Leaning into Discomfort: Making Mistakes and the Social Model of Disability

Presented by Sarah Napoli

Video Transcript

- [Sarah] You are here for "Leaning into Discomfort: Making Mistakes," which is my favorite thing to talk about when we talk about disability and the social model of disability. Thank you, Rebecca, for your generous intro. My name is Sarah Napoli, and I'm coming to you, like I said, from Edgewater, New Jersey. I'm currently in transition.

So if you were at my last session, I originally was working at Open Society Foundations within their people and culture diversity equity inclusion team as a disability inclusion project lead. That is a mouthful. I am now moving to the Disability and Philanthropy Forum, which supports... It's a philanthropy-serving organization that supports 70-plus organizations who have signed onto the disability inclusion pledge.

I know that in my resources I put a lot of the forum's website on there because they offer so many great things that's you don't have to be a member to view. So I think that's just a wonderful resource, but I'm going to become their learning services director. So I'll be putting together content like this full-time, which is very exciting and doing a lot more presenting and traveling around to all these different partner organizations. So I'm really excited for the transition.

I'm glad I get to share some of this material with you now. So we're going to start with some guidelines for conversation. Obviously, whenever you talk about anything related to diversity, equity, inclusion, sometimes people can have a lot of feelings or emotions. And so I just like to put some guidelines out there to get us started. Please be respectful of each other's thoughts, ideas, and emotions.

We're here to have a dialogue, a conversation. We're not here to have an argument. There's plenty of that going around in the world. So let's try to practice dialogue, not debate. Try to be fully present. It sounds like a lot of you probably were at an event earlier. So it might be a long day on camera or off-camera, but in the virtual space.

So I totally understand. Please take care of yourself. Do what you need to, to get what you need, water. I have tea in front of me. If you need to get up, move around. Make sure that your access needs are being met. I know sometimes for myself, I have a hard time sitting still for a very long time.

So please, if you want to stay on camera and get up and move around, if you want to grab your cat. I have a new animal in my room right now. So if animals and children or partners fly into the screen, they are welcome. Please just do what you need to do to attend. It may be uncomfortable. The title is "Leaning into Discomfort."

So it might be a little uncomfortable to talk about things that, in a way, that might be new, or different than what you're used to talking about. So just be okay with that uncomfortableness for today. This is a brave space. We're here to learn together. I encourage you to challenge any preconceived ideas and thoughts, especially around the language of disability. I identify as a proud disabled person.

And those terminologies are very important to me. So we're going to talk a little more about that today. And finally, most importantly, keep calm. It's just a disability. So please, we're here to have the conversation that maybe isn't as... It may be a taboo, and considered a little bit uncomfortable. But I want you to take a deep breath and be calm because it's just a disability.

So the objectives of today, people will be able to...that's what the PWBAT stands for, understand the importance of celebrating disability as an aspect of diversity. So that in itself may be a new concept. For me, it's super important that we look at disability as part of our diverse identities. And so we're going to look at that a little bit more today, looking at the social model or the human rights lens of disability.

We're going to talk about the differences between definitions under something like the ADA and looking at the convention of Persons with Disabilities and how those are different, how they're similar. And just learn about some small changes that you can make potentially in your organization that may create more disability inclusion from that social, more proactive model. So we're going to dive in, in a few minutes to what is a disability.

Why does this dialogue even matter? Why does it matter especially now? So talking a little bit about how COVID and the pandemic has allowed us to really come to this moment in a more expedited fashion, expedited that it should have been happening decades ago, right, but that we're finally in the last few years having more substantial conversations, specifically about what is the social model, and then, also, the intersections of disability with other aspects of our identity.

We're going to watch some videos today. I'm going to talk a little bit, if we have time, with what we accomplished at Open Society Foundations as an example of ways that you could implement the social model of disability into your organization. And then, obviously, as always, I will give out some further resources at the end probably in a follow-up and allow for some time for Q&A. So during the presentation, if you have questions, please feel free to drop them in the chat.

And depending on where we are, I'll either put it in a parking lot for the end of the conversation or if I feel like I can answer it in the moment, I will. So please don't be shy about that. I ask to only use the chat for when prompted or for questions because it can be a little distracting to try to read the chat and follow along with the presentation at the same time.

But Rebecca has offered to kindly help me moderate the chat because I can't see it currently. And so we'll get started. Okay. I'm going to really go through this very quickly because I wanted to talk about why it's important that we have these conversations now. I usually have some iteration of this slide at every session I do because I think it's really important that we acknowledge that we are all multicultural beings, right?

So the word multicultural gets thrown around a lot. A lot of times, people frame it in terminology only about race and ethnicity. But if you think about all the different layers of your identity and how it has shown up in spaces, whether that be race, ethnicity or whether that be economics background, whether it be education, your religious affiliations, disability, all these aspects of yourself make you a multicultural being, right, and allow us to have similarities and differences with the people around us.

