

# Knowledge is Empowerment: Bridging the Inclusion Gap Between Athletes and Coaches

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# Learning Objectives

## Objective 1

Define and understand models of disability and how those perceptions influence interaction with the disabled community.

## Objective 2

Understand the concept of unconscious bias, how to recognize it, and how to curb it.

## Objective 3

Coach / athlete power dynamics: understanding and striking a balance between coach knowledge and athlete expertise via their own lived experience as a disabled person

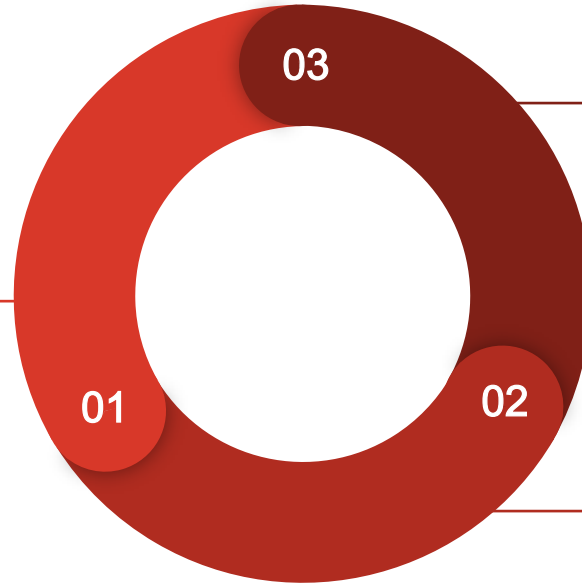
# Questions to ponder...

- When you think of the athletes you coach, do you see them as adaptive athletes or athletes?
- When a new athlete comes to your program, what do you first ask yourself?
- How do you talk about your athlete or programs to folks outside of the adaptive sport community?

# Models of Disability



**Medical /  
Charity Model  
of Disability**



**Biopsychosocial  
Model of  
Disability**

**Social Model  
of Disability**

# Medical / Charity Model

- Disability is the attribute of the person
- Disability needs to be fixed or cured
- Professionals know best
- People need help

# Social Model

- Disability is an attribute of **society**
  - Secondary to the social, legislative, and attitudinal environment in which the person lives
- Disability is a natural part of life
- PWD are their own best advocates
- Emphasis on inclusion and integration

# Biopsychosocial Model

- Disability is a result of three **contributing factors** , medically, socially, and personally
- Bio = pathology / diagnosis
- Psycho = thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, like distress, fear or avoidance, and coping methods
- Social = socioeconomic and cultural factors, like finances, family circumstances, and access to resources
- Must address all three areas to improve disabled experience



# Unconscious Bias



# Unconscious Bias

- Describes the associations we hold outside of our conscious awareness and control
- Includes various stereotypes and judgements that people unknowingly assign to others based on a variety of factors, like their age, socioeconomic status, weight, gender, race, sexual orientation, or ability
- REMEMBER: all of us are susceptible to bias even if we hold a minority identity
- How we think about people directly impacts how we treat them

# Recognizing Your Biases

- Online testing resources
- Introspection and self awareness
  - Consider your lived experience and how that shapes your thinking patterns
  - Identify your own stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination

# Addressing Unconscious Bias

- Learn about the varying types of unconscious bias
- Self reflect on your own biases and assumptions
- Engage with people who aren't like you
  - Avoid the affinity bias
- Be intentional and proactive in inclusion efforts
- Practice mindfulness by recognizing the thoughts and associations you have toward people with different characteristics or identities

# A Focus on Disability

# Framing Disability: Language

## Avoid Saying...

- Wheelchair bound / confined to a wheelchair
- Differently abled / handicapped

## Instead Say...

- Wheelchair user / uses a wheelchair
- Disabled / adaptive

Language can be environmental

# Framing Disability: Language

## Person-First

- “A person with a disability”
- Separates the person from their disability
- Recognizes that someone is more than their disability

## Identity -First

- “A disabled person”
- Recognizes disability as an identity category as something that is embraced
- Under the premise that disability is nothing to be ashamed of

Important to remember that identity is individualized

# Disability Identity is a Spectrum

- Comfort with disability identity is fluid
  - Disability can be acquired at any age
  - People can identify with certain aspects of a diagnosis, but not others
- Situational identity is common
- Never disclose a person's disability without their permission



# The Coach and Athlete Dynamic

# Coach

- Typically has control
- Directive
- Expert in sport / adaptations

# Athlete

- Seeking
- Follower
- Expert in lived experience / needs\*

# Self Advocacy in Sport

- Athletes are experts in their own lived experience and needs pertaining to disability
- Coaches are experts in their sport and its procedures / adaptations

## How do we bridge the gap?

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Confidence building
- Asking questions

What questions do  
you have?