

Essay Introduction and Instructions

Hello and thank you for your participation in this book project! My name is Elizabeth, I was born with Spina Bifida at T10/11 and have been a wheelchair user since the age of 18 months. This project idea was born out of a need to have ableism be a part of the larger social conversation. The need is clear, as a person living with a disability I am impacted by Abilistic systems, environments and attitudes Every. Single. Day. However, when I try to talk to others about ableism and how it impacts me, I am often met with confusion, or even worse, denial.

It has not been until the last couple of years that I have become fully aware of just how affected I am by ableism, how much I have internalized it and even perpetuate it! I have found it fascinating and validating to explore this with others. In my conversations, I am finding that many others living with disability and/or chronic disease have had similar experiences and like me, haven't really talked about it before. In putting this project together, I am giving you an opportunity to be heard and for your voice to become part of the collective voice of disability and/or chronic illness.

My personal hope for this project is three-fold. First, I hope that the process of writing your essay/s gives you the opportunity to explore ableism in your life and gives you a vessel in which to voice your experience. Second, I hope that in knowing others are doing the same, that you don't feel as alone in your experience. My third hope is to those temporarily able bodied (TAB) individuals who read this collection; I hope that you read this and are able to take in the stories and begin to think about how you have been affected by ableism and that you start the process of changing the way you think about disability.

Essay Instructions

Definitions and examples of “ableism” are included below.

- 1) Please write one or more essays answering the question: *How have you been impacted by ableism?* (if you are writing more than one, please submit each in a separate submission).
- 2) Essays can be any length. (I encourage you to write at least a 5-paragraph essay).
- 3) At the top of each essay you submit, please have your name.
 - a) You may also want to list your disability/chronic disease, age, ethnicity, gender identity, or any other demographic information you think is pertinent.
 - b) Please indicate on the *Consent Form whether or not you want this information included in publication.
- 4) Submit each completed essay *along with the signed *consent form* to Elizabeth at:
elizabeth.scriven.psyd@gmail.com
**To successfully submit an essay you must include the Consent Form with each entry*
- 5) Feel free to call or email me with any questions!

Elizabeth Scriven: email: elizabeth.scriven.psyd@gmail.com

Tips and Tricks

If you are new to writing here is a formula that I have found helpful for getting going. I learned it when writing 5-paragraph essays but can be applied to longer papers as well!

- 1) **Introduction:** Tell them the reader what you are going to tell them.
 - a) In the first paragraph/s briefly outline what you want to say. Write a sentence that describes the topic, a sentence on each point you want to make, and a sentence on why you are telling the reader what you are telling them.
 - b) If you are writing a longer introduction(,) each of the sentences noted above may be a paragraph.
- 2) **Content:** Tell them.
 - a) Each idea point you want to make should get at least a paragraph.
 - b) More nuanced points may get several paragraphs.

3) **Conclusion:** Tell them what you told them

- a) This is at least a paragraph, sometimes more, summarizing all the things you just said.
- b) Your conclusion should include the take home. What do you want your reader to leave remembering about your writing?

What is Ableism?

Definitions of Ableism:

- “Ableism is a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other. (<https://cdnys.org/blog/uncategorized/ableism/>)
- “The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people who have mental, emotional and physical disabilities.” (Van Daalen-Smith, 2006, p. 263)
- “[People] consider disabled people to be not only broken or damaged, but also incompetent, impotent, undesirable, or asexual. Their inability to perform gender and sexuality in a way that meets dominant societal expectations is seen as an intrinsic limitation, an ‘unfortunate’ but unavoidable consequence of inhabiting a disabled body.” (Rembis, 2009, p. 51)
- “Ableism refers to a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human.” (Bogart & Dunn, 2019, p. 651)

Myths/Ideas of Ableism:

1) Life:

- a) Brave and Courageous
- b) People with disabilities are more comfortable with "their own kind."
- c) The lives of people with disabilities are totally different than the lives of people without disabilities.

- d) Overcoming or Compensating
- e) People with disability have a very different lifestyle and they cannot adjust anywhere apart from their own home

2) Wheelchairs/Mobility Devices

- a) All persons who use wheelchairs are chronically ill or sick.
- b) Wheelchair use is confining; people who use wheelchairs are "wheelchair-bound."
- c) Disabled people must feel confined by their orthotics, mobility devices or wheelchair

3) In relation to others

- a) Non-disabled people are obligated to "take care of" people with disabilities.
- b) Curious children should never ask people about their disabilities.
- c) There is nothing one person can do to help eliminate the barriers confronting people with disabilities.

4) Sexuality

- a) Most people with disabilities cannot have sexual relationships.
- b) People with disabilities are asexual.
- c) People with disabilities have more important things than sex to worry about
- d) People with disabilities don't need sex education
- e) People with disabilities don't get sexually assaulted.
- f) People with disabilities should only marry and have sexual relationships with other people with disabilities.
- g) People with disabilities should not have children.

5) Work

- a) People with disability are best suited to unskilled work
- b) My insurance costs will increase if I hire someone with disability
- c) People with disability are less productive
- d) People with disability will not fit in the workplace

- e) People with a physical disability should not go to college if they will experience discrimination in the job market
- f) Kids with disabilities must be in all special education classrooms and program

6) Disability Perception

- a) Disability as Pathology
- b) Kill-or-Cure
- c) Disability as tragedy Object of Pity and/or Charity
- d) Physical Deformity as Sign of Internal Flaw
- e) Disability Spread/Disability Hierarchy
- f) People who apply and receive disability benefits are lazy
- g) People with disabilities are inspirational and courageous therefore should be praised for whatever they do