So because of that, we are constantly having those intercultural experiences and conflict, right? So I'm hoping that the main goal of sessions like this are that we kind of take time for self-reflection. It's not a lot about this is just one thing that you need to learn about, and then you'll understand it. It's more about how do you personally understand these things and why is it that you think the way you do about these things so that you can move towards some type of competency.

But because culture is constantly shifting and changing, and one example is the use of the language of disability, right? So a lot of people, especially over the last 30 years, really since the disability rights movement that kicked off really substantially in the '70s, the use of the word "disabled" and reclaiming some of this language has been really important, right, so much so that some people do not appreciate being called a person with a disability.

They appreciate being called a disabled person, right? And it depends on the person. So because of that, it's really important to constantly kind of update yourself and either attend sessions like this or I currently have a great reading list that I've been exploring. "The Future is Disabled" is one of the best books I've read in the last decade. "The Year of the Tiger" by Alice Long.

"Black Disability Politics" is a new one that I haven't dived into yet, or things that are a little more general like looking at "Demystifying Disability" by Emily Ladau, which she really gives you some really good background information on how that culture is changing and shifting, along with the history of the language. So that's why I just think it's super important.

And I'm really happy you're all here today because there's also the organizations that you all work in. Once I am able to go back and look at the chat, I can get a better idea of where you all are. But obviously, there's always those privilege and power dynamics within organizations. And so you really have to think critically, especially if you're someone that doesn't identify as having a disability, but then you work with folks with disabilities, how does that change those dynamics and how you experience difference.

So sit back, relax. It's a life-long process. I've been doing trainings like this for over 20 years, and I really don't feel like I have arrived. I don't feel like I have reached enlightenment. So I'm part of this learning journey with you all as well. And really, the COVID factor, right, the fact that we are still in a pandemic.

It has not been officially declared over. There's a lot of people that are still taking heavy precautions in this world and in this space that has kind of moved on. I was traveling recently, and no one in the airport's wearing a mask, and no one on the plane's wearing a mask. And people with immunocompromising conditions still have to move in these spaces.

So what can we learn that we can sort of embed in our organizations now? One example I've noticed is I'm going to be presenting a lot, and there's not virtual options anymore in some cases, or if they're virtual, it's only one or two parts of the event is being streamed live but it's not really a proper multi-access experience for people that can't come in person. So it's interesting how we have moved on so quickly.

And so I think that's something we have to think about. All right. So the Zoom poll is a little bit of a lie. I'm not going to use Zoom poll. Instead, I want to see all of you if you're on screen. Awesome. So I'm just curious.

I'm going to open up the dialogue just really raw and jump into it. And then, I'm going to share some definitions with you that I find useful. But what is a disability? What am I even talking about here? I need to have a general idea of how you all define it. And remember, be brave. This does not have to be the textbook definition.

It also doesn't have to be correct. So feel free to come off mute or just drop something in the chat. What is a disability? Anyone going to be brave and jump in? Oh, I see typing.

Very exciting. There are no wrong answers. Something that keeps you from being able to do a basic life function.

Basic life function is key. That's very legal language how it's defined or exists on the spectrum of living. Disability is a condition that may cause impairment or present challenges that most may not face.

I think the latest data, although that probably changed... Go ahead if somebody's going to say something. Oh, no. Okay. I think that may have changed but one in three or one in four people live with what would be considered a disability under the ADA.

I would imagine that has changed a lot through COVID. I think there were probably a lot more people that maybe don't realize that they're living with a disability under what the law would consider a disability. Prevents access to activities of living in the community. That's a big one.

Prevents access. A big conversation within the disabled community is access and why is there not access, right, because we live in an abled space. That's my new word for able-bodied is abled. I appreciate that. I think it's more accurate. Intellectual, physical, and sensory conditions impeding every-day activities. Awesome.

And psychosocial, right? There's so many cognitive, developmental, yeah. So many different ways that you can layer that definition. Okay. I'm going to mix it up a little bit here. So then, what's the difference between disabled and a person with a disability? I kind of already talked about this.

But I'm just curious what you may think the difference is. Is there a difference? You're typing. The little bubbles are so exciting. Yes. People-first language. Yeah, people-first language is very popular, especially in the U.S., because people don't want to be identified as just one thing, right?

So it's like that's the, yeah, a person that's defined by their disability first. Right. That's usually the case, right, why people use person-first language. What about disabled? What's the difference? No one wants to touch that one, huh?

- [Woman] Hi, Ron.

- [Ron] Hello. How are you?

- Good.

- If you're not speaking, could you please mute your microphone, or actually, Rebecca, you may have the power to do that. Sorry, I'm reading your comment, Gina Marie. Service providers.

Gina Marie, if you don't mind, do you mind coming off mute and just...? I'm not sure I understand your question. Maybe help me understand it a little bit better.

- [Gina Marie] May you repeat your question because you said two words? Can you repeat it, please?

- Yeah. I said, well, my original question was, what is a disability? And then the second question was, what is the difference between disabled and person with a disability? And people have been responding a little bit to the person-first language. So I was wondering what the difference in saying disabled is or what does that mean.

