

What is Ableism?

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In this video, we discuss *Othering* and exclusion. Ableism is the social devaluation and structural oppression of disabled people. *Othering* refers to the process of casting people out of social acceptance. This happens along multiple axes of identity, including sex, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, religion, class, and – our focus – disability, chronic health conditions, and neurodivergence. Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality captures how a person can be oppressed by multiple power systems targeting multiple aspects of their identity.

Ableist privilege is built upon the exclusion of those who do not satisfy the demands of able-bodied and neurotypical values. In employment, inflexible work hours with hard deadlines and quotas exclude and invalidate those who cannot keep the normalized pace of a hyper-capitalist work environment. In education, inflexible standardized testing, limited formats for distributing information, hard deadlines, and mandatory in-person learning exclude students who work at different paces or process information in nontraditional academic ways. In fitness and beauty culture, popularized images revere very narrow, gender binary ideals upholding extreme characteristics usually associated with able-bodiedness. In each of these contexts, disability gets relegated as *other* than or *lesser* than accepted standards.

For more information on ableism, please see our expanded discussion which focuses on how ableism restricts resources, opportunities, and power.