

Handout 3

DISABILITY AND DIFFERENT IMPAIRMENTS

HOW TO USE THIS HANDOUT

Use this handout with the following activity:

- **Unmasking myths**

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DISABILITY?

- the result of limitations imposed on people with impairments
- those limitations prevent their full participation in society
- attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers prevent their inclusion.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY IMPAIRMENTS?

- problems in body function or structure
- examples are: lacking part of or all of a limb; or a limb, organ or body mechanism that doesn't fully function
- may be long-term or short-term, physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, mental or physiological
- multi-impairments are where a person has more than one impairment
- conditions caused by disease or injury that affect a person's functioning or appearance.

WHAT CAUSES THEM?

- some impairments are congenital due to genetic factors
- other impairments can be caused by an injury or illness before birth
- others can be caused by injury or illness after birth
- a person can have multi-impairments from one or more causes.

HOW DO THEY AFFECT PEOPLE?

- *physical* impairment affects a person's body movement and/or appearance (e.g. cerebral palsy, limb loss)
- *sensory* impairment affects sight, hearing, speech, smell, taste, sensation/feeling, physical balance (e.g. blindness, hearing loss)
- *neurological* affects nervous system, speech, motor skills, vision, memory, muscles, learning abilities (e.g. epilepsy, multiple sclerosis)

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- *intellectual* affects cognitive functioning and behaviour (e.g. Down's syndrome, learning difficulties)
- *mental illness* affects thinking, moods, ability to relate and capacity for coping with life (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar disorder).

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

- use the social model to understand disability
- challenge stigma and discrimination
- realise that limitations may depend on other factors such as personality, background, support networks, cultural context
- note that regardless of their impairment, a person can be 'disabled' by society because of stigma and prejudice.