- See, this is where... Okay. I responded the way I did because I'm confused with the question because the people, the resources in place... I'll call them resources, in place, they use that question that you put either the or, what be what as the same thing.

So through the resource to provide us function-level quality of life, then I'm confused with the question. Did I explain it propers?

- Yeah. What the answer really is, is that it's a bit of a trick question, right? So a disabled person is the same as a person with disability. But for some reason, culturally, especially in the U.S., I feel like, and I don't see it as much in...because I've done a lot of global work around disability. And I feel like the use of the terminology of disabled person is actually quite prominent, especially in activist spaces, people that are advocating for disabled access and rights and justice, inclusion, tend to use disabled language.

But for some reason in the U.S., it's almost seen as a little bit of a bad word. You don't say, "Disabled person," that it could be a little bit condescending or wrong. But people who identify that way find it quite empowering. And that's also because I'm going to talk a little bit in a minute about the social model of disability, which, again, if you're living your life from the social model of disability perspective, identifying as a disabled is a powerful statement because what you're saying is that society is disabling.

And you want to call out the power structures. So there is really no difference. And also, depending on the organization who is providing services or resources, they may use disabled or people with disabilities interchangeably. But I think the rule of thumb is, or the way you should move forward, is that whatever the person, however they describe themselves, is how you should describe them.

I think sometimes we tend to... I think I had shared this story at the last session I did that I had said I was disabled to someone, and they corrected me. They said, "No, no, no. You're a person with a disability." And I found that very offensive because I was like, "No, actually I love this label. This is how I'm presenting myself." And so I think sometimes though as service providers and people that hold the resources, sometimes they want to reclaim the language.

And I think it's the community that should be laying claim to how they wish to be identified.

- Thank you, Miss Sarah. I have a question.

- Sure. Please, yeah. Great.

- Before the COVIDs come, I used to try to work the best I could. And one of my...well, okay, my direct supervisor was a person of color. They were from Puerto Rico. So they identified as being Puerto Ricans. And that person would forever tell me, "You can't leave with the disableds."

But that my person was constantly saying, "They push back because I'm Puerto Rican, because I'm a person of color, this, that." So it kind of ties into everything you just being said to us with the platform. And it's very confused for me when there's a push for certain levels of society to be able to lead proud with that.

But when I say like, "I'm a person that just happens to be on the spectrum," it's like, "Oh, no, you can't do that." And then you have people that are, I call them double-triple threats. If you're a person of a certain age and then you're a veteran and then you have disableds, you're that triple, quadruple threat thing. So is that what...?

Okay, I'm going to shut up again because I don't want to take your time. But yeah, you hit the nail on the head with why it's viewed kind of like a dirty word. I appreciate that. Thank you.

- Yeah, and I think I'm really excited. I felt like I put you in place to say those things because you're almost like a coming attraction for what I'm going to talk about in a few minutes. So thank you because I'm going to talk about how... The triple threat is interesting, right, because I think we have this symbol, especially in disability rights, which again, disability rights, disability inclusion, disability justice are three very unique, separate entities and movements, right, especially disability justice being a predominantly queer, LGBT, folks of color space, talking about the intersections of law, these different forms of oppression, the systems of oppression, and how they're fighting for justice and equity in their communities, right?

That is a very unique movement. The disability rights movement, which brought us ADA and still works as an advocate for us in all levels of government, has a very white image, right, white folks potentially only with physical disabilities or using wheelchairs. And that's an image of what a disabled or a person with disability is, right?

And so what does that mean for people that live at the intersections of all these other identifies? I'm a person of color. I'm LGBT. Like you said, maybe they're working class, or you're a woman. All these different intersections, is it going to change how you experience your disability, and especially culturally.

So I think something else you hit at, Gina Marie, is that culturally, identifying the disability is going to be very interesting because it's going to... There's a lot of context and content to what you bring to the table in that community. And I think I'm coming off of a much more global space. I'm going to be working more predominantly in the U.S. in the coming years.

But that was very difficult, talking about a disability in places like Puerto Rico or in different countries in Latin America, in Asia, and on the African continent. The way that people describe their disabilities is going to have that context. You need that context. But yeah, I'm going to share some definitions with you all. I'm going to just see if I can do this correctly on my...yep, got it.

Okay. Let's share my screen. Here we go. So yeah, some of you use the language of the ADA, right? I love that I'm talking to a group of people that are here in the U.S. Whenever I talk about this stuff on a global network, it's difficult because everyone region or country's going to have their own definitions and interpretations of what a disability is.

But the language, the legal and really medical language of disability talks about impairments, right? It talks about limitations. Somebody said this like, "Limits one of your major life activities," right? So sleeping, eating, walking, being able to work, that kind of thing. Something is limiting.

