbclid=IwAR1xXq3Zwmn4jZLIWapyv8-4prApVxWS4yjdPhYmRphLYLaeChqGjnnfbLg&>

Ableism in Academia -

<https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/123203?fbclid=IwAR2bqSDAO0thsmDMdsNVp0ImcSNVcEH5eqE4Gr2EduSCEElrmGlwl-k2jiY>

End:
Questions?