

Disability 101

Time: 20-30 mins

Lesson Guide: This lesson builds on the concept of disability as a form of human diversity by presenting students with some basic facts about disability that will help them begin to understand it better. It's important to emphasize as much as possible how typical, expected, and natural disability is. There's nothing tragic, scary, or unusual about it.

Materials: [Disability Definition Infographic](#), [Disability Definition Anchor Chart](#), [Images Handout](#), [Disability Resource Guide](#)

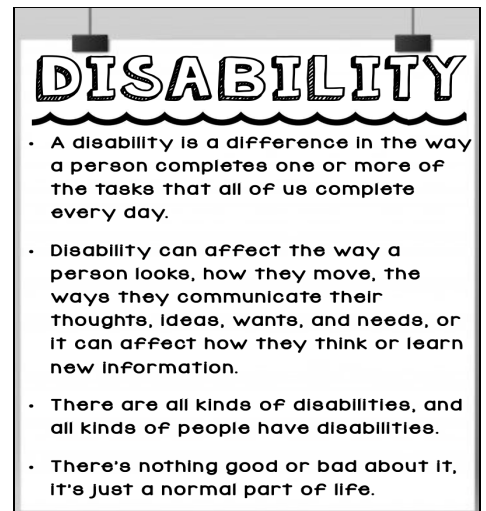
Advanced Preparation: Print or project the [Images Handout](#) so it is visible to all students.

Alignment to ISBE SEL Standards: 2B.2a Identify differences among and contributions of various social and cultural groups.

Explain to students that there are many different forms of human diversity, or aspects of who we are that may be similar and different. Race, gender expression, and religion are all forms of human diversity. Disability is also a form of human diversity that many people experience.



Gather students together so you can share information first. Start by presenting a definition of disability, posting a Disability Definition poster as you do (consider using the [poster infographic](#) or poster with text to the right). Say, "A disability is a difference in the way a person completes one or more of the tasks that all of us complete every day. Disability can affect the way a person looks, how they move, the ways they communicate their thoughts, ideas, wants, and needs, or it can affect how they think or learn new information. There are all kinds of disabilities, and all kinds of people have disabilities. There's nothing good or bad about it, it's just a normal part of life."



Explain that there's nothing extraordinary, strange, unusual, or problematic about disability. Disability shouldn't make us happy or sad. It's just a part of life that we can expect to see, and one that everyone should learn about. Explain that learning about disability will help us grow as includers, because we will know more about how some people live and experience the world, which helps us build our empathy. Reference the [Disability Resource Guide](#) for more information about disability and ideas for sharing with students.

Transition students to working on an activity. Draw students' attention to the [Images Handout](#), saying "There are four different pictures on these sheets, each labeled one to four. I'm going to share four different things about disability with you. As I do, I want you to listen carefully and try to decide which picture matches the facts I'm telling you. When I finish sharing, you'll hold up your fingers with the number of the picture that you think matches best."

Read the following paragraphs to students, one at a time. After you read it, pause and give students a chance to point to the image they think matches the information you shared. Read the information a second time if needed. Then have students vote which image they think is the best fit by holding up their fingers. After students have voted, share the picture description to explain the connection. Be sure to give students time to process after each picture, answering any questions that may arise. If you're not sure how to answer a question, that's ok! Tell students you'll get back to them with an answer, and work either with special education staff in your school or TNP's Inclusion Specialist¹ for assistance.

Disability Facts:

1. Many people have disabilities! You might be thinking, I don't know many people with disabilities! But you might know more people than you think. Sometimes people have a disability that you can notice with your eyes, like when they use special equipment like a wheelchair. But other times, people have a disability that we can't see. Those are invisible disabilities, and they might affect the way a person learns or feels in certain situations. The important thing to know is that 1 in 5 people on Earth have a disability. That's 20% of people! Another way to think about it is if you had 100 people in a room, 20 of them would be likely to have a disability. Remember, disability isn't bad or good, it's just one way to be.

Correct Image = #4 **Image Description:** *What you see in this picture represents how many people have disabilities. There are 100 people on this page. Did you notice that 20 of them are a different color? Lots of people have disabilities!*

2. Disability is different for everyone. Some people are born with a disability and others get their disability after they are born. Sometimes people have a disability for a short time, and others have it for their whole lives. Remember, disability isn't something to be afraid of or worry about, it's just a normal part of many people's lives.

Correct Image = #1 **Image Description:** *In this picture, we can see a person wearing a cast on their foot next to a person who has a limb difference. The person with the cast on their foot might only have a disability for a short time. The person with the limb difference will live with their disability their whole life. One isn't better or worse than the other, and both are normal!*

3. Disability can impact anyone, so people with disabilities are a very diverse group. To have or get a disability, you can be old or young, rich or poor. You can have any gender, race, or religion. Disability is a part of life for many people.

¹ Contact Dr. Janie Avant, TNP Inclusion Specialist, at janie@thenoraproject.ngo

Correct Image = #2 Image Description: *This picture shows a group of people that are different ages, races, and genders. All of them have a disability, and every disability is different! That's because everyone experiences disability in their own way.*

4. People with disabilities are proud of who they are. Remember when we talked about diversity being made up of all the different identity parts we have? The things that make us different and make us who we are? Many people with disabilities count their disability as a thing that they are proud of. It's something that shapes who they are and how they experience the world. There are even special events around the world to celebrate disability pride!

Correct Image = #3 Image Description: *This is a picture of the Disability Pride flag. That's right! The disability community has a special flag, just like the LGBTQ community, to celebrate how they feel about disability as a part of what makes them who they are. Disability is something that we can celebrate!*

Ideas for Modifications or Extension:

Modifications:

- To create a more kinesthetic experience, you can post the images around the room and have students move to the corner of the room with the image that they think matches the information you share.

Extensions:

- If students are curious about disability and you'd like to provide them additional ways to learn more in between lessons, TNP has assembled a list of [picture books](#) that you can utilize to spark conversations or provide information about disability broadly and about specific disabilities.