And so there's a law that, obviously, protects individuals who have a disability. And then, there's the regular definition, and somebody used these terms too. Physical, mental, cognitive, developmental condition. And, again, the language of impairment is used. Limitation is used. So what is interesting about those definitions is how it contradicts with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This was ratified in 2008. It was the fastest-ratified convention in the history of the UN. Very interesting that the U.S. has not signed the final iteration of this convention, which means that they don't really follow what's sort of been laid out as really a working sort of litmus test, a test of what you can achieve and what should be seen as the standards, because this is changing the way that we look at disability.

The idea is that changed attitudes and approaches, this idea that it views people as moving away from looking at people as objects of charity, medical treatment, and social protection, but instead, looking at people who are subjects with rights who are capable of claiming those rights. And I know that this convention has been really successful in places in Latin America, especially in Peru and Ecuador, which has approved the convention, ratified the convention and signed it.

But they've been able to...for folks who have intellectual or different psychosocial disabilities allowing them to claim on their lives again and giving them the ability to make decisions about their care and where they want to live and how they want to live their life. So it really has been successful in parts of the world that has ratified the documents. But it changes the way that we think about disability in such an amazing and progressive and I don't really like using the word radical because what is radical should be just a basic human right.

But it is sort of moving away from what the ADA or standard sort of definitions of disability are. And so if we look at this further, I'm going to share my slides again. And then, I am going to come back and ask you how are you feeling about the information because it is a lot of information.

But I want to go back. Oh, I did it wrong. I have to go back to my presentation. There it is. All right. Oops. So looking at the two main models of disability, so this is the one that we're probably all very familiar, right, the medical model of disability.

So a person's impairment or condition limits their ability to fully participate. He can't read that newspaper because he's blind, right? That's just one example. The problem is with the person. Professionals provide medical interventions to cure or manage the disability. So, again, it really is an individual issue.

It's not looked at as a systemic issue or a cultural issue or a social issue. The problem is with the person. The person is disabled, more than disabled, more than other members in society. So let's just try to manage it and help that person. In contrast, if you look at the social model, the individual isn't part of the equation. Obviously, they are the ones who bring this situation to this society, but the barriers are in the world around them, right?

So people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their difference or impairment. So the onus is on society for removing those barriers which prevent disabled people from participating. So it really is a very different way to look at disability and why I identify as disabled, right, because I feel like there are aspects of society that have not given me access for a reason that they feel like is not necessary, right, because the majority of society can access this.

So the problem and the onus is on the individual, not on society. So all this might feel a little confusing. So I thought it would be easier to share a video with you that will give you a little more insight into what is the social model of disability. I'm sure for some of you this is not the first time you've heard of this definition. But I do think this video is really great and gives us some really good insight.

And then, I'm going to pause and just see, how are you all feeling? So please, be brave after the video and come off mute or use the chat and just say how does it make you feel? What does this information mean to you or what are you thinking about? Okay. And so please let me know if you can't hear the video. I've got my closed captions on.

- [Woman 2] According to the medical model of disability, the word disabled means less able. Less able to achieve your potential, less able to have meaningful relationships, less able to play an active part in the world around you, and that this is just your bad luck.

This outdated view of the world puts the responsibility of overcoming disabling barriers on the person with an impairment, but this idea is changing. The more modern social model of disability says that a person doesn't have a disability, but that they are disabled.

They're disabled by society. It is the attitudes and physical barriers imposed on them by society that prevents them from achieving their potential. The social model was developed by disabled people and their allies to help them take action against discrimination and to empower people to find solutions, remove barriers, and campaign together for equality and human rights.

They showed how people with lots of different impairments face many of the same problems. These disabling barriers include prejudiced opinions and attitudes, restricted access, and people being systematically excluded. The social model looks for the ways that society can be planned and organized in order to provide accessibility, independence, and opportunity in a way that enables people, rather than 'disables' them.

What we learn from the social model of disability is that disability is a social construct created by social barriers, barriers which can be eliminated. We learn that it is the responsibility of government, public spaces, businesses, and individual people to make the changes to increase the access and build a more equal society where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

- All right. My cat is so vocal. I think he's learning a lot today. So apologies for the background muse. Yeah. So what are people thinking about? Is this new information?

Is it old information? Is it landing with any of you in a different way? Is it interesting, intriguing, difficult, all those things? I'm just curious to hear what you're feeling or what you're thinking about after all that information. You can use the chat. You don't have to talk. And hopefully, the chat is easier.

- While we're waiting, I'll start. I've been thinking a lot about how in the medical model, it seems like a lot of people are expected to come to middle of their potential rather than full potential, that there's an idea of what is enough of how people are functioning in the world.

And I think that what I really liked about the video was the focus on reaching the full potential of what a person can do.

- Yeah. We might have time to watch the Stella Young video, but I think she also talks about that a bit, this idea that we should just be, any individual should be afforded access to reach their full potential.

You shouldn't expect less of a person with a disability because they have a disability. And I think she talks a little bit about that in her story about being given an award or I've gotten that too. People are like, "Wow, you've been through so much. You're so extraordinary because you got to work today. Wow." And I'm like, "What about that report I wrote? Wasn't that report excellent?"

