

Inclusion Resource

UNJUST SITUATIONS: PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION



Imagine you are at your place of work. You are in a meeting with colleagues and the discussion turns to the group sharing their thoughts about hiring people with disabilities. One of your colleagues makes the following statement: “Well, employing people with disabilities may be good for public relations, but we just don’t have those jobs here.” Your stomach churns as you recognize the overt discrimination evident in what they are saying. What will you choose to do in this situation?

Coming across unjust situations that make us uncomfortable is a natural part of the human experience. When these situations occur, it can be challenging to identify why, or what to do to in response. Lifeworks put together the following prompts to assist you in reflecting on these moments.

What was challenging about the situation? Was there anything positive about the situation?

Did what happened involve language or action that reflects either of the sentiments below?

- “People with disabilities are inferior or dependent on society.” If yes, how can you take action to challenge this false belief?
- “People with disabilities are equal members of society.” If no, how could you take action to uphold this belief?

Which conceptual model(s)* reflect what happened?

- **Charity:** Depicting disabled people as victims of a tragic circumstance who are deserving of pity.
- **Medical:** Viewing disability as a problem of the individual person, directly caused by disease, trauma, or other health conditions that requires sustained medical care.
- **Social:** Viewing “disability” as a socially-created problem that requires collective action by society at large to make the modifications necessary for the full inclusion of people with disabilities.
- **Human Rights:** Enacting policy and legislation that seeks to address the issues of social justice and discrimination. Embraces the shift from disability being seen as an individual medical problem to it instead being about community membership and fair access to social activities.

*Source: [Disabled World](#)

Identify if there were underlying issues involved.

- For example, in the scenario at the top of the document, consider what may be the root cause of why your coworker thinks there are only certain jobs for “those” people with disabilities.
- What may be the underlying reason be for this othering? (Ableism, stigma, and prejudice could be some answers)

Were there opportunities to advocate for community level change?

- In what ways could you have challenged stereotypes or shared data to counteract the unjust situation?

Each unjust situation we encounter is an opportunity to disrupt ableism and disability discrimination. If you didn't respond in the moment, make a plan for how you will react to and disrupt similar situations in the future. For example, perhaps you could say, “I'm not sure I understood you correctly” and asked, “Can you tell me more about what you mean?”

And even if you did respond how you wanted to in one moment, keep doing the work and figure out how to bring more people along with you to advocate for disability inclusion. The value of doing this work lies in the long-term possibility and necessity for our communities to change for the better.

For more inclusion and educational resources, visit: lifeworks.org