Disability Pride: Exploring the Role of the Disability Identity

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Objective:
Identify and emphasize attitudes that enhance the opportunities for persons with DD to achieve their optimal potential

Notes:
From Pity to Pride: Why Disability Matters

Who We Are

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Training overview

Disability Identity, Pride, and Power

Why Pride is Important

How to Support the Development of Pride
Disability Identity

My disability is invisible so why does it matter if I identify? (have pride)

Disability is more than the physical, and/or mental effects on the body.
Our Many Identities

Definitions

Disability Pride
Disability Power
Disability Pride

- Accepting and honoring our uniqueness and seeing it as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity.
- Pride comes from celebrating our own heritage, culture, unique experiences, and contributions.

**DISABLED & PROUD!**

Disability Power

- Knowing and feeling one’s pride and applying our unique voices, skills, and actions with energy and confidence to achieve a vision
- This vision is one of full citizenship in all places: personal relationships, home, school, work community, institutions, etc.

Internalized Ableism

- I’m broken and need to be fixed
- I’m not good enough
- I will never get a job
- I’m asking for too much
- I will never get a job
WHAT IS DISABILITY PRIDE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEOb7-E-hOs

Tiers of Pride

1. Acknowledgement

Tiers of Pride 1

1.
What is to Gain

- Self-esteem
  - Self-acceptance
- Support System
  - Sense of belonging
- Accommodations
- Value of Interdependence
- Life of Honesty
- Appreciation for diversity

Building Disability Pride

Acknowledge

- Acknowledge identity
- Acknowledge losses
- Acknowledge gifts
Building Disability Pride

Acknowledge

Language

Acknowledging

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Language
**Language: From Allies/Service Professionals**

- **Offensive**
  - Normal/Average
  - Those People
  - "We all have a disability"

- **Thriving**
  - Non-Disabled
  - Person without a disability

- **Surviving**
  - Able-Bodied
  - Able-Minded
  - Temporarily Able-Bodied (TAB)

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**Building Disability Pride**

- Acknowledge
- Language
- History/Culture

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**History and Culture**

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"Remember, you weren’t the one, who made you ashamed, But you are the one, who can make you proud. Just practice, Practice until you get proud, and once you are proud, Keep practicing so you won’t forget. You get proud By practicing.”

--Laura Hershey
Environmental Inclusion

- Welcoming environments
- Physical access
- Attitudinal access
- Programmatic access
- Policies and procedures

Clinical Applications
- Medical vs. Social Model
- Welcoming Environments
- Pride Chart

Questions?

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From Pity to Pride: Why Disability Matters

*It takes a shift in one’s thinking to change a system!!!* We need to make a philosophical shift in how we view disability. We need to examine our attitudes and beliefs around disability in order to improve the systems that serve people with disabilities.

**Disability Pride:**
Accepting and honoring our uniqueness and seeing it as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity. Pride comes from celebrating our own heritage, culture, unique experiences and contributions. Disability pride:

- Recognizes the power people with disabilities have to make change.
- Results when we challenge and undo negative beliefs, attitudes and feelings that dominate groups think there is something wrong with our identity.
- Rejects shame and the need to “blend in”
- Self acceptance and validation of our uniqueness
- Results in making choices based on respect for interdependence, accommodations, and creativity.
- Feeling a strong connection w/ a community of other people
- Recognizes that it is our uniqueness that will transform all people and institutions (society)

**Disability Power:**
Knowing and feeling one’s pride and applying our unique voice, skills and actions with energy and confidence to achieve a vision (of full citizenship in all places: personal relationships, home, school, work, community, institutions, etc.). Disability power:

- Includes the commitment to provide personal and institutional support for people with disabilities who are seeking to claim their full and rightful place, power and pride
- Knowing practicing and using the skills to make changes
- Expressed when disability communities protest discrimination and celebrate disability culture, heritage and history.

**Tiers of a Proud Identity:**

1. **Acknowledgement** - This includes acknowledgement of their disability as part of their identity.
   - Getting rid of the messages that we are just “special” or that we are “just like everyone else.” Instead, we need to acknowledge that we are different – we are part of natural human diversity – and diversity is not a bad thing.
2. **Community** – This includes realizing that you are not the only one and finding a place where you fit in.
   - Knowing there are many others like you – with the same barriers put on us by society. It is having a shared understanding of the oppression you face with others like you. It is sharing common experiences with other people with disabilities – talking to people who “get it.”

3. **Movement** – This includes realizing you are part of a larger movement for social justice.
   - Learning about disability history (both the oppression and resistance). Looking at how long we have been oppressed and how far we have come over the years. Realizing how long people in your community have been fighting for equality.

4. **Pride** – This includes being able to say “I’m disabled” while also having a sense of pride instead of shame.
   - Not hiding or denying your disability. Using your community’s history as fuel to move forward and continue to fight for justice. Finding great power and excitement when around a large group of people with disabilities.

**Building Blocks of Pride:**

1. **Acknowledge** – Acknowledge their disability. Help them acknowledge the losses and the gifts that come with disability.
2. **Language** – Use language that supports disability pride.
3. **History and Culture** – Expose people to disability history and culture. Learn about it yourself.
4. **Inclusion** – Make your programs inclusive of people with disabilities. Acknowledge the importance of community (spaces for people with disabilities only) but know that it must be by choice.
5. **Practice** – Allow people with disabilities the opportunities to practice being proud. You should practice what you preach. If you are teaching disability pride, you should believe in disability pride.

**Benefits of Pride:**

- **Increased Self-Esteem** – As once accepts themselves they have a higher self-esteem and self-confidence
- **Accommodations** – When one knows they have a disability, they know what accommodations they need. When they are proud of their disability, they are able to advocate for the accommodations they need without feeling a sense of shame or like they are asking for something “special.”
- **Increased Independence/Interdependence** – As one gets the accommodations they need, they are more likely to be independent and successful in their lives, housing situations, places of employment, educational settings, personal relationships, community involvement, etc. Increased value of interdependence – knowing it is okay to rely on others.
- **Community Inclusion** – As people become more independent in the places mentioned above, they become more likely to be included in community activities.