I don't want to hear about how I just barely managed to get to work today. Please, expect more from me. So I'm just going to see what's up in the chat here. Society must provide, yeah. Also, and I'll talk about this throughout this session, but I think a lot of times, this idea of accommodations being special are so odd, the idea that we should put in a special system of accommodations.

Accommodations should be for everyone. They should just help everyone work more effectively, right? So this idea of putting a ramp in separate from the stairs, why isn't there just a ramp? This is the kind of stuff that I think is very interesting. I've actually spoken to architects about this and this idea that, well, the aesthetic of the stairs. It's just people are very just stuck in these... that the only way to enter a building is stairs.

And now, we have to create a special access or a special entrance when so many people throughout their life... Yes, universal inclusive design. Throughout their life could become disabled at any moment, like being pregnant, or having surgery, breaking your leg, becoming older. At any moment, people would not want to use stairs.

So it is not a special accommodation, right? Yes, yes, let people with disabilities try going to stairs. Yes, I feel like will always immediately approach disabilities with pity, feeling sorry, surprised that you're able to do very basic functions.

And I always argue that people with disabilities are intensely flexible and adaptable and they're able to create new and interesting ways to do things because the world hasn't been designed for them. I see a hand up but I didn't see the name. Did you see who it was, Rebecca?

- [Adrian] Yeah, this is Adrian. Can you hear me?

- Yeah.

- So I agree with you and I am a big advocate of why the steps and why the ramp. Actually, a disability advocate had contacted me to say, "Well, some people have balance issues and more vestibular issues that that ramp, the steps actually might be better." But I'm all for ramp thing. So for my...in the advocacy that I do particularly in municipalities, it's really about including people with disabilities in the concept and design and of the development of whatever you're developing because then, we're really...

I'm sorry I'm talking so quickly, Allison. It's really been inclusive of all people, not us and them. I went to a restaurant once, and there was a division between the steps and the ramp with a clear divider between the two. It was a glass divider.

- Wow.

- I thought, "Why are we separating? Right from the get-go, we're separating two people."

- And it makes you feel so, like, on view then almost like, "Look at that person over there."

- Right.

- Yeah. It's almost building sort of sorrow in the contraption, in the building. It's just creating that us-them kind of mentality. Thank you for sharing. Yeah. No, I agree. There's no...

I love what you said about the stairs as well. I use stairs to strengthen my knees. I have really bad joint issues. And I can only use stairs a certain way. But they help me build that strength in my body. So I think I would be a bit sad if there were no stairs anywhere either. But I do think that there is just this...

I was trying to more express why is it that we're not thinking about, like you said, having disabled folks at the table part of that process from the get-go. And not just talking about actually physical spaces, right? We're also talking about the way that they operate. The fact that Microsoft Teams is so confusing, and we now know that in this small session today, why aren't we building accessibility from the get-go?

I just got a Mac that I love. And I've been... When I opened it up for the first time and it was like, "What are your accessibility needs?" I don't know if anyone has had a new Mac lately, but that's the second screen when I set up my Mac. And I was so excited about it because I have some vision issues that are associated with my neuro issues. And then, I have the hearing issues.

And it had all these really cool things that you can... It bings and does things and flashes at you for certain things. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh. It's amazing." It's just built in. I didn't have to ask for it. I didn't have to contact. I don't want to tell how great Apple is because it also...

I didn't pay for it. If I had to pay for it, I probably wouldn't have gotten it. So I understand that there are limitations to the access. But why can't we be doing more of that in a way that's affordable and accessible for everyone? I'm just trying to catch up on some of the chat. Oh, Karen, please, go ahead.

Jump in.

- [Karen] So just an example with what you're talking about in terms of universal design being very well-done, there's a restaurant in East Harlem called Contento that was built from the ground up to be accessible. And two of the three owners are wheelchair users as I understand it.

And it's gotten great reviews. I have no stock, but I have been there and I have dined there. And I can put something in the chat, but I don't want to turn it into an ad campaign for any particular. But it's gotten a lot of attention when it opened up in '21 because of the design element. So if that's okay, to share that.

- I would love to see it because I'm always looking for spaces to invite my friends who use wheelchairs. So I would love to have something that's more accessible.

- Okay. So I just threw it in there.

- Awesome.

- But the review was so good that we actually on a trip to the city made a point of dining there so we could actually see if it was good. And it was very good.

- That's good. Right, we want all those things, not just part of a thing. We want everything. The food has to be good.

- I don't want it to be just accessible. I want it to have a good wine list and the food, it's got to be...

- Right.

- ...on par.

- Right. That's a good point. Thank you for all these comments. There's so much amazing things going on here. And I'm sorry I'm not going to comment on everything. But I loved somebody was talking about that they're in a disability studies course. And then, Gina Marie, your comments, as well, just talking about the location of hand sanitizers.

And that's, again, just interesting. Who are making these decisions? You mentioned California, which is one of the... A lot of disabled folks have moved to Northern California because of access and having sort of that history of access and in that community.

