

Toronto Neighbourhood Centres' (TNC) Disability Justice Approach to Dismantling Ableism in the Workplace

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A bit about us...



- Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC) is an association of non-profit multi-service organizations dedicated to strengthening local neighbourhoods and enabling diverse communities to work together to promote justice and a healthy life for all.

Disability Justice is...

- A framework that examines disability and ableism as it relates to other forms of oppression and identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, incarceration, size, etc.)
- Coined by Sins Invalid in response to the Disability Rights movement which has historically focused on white people with physical disabilities gaining legal rights at the expense of other intersections of race, gender, sexuality, age, citizenship, etc. and other forms of disability.
- The understanding that all bodies are essential, and are affected by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more.

Development of Disability Justice Affinity Group, Conversations & Learning Exchange

- Staff across organizations & organizational levels shared experiences related to disability in the workplace and Disability Justice
- Identifying challenges:
 - Power structures leaving people feel that there was not as much they could accomplish
 - Hesitation to take action when you do not feel like you have expertise
- The goals of the proposed solution:
 - Creating an interactive space for people to develop a lens to identify ableism in their daily lives & workplace, regardless of their position at their agency
 - Dreaming alternative ways that our workplaces and everyday lives could look that would be accessible & inclusive

Frameworks & Concepts For Understanding Disability Justice

- **Medical Model** - disability is based on individual symptoms and conditions
- **Social Model** - disability is created by inaccessible environments and discrimination (created as part of the disability rights movement)
- **Universal Design** - According to the Center for Universal Design, UD is "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."

Disability Justice Principles

These 10 principles of disability justice were developed by Sins Invalid – more info can be found at www.sinsinvalid.org

Intersectionality

Leadership of Those Most Impacted

Anti-Capitalist Politic

Commitment to Cross-Movement Organizing

Recognizing Wholeness

Sustainability

Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity

Interdependence

Collective Access

Collective Liberation



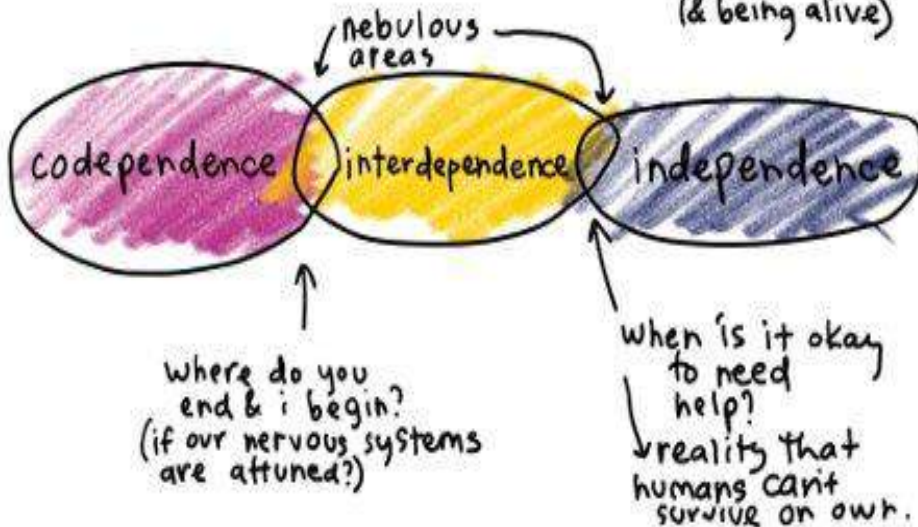
Anti-Capitalist Politic



Recognizing Wholeness

THE POROUS NATURE OF TERMS

(& being alive)



Interdependence



Sustainability



Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity

If you have come
to help me, you are
wasting your time.
But if you have
come because your
liberation is bound
up with mine, then
let us work together.

ABORIGINAL
ACTIVIST'S
COUNCIL
1972

Collective
Liberation

Scenario #1

One of your employee's requests to take sick leave at a busy time. You ask questions about why they need it but ultimately end up denying it because you feel there is far too much to be done right now.

Is this inclusive?

What would be more inclusive?

What would make it even more inclusive?

What values are at play?

Scenario #1 – An Alternative

- Trust people to know what they need
- All programming and workflows are developed and evaluated collaboratively, in ways that ensure tasks do not fall to one person alone.
- Work is designed in a way where people can take time off easily as needed.
- Pre-plan for busy times to divide up the work in ways that are fair to everyone, including backup plans
- Advocate with funders on your team's behalf when deadlines are not met

Think about the following principles:

- Anti-Capitalist
- Recognizing Wholeness
- Sustainability
- Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity

Scenario #1 – An Alternative (Continued)

- Supervisors and colleagues encourage each other to take time off to rest, take vacations, take sick time, take days off for mental health, etc.
- Self-care is seen as a collective / organizational responsibility
 - Self-Care / collective care is built into the workday, into workflows, and into meetings
 - Examples: taking lunch breaks together, including games or activities that are joyful and not work-related but still paid time for the team

Think about the following principles:

- Anti-Capitalist
- Recognizing Wholeness
- Sustainability
- Commitment to Cross-Disability Solidarity

Scenario #2

Let's say you are a worker/employee with an episodic disability that you have not chosen to disclose to your employer. You are having a flare up of your condition that prevents you from being able to arrive to work at the usual expected start time. You are terrified to call in because this is the fourth time this month that you have had to call in late.

Is this inclusive?

What would be more inclusive?

What would make it even more inclusive?

What values are at play?

Scenario #2 – An Alternative

- People at the organization may start at varying times for any number of reasons. In practice, teams and leaders maintain flexibility and give people the grace to be human.
- Organizations focus on work itself rather than rigid time frames. If a certain number of tasks or projects need to be completed, more importance is placed on their completion and quality than on the time of day or day of the week that the task was completed.
- Organizations provide flexibility to be able to work remotely as needed.
- Organizations trust employees to know what they need and honor those needs without seeking documentation.

Think about the following principles:

- Sustainability
- Anti-Capitalist Politic
- Recognizing Wholeness
- Collective Liberation

Scenario #2 – An Alternative (Continued)

- Work is designed to be collaborative, so that employees can take time to take care of themselves if they need to suddenly take time off without worrying about their work.
- Teams advocate with funders if deadlines are not met, empowering employees to take the time they need to care for themselves rather than putting pressure to get work done at the expense of their health.

Think about the following principles:

- Sustainability
- Anti-Capitalist Politic
- Recognizing Wholeness
- Collective Liberation

Questions?