



Innovations in Counseling (Part 11 Session 6)

Bridging the Gap in Multicultural and Diversity Approaches: Including Disability Justice and Anti-Ableism in the Conversation.

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session With Lynn Pierce, PhD, NCC, ACS, LPC, CRC

Question from Anonymous:

I am learning more about ableism and wonder if you could speak to the idea of someone who is able-bodied not wanting to acquire a "condition" or "diagnosis" or "disease" as possibly being ableist. What are the concepts and tensions to pay attention with this idea?

Answer from Presenter: Certainly it is rooted in ableism, because if disability is not 'lesser' and if the systems were not oppressive there wouldn't be this concern. That said, as with any shift in identity there may be loss/grief, and there is a process of disability identity development that is often not sufficiently supported due to the stigma and fear surrounding disability in society.

Question from M. Ellison:

I am 74 years of age and experience ageism. I think I am seen as a facade or cardboard cut-out surface. My own father was differently-abled to to a childhood accident. He reported being told he could not be in some places because he "looked funny." He was born in 1900 and myself in 1949. He faced marginalization until he retired. QUESTION: How do you see working toward Disability Justice might help in these examples of ageism/ableism?

Answer from Presenter: Ugly laws were on the books until as late as the 1980s, so it's likely he literally could not be in some public places due to an "unsightly or disfiguring" condition. The people first movement came out of some of these concerns, and I think the Disability Rights Movement in general and certainly contemporary Disability Justice helps by challenging the status quo in society and forcing the conversation about disability to take place, which has been the only way meaningful change and protections for disabled populations has occurred.

Question from A. Vosburg:

How can new perspectives be found and explored in collective disability, to advance a cause or movement in a positive nature?

Answer from Presenter: The disability community is extremely diverse and I think that this had been happening in the Disability Rights Movement broadly, and in Disability Justice spaces specifically. People need to engage with the community and the conversation.

Question from M. Ellison:

QUESTION: what do you think is behind the use of words like "crippled?" I am aware that people feel afraid of differently-abled individuals. Why do we continue to label people?

Answer from Presenter: Various versions of the word crippled have been used to mean lacking use of limbs since Middle English. It became broadly considered offensive in the 1970s, but some people still consider it an accurate descriptor for their disabilities and identity and it has certainly been reclaimed by Crip Culture and the "Crip" short hand (crip-talk, crip-time, etc.) is in common use in different sub-communities. The term "differently-abled" is labeling as well, and is considered offensive by many in disability community as it is avoidant and erases disability. The Say the Word movement centers around the reluctance of people (largely able-bodied allies and carers) to empower the language and identity choices of disabled people. This is an area like other communities (LGBTQIA+ spaces come to mind) where language is very complex and personal and there needs to be a concerted effort to understand those choices on both a community and individual level.

Question from B. Jackson:

I was raised to ask questions with discernment. If I want to learn something, I research it or ask questions. How can an "able-individual" initiate conversations with "disabled individuals" appropriately?

Answer from Presenter: I advise letting the disabled person lead the conversation and set parameters as much as possible and centering curiosity and respect but also waiting until it would be appropriate to ask any other potentially prying or intrusive question.

Question from R. Wood:

Is it rude to tell a person they are admired for overcoming their handicap?

Answer from Presenter: Handicap is extremely outdated and many consider it offensive. That said, assuming a disability is something to "overcome" is in and of itself a trope and an example of inspiration porn (see Stella Young's TED Talk).

Question from J. Bjork:

Do you know of organizations for advocacy and activism for invisible chronic illnesses?

Answer from Presenter: Most of the ones I am personally familiar with focus on specific illnesses. There will typically be some sort of society or research organization at the national or international level if you look by

condition. There are a few associations and projects on invisible disabilities broadly but I'm not personally aware of any that stand out in terms of community discussion beyond the condition-specific organizations.

Question from A. Baker:

I have worked at 2 universities where the Office of Disability Services was on the 2nd or 3rd floor of a building where the elevator regularly broke down. How can we do better?

Answer from Presenter: Yes, I entered through the back door for the 4 years I worked at disability services. This really comes down to whether Universities have a priority to embrace a Universal Design model and consider accessibility proactively or whether they will continue to insist on only changing things when the law is enforced. Even then, to be truly equitable and inclusive we'd have to exceed the standard set by the ADA and Rehabilitation Act, so I'm not sure what it would take to create that sort of cultural shift in Higher Ed.