And it really is sort of an interesting place to start the conversation and to look at sort of what's happening. A lot of people look to the West to see what's happening. And finally, we get curb cuts in the East as we move along more towards the East Coast. I'm going to run back to my slides. But I am going to show another video soon to go back to. So many steps.

This is a little bit of a refresh, the differences. I think you all sort of get it, it seems like from the comments and the conversation. But, again, just I do think, also, it's a little bit hard for us to maybe work in service providers or a resource providers organization because it is kind of turning this concept on it's head, right?

So those organizations are providing a service. They're providing a resource for disabled folks. But then, all of a sudden, the question gets flipped to, "How can we support society or advocate or lobby different maybe government initiatives or laws and bills so that society can take the onus and start being more responsible for creating the access to being with?"

Because if you provided a lot of access and resources and just made it very universal and limitless, then some of our jobs, we wouldn't have to work, right, because it would just be happening. And we wouldn't have to go through so many barriers and obstacles to get what we need. And talking about barriers, let me get that really quick, we were kind of just talking about this.

So this is, again, the stairs argument, but this idea that, "All these other kids are waiting to use the stairs. When I get through shoveling them off, then I will clear the ramp for you." And then he's like, "But if you shovel the ramp, we can just all get in, right?" This idea that since the ramp is only for that one person or two people when actually it's not, right, depending on the structure of the ramp, correct, making it more accessible for more people at once.

And that's true I think with captions that I'm learning. A lot of people are using captions who maybe don't require it for their particular disability. But a lot of folks these days are using captions for all sorts of reason. So captions are helpful for everyone. And I wish everyone knew ASL.

I wish it was just as common as picking any other language, right? We would just be more inclusive from the get-go. And so I think I'm going to stick on this for a minute before I jump to my intersecting identity questions because I'm curious if, because some of you have already jumped into some of this dialogue.

You've given some great examples. The restaurant example or having more disabled people at the table. But I would be curious if you can think about your own day-to-day, sort of where you work and the spaces that you work and move in. If you were to focus on the social human rights definition, how is that you might be creating disabling environments unintentionally or unconsciously?

And what could you do to improve? So I'm going to just pause there really quick because I think that's a big question. So how are we potentially unintentionally creating disabling environments by just the sheer place of where we work, how people have access to the work you're doing, or even just your day-to-day?

I'm glad somebody else uses the comic. I see some folks typing. Feel free to come off mute, as well.

Yes, expecting instantaneous responses. Yes, that is … Yeah, I have so many things to say about that. But I think setting realistic expectations is good, 24 or 48 hours, depending on what's the nature of the request, right?

Sometimes, you could even have a standard response. "It takes me this long to respond. So expect a response in this many days," or something like that, and for that not to be judged or, "Oh, they're taking too long to respond." Who created these rules? I would say abled or I think also something that people might not think about and that we did at OSF was we created a disability inclusion sort of process within our procurement.

So if anybody was going to work with a vendor or look at a space or software or new tools for work, anything at all, we had part of the procurement vendor questionnaire had embedded disability accessibility questions in the questionnaire, because I can't always expect that the person in charge of the process is going to actually ask the question.

So we just put it in the document. And if the vendor doesn't answer those questions, we just keep asking until they answer them. So then, we prevent this having… For example, the tool we used at work for video calls had no captions when I started. I couldn't believe no one before me needed captions. But that was the case, right?

Now, of course, we live in a post-COVID age, and we have captions suddenly on every platform. But why wasn't that asked before they secured it is the question? Michael, did you want to share? I just noticed that you were off mute.

- [Michael] I'm sorry. I just joined.

- Okay. Hi.

- No, thank you very much. I need to have more information before I share. I'm sorry.

- No worries.

- I'm going to go back on mute. I'm sorry.

- Welcome. Welcome. No worries at all. Yes, architectural changes, wider doorways, adaptive equipment in the kitchen. Yeah, also, in thinking about if you provide food or anything at an event, do you provide it at a level that all people can access it? I think that's another very standard, the food's always high, the table's always high. Yeah, or sometimes when you have a meeting, depending on what your requirements are, I've noticed that sometimes everyone's like, "Please, turn on your cameras. Everyone, turn on your cameras."

That can be very intimidating for a lot of people, and that can be very hard for people. And then, the argument is always, "Well, if we were in person." Well, in person wasn't always accessible, right? I know for me personally I like seeing people's faces when they talk. It helps me understand them because my hearing isn't wonderful. It is wonderful, actually, it's just not good enough for me to hear everything you're saying. So those are very unique, sort of combinations.

But I think that that's just another example of insisting that everyone participate in a certain way. So we're going to keep this conversation going. Oh, I see one more. Acting like unexpected answers to questions mean the person misunderstood when really the way the individual heard the question is also valid.

That is huge, yeah. Yep. Let me… I'm going to just go back to some questions on my slide. No, going back, back, back. So these are some questions I want you to think about when we watch the next video.

