Are We Disabled “Enough”?
The Journey of Naming Intersecting Identities in Ourselves as Disability Professionals

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We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects... 

Access and Inclusion  
and  
Civility and Respect  

...this week and in all aspects of our organization.
Focus of Presentation

• Professionals with non-apparent disabilities
• Complexity of multiple identities, including disability, race, gender, and sexual orientation
• Establishing methods of self-disclosure as it relates to non-apparent disabilities
• Structuring a balance between what is “too private” and what can be beneficial to disclose
• Moving from a counseling perspective to a more inclusive identification model
• Explore our various identities and how they will shape who we are as disability professionals
Let’s visualize this…

• A student that has experienced racism?
• A student that has experienced homophobia, transphobia, etc.?
• A student that has experienced gender bias?
• A student that has experienced poverty?
• A student that has had COVID?
• A student athlete?
• A student that has experienced ability bias?
• What do they look like? Do you have their pictures in your mind?
Now Answer this…

• How would you identify yourself? By gender, race, religion, sexuality……?

• Did the image change? Did your perception change?

• What does it mean to have intersecting identities?

• Do you honor all levels of disclosure?

• What about for yourself?
Do Identities require a “with”? 

- Student WITH a disability – Do they have something? Can they infect me with it? Can we cure whatever they have? Can we “help” them to overcome?

- Do you use person first language or identity first language? Is this related to power? 
  - Sally is a student with dyslexia. John is with autism and ADHD.
  - Sally is also with gay, Afro-American background and John is also with the indigenous peoples.

- Does this language other? Is this how you would refer to a student? 
  - Disabled students are Autistic Students, ADHD students, that identify as disabled, white, catholic, etc.

- Are we measuring disability identity in the same way we do other identities? 
  - Karen is half white and half black – how does she identify? Did she click both boxes?

- Do we change the language we use to identify ourselves?
If you know the story, would you create the narrative? Would they “qualify” for accommodations? How does the counseling/social work/disability specialist perspective lead the conversation?

- First generation college student
- Full Financial Aide Student
- Works (3) three jobs
- Father in Federal Prison
- Parents Divorced, Single Family Household
- Significant Family Trauma (Drugs, Addiction, Violence, Sexual/Physical/Emotional Abuse)
- Caucasian, Italian, Raised Catholic
- Lesbian/Queer

- Child Protective Services mandated psychological intervention
- History and Diagnosis of Anxiety, Major Depressive Disorder, Panic Disorder, PTSD, Child Reactive Trauma Response, Suicidal ideation/attempt
- Blood Disorder, Major Gynecologic Surgeries, Laminentomy – Spinal Surgery
- How does she identify? Which programs does she qualify for?
- **Does she have a Disability?**
Vivian’s Journey
Privileges

• Is there privilege in non-apparent disabilities?
• Are we “hiding” behind our invisibility?
• Do we need to “come out”? 
The Collaborative Interactive Intake Process

“The Burden of Proof”

• A Disabled student must self-identify and self-report – Do WE?????
• Do we seek accommodations from our Human Resources Departments? – What does this look like at your institution? Do you fear the process for yourself?
• Do we tend to shift our thoughts as professionals to maintain compliance?
• Am I not otherwise qualified? – Major life activity?
• Student has the right to NOT divulge personal information to their professors. Do we have the right to Not disclose to our students?
• How many other groups have to provide proof?
• Do you ask them to verify their blackness, their faith in religion, which economic category they fit into in each interaction?
Do our students believe that we are/can be disabled?
Do our families believe that we are disabled?
Do our colleagues? If they do, is this a negative?
Do you allow yourself to add the identifier to your narrative? Is there space at your institution to do so?
Questions, Comments, Feelings???

Please reach out – Maria Schiano

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Session Evaluation

Please point your phone at this QR code, or go to:
tinyurl.com/AHEADeval

Your feedback helps shape future programming.
Thank you for attending!