

Resources on Disability and Ableism

For everyone — disabled and non-disabled alike.

The East Bay Meditation Center invites all community members to actively participate in creating a welcoming, inclusive environment through our **Radical Inclusivity** practice.

Society's ableist structures often render disabled people invisible while assuming non-disabled status as the default. Creating genuine accessibility requires intentional, ongoing effort. These resources aim to raise awareness and support meaningful behavioral change regarding disability inclusion.

Tips for creating access in our community

Accessibility practices should be consistently maintained rather than implemented only when disabled people are visibly present. For example, aisles must always remain clear, not just when wheelchair users arrive; microphones should always be used to ensure everyone can hear without special requests.

Please:

- Keep all aisles and access routes free of obstruction
- Always attend EBMC completely fragrance-free, including laundry detergent, shampoo, soap, conditioner, styling products, deodorants, and personal care items
- Always use the microphone, even if you have a loud voice
- Ask about access needs, not about someone's disability
- Remember that the disability community encompasses diverse life circumstances and intersectional identities
- Be patient if you have difficulty understanding someone's speech; request polite repetition to build trust
- Ask before helping someone access stressless lounge chairs or assisting with chairs

Refrain from:

- Touching or petting service animals
- Offering assistance without being asked
- Using devaluing language like "cripple," "crazy," "nuts," or "wacko" (though some disabled people have reclaimed such terms for self-description)
- Asking questions about someone's body, assistive devices, or specific behaviors
- Offering unsolicited advice about dietary, exercise, herbal, medical, therapeutic, or spiritual interventions for disability, energy, mental health, sleep, or pain management — unless explicitly requested

- Telling disabled people about acquaintances with similar disabilities

These practices are adapted from [SURJ's Disability Home Manners](#). Additional information is available through the [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) regarding workplace accommodations and ADA compliance.

What is ableism?

Ableism is "a system of oppression that favors able-bodiedness at any cost, frequently at the expense of people with disabilities," touching every aspect of life, according to disability justice scholar Stacey Milbern.

- [Ableism is the Bane of My Motherfuckin' Existence](#) — Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern (4:44)
- [I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much](#) — Stella Young (9:03)
- [Not all disabilities are visible](#) — The Horizontals (11:18)
- [My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does](#) — Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern (5:08)

Milbern distinguishes impairment (physical or neurological manifestation) from disability (societal barriers created because of impairment). Kay Ulanday Barrett emphasizes that "passively accepting the status quo of normalcy of able-bodiedness means you reap benefits of ableism," and that this exclusion causes communities to lose necessary expertise and vibrancy.

- [Some of Us Cannot Wait & See: 5 Thoughts on Undoing Ableism & Isolation In Your Community Spaces](#) — Kay Ulanday Barrett (6–11 min)

How might I be harming disabled people without realizing it?

Unintentional harm often stems from assumptions about disabled people's needs.

- [Seven things you should stop saying and doing to disabled people](#) — The Guardian (3–6 min)
- [6 Backhanded 'Compliments' That Mentally Ill People Are Tired Of](#) — Sam Dylan Finch (8–17 min)
- [What You're Saying When You Say "I Don't Need a Mic"](#) — Erika A. Hewitt (3–6 min)

Mia Mingus writes about "liberatory access," which "demands that the responsibility for access shifts from being an individual responsibility to a collective responsibility," in [Access Intimacy, Interdependence and Disability Justice](#) (16–32 min).

Can disabled people be ableist?

Yes. Disability community members can internalize and perpetuate ableist hierarchies.

- [Another View of Ableism](#) — s.e. smith (4–8 min)

- [Pyjama Girl and the Disability Hierarchy](#) — Liz Main (3–7 min)

What is a better way?

- [Disability Etiquette](#) — United Spinal Association (20–40 min)
- [10 Ways to Avoid Everyday Ableism](#) — Erin Tatum (5–11 min)
- [4 Ways to Be An Ally To People With Invisible Disabilities](#) — Sarah Whitestone (5–10 min)
- [How to be an Ally to Disabled & Neurodiverse Folks in Activist & Academic Communities](#) — Access Culture (4–8 min)
- [4 Texts that Get It Right About Invisible Disabilities](#) — Linda Williams, PhD, and Monica Slabaugh (2–3 min)
- Widening Our Circle: Being an Ally to People with Chronic Illnesses — Diana Lion (11–21 min), available as a separate document
- [Fragrance Free Femme of Colour Realness](#) — Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (13–26 min)

How is disability justice different from disability rights?

Disability justice moves beyond the "myth of independence," seeking instead "an interdependence that embraces need" rather than fighting for individual independence alone.

- [Changing the Framework: Disability Justice](#) — Mia Mingus (5–9 min)
- [Disability Justice — a working draft by Patty Berne](#) (8–17 min) — describes how disability justice emerged in 2005 to address intersectional oppression and centered the experiences of disabled people of color, queer disabled people, trans disabled people, incarcerated disabled people, and other marginalized communities
- [Creating Freedom Movements Disability Justice Resource Directory](#)

Where can I learn more?

- [Ableism/Language](#) — Lydia X. Z. Brown (15–29 min)
- [Neurodiversity and Disability Justice](#) — video of Lydia X. Z. Brown (1:18:00)
- [Disability Justice](#) — POC Online Classroom (3–5 min)
- [Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) — workplace accommodations and ADA information

For people with chronic pain

- Books, free PDFs, and YouTube videos by Shinzen Young — search "Shinzen Young pain"

- [Health Journeys guided imagery for pain relief](#)
- EBMC's Every Body Every Mind Sangha (Sunday evenings, 6–7:30 pm Pacific via Zoom) — designed for people with disabilities, chronic pain, chronic illness, or limitations; participants may lie down. [Information and Zoom link](#)
- [Darlene Cohen's books and resources](#), including *Turning Suffering Inside Out: A Zen Approach to Living with Physical and Emotional Pain*
- Tara Brach's [R.A.I.N. of Compassion resources](#) — search her site for "chronic pain"
- *Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief: Guided Practices for Reclaiming Your Body and Your Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn

A shareable PDF of chronic pain resources is available as a separate document.

Questions and comments are welcome at Radical.Inclusivity@eastbaymeditation.org

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Originally published at <https://eastbaymeditation.org/about/radical-inclusivity/resources-on-disability-and-ableism/>