So this idea of intersectionality and disability culture. How do various identities inform how we interact with a disabled person? So we talked about this a little bit earlier. We were talking about you have multiple intersecting identities and why it's important to remember…what is important to remember when working with folks with disabilities?

And how does experience differ? I think that actually is a great lead off of the last comment in the chat, this idea that sometimes people are experiencing the world differently. So how can we understand all those different identities and all those different intersections at the same time may lead to understanding the world and moving in the world in a very different way because I think at the end of the day, the most important question is, could there be one right way to handle a difficult situation?

Obviously, the answer is no. But I think sometimes we want a really easy answer like, "Yes, give me the answer so I can write it down and check a box," instead of working in that messy space, which is what we're talking about today, is how this stuff is messy and confusing, and it doesn't always have one right answer. So we're going to watch another just really quick video that talks about intersections of identity by Keri Gray.

And I just think it's a really nice little short video that talks about multiple intersections and why it's important to pay attention to all those things at the same time. And then, we're going to have a little dialogue about it. So I'd be interested, especially on those last couple questions is, what's important to remember when you're working with folks with disabilities, when you're thinking about the intersecting aspects of identity, and also is there one way to handle the situation, and how can we approach these situations with grace and humility and potentially make some mistakes along the way.

There we go. Okay.

- [Keri] My name is Keri Gray. Keri Gray is a black, disabled woman, and there's power behind that.

In the United States, one in four in the black community have some type of disability, whether that's visible or invisible. Historically speaking, organizations and institutions have shown us that they want to identify with one thing and build power around that, build influence and access.

And I get it, right? So this idea that you have disability rights, you have women's rights, you have LGBTQ rights, and those kind of different pockets are really building a strong narrative. But the thing that I find to be harmful is when we're not building in coalition because the reality is, is that you have people like myself, who are black, disabled, and women, and so many other things.

And when you live at the intersections of all three of those, then you can't split your political and social dynamics between these different groups. It doesn't produce real results of freedom, and it doesn't produce real results of access to employment and other opportunities that you're looking for.

I'll give one example on this. So the Black Lives Matter movement. When it was created, it was created in conjunction mostly with a lot of young folks. What was unique about this particular movement was the intersectional philosophy that was built upon it, and the folks getting up and saying, "We are not just fighting for one narrative, but we are specifically fighting for folks who are on the margins. We are fighting for black folks who are also LGBTQ, who are women, who are fem, who are trans, who are disabled."

They named it. They saw their people across the country and said, "I'm fighting for all of you, not just some of you, not jus the ones that have traditionally gained power and access." And that gives me a lot of hope because no one wants to be left behind." - So I highly recommend that series, the Ford Foundation series.

There's a lot of great videos in that series, and I think I've shared the link in the past to all those videos. But that one, I think, is really useful because it gives us… Oh, wait, was that…was the video... Gina Marie, were you unable to see the video?

Oh, no. Was the video on, Rebecca, or did I…? I'll send [crosstalk].

- I was going to say I can send Gina Marie the link in the email because I have her contact information.

- Okay. Cool. Okay. I'm so sorry. I should have checked before that everyone was able to see it. Yeah. Keri Gray is wonderful.

So I recommend anything that she's in to give it a watch because I think she really is talking about these ideas of intersections of identity in a way that not everybody is having those conversations. So I'm curious about this dialogue because, again, going back to what we first talked about with what you think of when you think of disability and what's seen as sort of the standard, especially in the disability rights movement, of usually a white person, usually someone that has a physical disability, and that idea that Keri Gray was talking about of the movement wasn't thinking of just a singular issue.

They were really trying to think of all these different folks and bring them into the fold because a lot of times, people are not able to be part of those conversations and have a seat at the same table because the table wasn't built for them. So what are some thoughts that you have about this, or if you have any experience talking about the…? Yeah, Adrian.

- I watch that video over and over again and then share it. I think it's a fabulous foundation and all of hers, I do like too. I'm very curious on your thoughts about we are individually intersectional, right? So a white disabled person or whatever each of us might be. And we're all of that together, right?

We are each very, very unique in that intersectionality.

- Yes.

- But yet, we hear there is Black History Month, LGBTQ Month, Woman's Month, all of these very categorical things that we're separating. And how can we kind of start...? We do that, I think, to just, in our minds, to categorize these things and celebrate them. But how can we break those barriers down?

Because it really is about all of us, the individual tapestry that each of us has to bring to the table. So I just don't know how. I'm in the DEI world. We're just separating all of these. And how can we better bring them together?

- Yeah. I also just want to pause. I lost the interpreter on my side. Rebecca, is that the ASL interpreter? Is it just me? I just want to make sure that other people can see.

- [Allison] Yeah. I just froze for a little bit. I'm not sure. Maybe there is a bad internet connection, but I am back.

- Okay.

- Thank you.

- I just wanted to make sure. I still can't see you, Allison but...

- She shows as still being spotlighted.

