Common Perceptions & Misconceptions

Impairment, disability and disabled persons

Joe Camilleri
Stigma & Labelling

- Traditionally seen as different from ‘normal’ people.
- An embarrassment & shame to family & community.
- Disability a sign of evil & sinfulness.
- Objects of fear to be avoided and/ or hidden away.
Difference (Stigma) --- always shameful?

- Among the 62 Catholic Saints or Blesseds with stigmata

- Nathaniel Hawthorne – *The Scarlet Letter*
look ...
look …
Look …
Stigma/Impairment ➔ Prejudice ➔ Person

Understanding = Acceptance
Definitions

- **Impairment (*)**
  loss or limitation of physical, mental or sensory function on a long-term or permanent basis. **(BIOLOGICAL)**

- **Disablement (*)**
  loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the ordinary life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers. **(SOCIAL)**

(*) Disabled People’s International, 1981
BIOLOGICAL IMPAIRMENT

- Hearing
- Hidden
- Intellectual
- Mental Health
- Mobility
- Visual
The Medical Model of Disability: over-medicalising our lives

always needing support

cannot climb stairs

has fits

always looking for a cure

The problem is the disabled person

housebound

cannot walk

cannot use handles

cannot see, or hear

always sick

wheelchair ‘bound’

Source: http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/DRC/citizenship/worksheets/PDFs/L3W2.pdf
The Social Model of Disability: Removing disabling barriers

Socially constructed barriers:
- NO accessible parking places
- steps, NO ramps
- isolated families
- NO sign language interpreters
- poverty and low income
- negatively designed buildings
- negative attitudes
- NO gainful employment
- segregated education
- inaccessible transport

Source: [http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/DRC/citizenship/worksheets/PDFs/L3W2.pdf](http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/DRC/citizenship/worksheets/PDFs/L3W2.pdf)
A Solid Foundation

- CONTINUOUS EDUCATION
- ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION
- APPROPRIATE SERVICES
- ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT
YOU must be the change you want to see in the world (Ghandi)

- Don’t be afraid, to be afraid
  - Focus on the person, not the impairment
- Rights, not charity
  - LISTEN (to disabled people)
- EQUAL = better for everyone
  - Respect individual differences
Resources

- Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b’Dizabilità website
  - http://www.knpd.org

- British Film Institute
  - http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/disability/

- Self-Direction Community Project website
  - http://www.selfdirection.org/

- The UK Disability Archive (Leeds University)
  - http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/archframe.htm
Who is Disabled?
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