- It says that I'm still spotlighted, yeah.

- Okay. Okay. Great.

- Thanks.

- I just want to make sure before I move forward. Yeah. Yes, that's a great question, Adrian, and I think one that I have tried to dismantle when I have worked in DEI teams because I think there's some joy in having these celebratory months. It allows for conversations and issues to be highlighted and given the time they deserve. But I think the idea is...one of our old standards that we used to, when I worked at Manhattan Vo College in Westchester was, "We could do this, but make it intersectional."

So we would never just talk about a singular identity issue because those don't exist, if you think about it. None of this... I'm actually currently putting together a session on disability and economic justice, right? You can't talk about economic justice without talking about disability. You can't talk about Black History Month without talking about disability.

You can't talk about Women's History Month without talking about disability, right? So it's like we would just be very intentional about ensuring that none of these celebratory months were singular issues, which I think is the right way to do it. But I also think that you can't just talk about these things during those months, right? That was another thing I always pushed back on was how can we make sure we're talking about disability outside of Disability Awareness Month, or how can we make sure that we're talking about black history and black culture outside of February?

Nothing is telling us that we can't do those things. So I know our staff, we took sort of a model that we would honor the month because I think that that's important to do. But then, we also honor it all year long. And so we made sure that we did a disability inclusion week of events during International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which we're acknowledging that this is a great time to bring awareness.

But then, let's make sure we're also talking about it every other month of the year because a lot of folks, and I know disabled, for example, during sort of Disability Employment Awareness Month I think is October. And I remember I always get like, "Oh, please come talk at this event or this event." And then, my biggest message is, "Okay, why didn't you invite me in March or in other parts of the year?

You don't have to only have us come talk to you in October or in December," because it does sort of, I think, tokenize instead of actually embed it into the culture. And I think if you have a DEI strategy at your organization or at your school and it doesn't include disability, then that's a problem.

So I really don't think we can talk about any of these issues without talking about disability. A great intersecting identity question I think. Yeah, the captions are not wonderful. I'm so sorry about that.

Any other thoughts on intersecting identities? Is there one way to have a conversation with someone about a disability? Okay.

No one's responding. So I'm going to take that as maybe we're unsure. So I haven't gotten to my mistakes conversation yet. So we'll go there about making mistakes because I think what happens is because we don't know all the answers, sometimes we freeze, right, or we don't know what to say.

So we don't say anything at all, or we make a mistake, right? So one example being if you see somebody using a wheelchair or maybe another mobility device and they're opening a door, we immediately, if we are able, might run to open that door for that person because we think we know what's best.

They need help. What's another way to potentially approach that?

- "Would you like some assistance with the door?"

- Yes, but people feel so funny. They're like, "Oh, can I can say that? How will they view me if I say that, right?" Easy question, yeah. Sometimes, I think we get really nervous about saying the wrong thing. But when you leave it ambiguous like that, what I'm saying is it's okay to make mistakes.

It's okay to mess up. I think people get a little scared. So it's scary.

- Sarah, can I add something to that? Would you…?

- Yeah, please.

- I think there's also significant cultural differences as you go around the world.

- Oh, my God, yeah.

- And there are some places, I've lived places where there's been a lot of conflict. And there's a lot of people who have been wounded in that society. And people will just say, "What happened to you?" And it's very off-putting if you come from an American experience when we pretend we don't see things. It's just a different platform.

It's just a different way of approaching it because the assumption in that culture is, "We're all part of this same community. I want to know what your story is because we're in the same community," not, "I'm curious about you out of a spectator sort of perspective."

- Right. Right. Yeah. The directiveness that some cultures have around disability can be very, yeah, it can be different.

- Off-putting and liberating.

- Yeah, yeah, exactly. I find it very liberating, but I love it when people ask me questions about my deafness because it's something that has been happening over 10 years, and it's sort of tied to all these other things. But I find that when they ask about it and I tell them, then they feel really bad for me, or they feel like, "Oh, that's so sad." And so that's the part that I'm like, "You don't have to be sad. You can be angry with me. That's cool. Let's be angry together. Let's be frustrated that this system is just making this more complicated."

I was supposed to get a medical procedure yesterday. And then, I get a call late on Tuesday like, "Oops, your insurance says that's not covered." And I had been waiting for six weeks to get this done. So it's just one example of the frustration to me is much more palpable and helpful than pity. Pity doesn't help anybody.

- And that's the part that's universal.

- Right. Yeah. Yeah. I think that that's… There's the directness which comes from some cultures, but then there's also the serious taboo like, "We don't talk about disability. Disability doesn't exist here." I think that's also a cultural marker for some communities around the world. And what made our work so interesting at Open Society, and I'll talk a little bit about, if we have time, what we accomplished there, but when you're, yeah, having this dialogue with people across cultures was always one of my favorite things to do because it was extremely challenging to find a way that we can talk about disability across the global network because we had…our office sizes are shrinking but I think we have 60 offices around the world.

So if you're trying to create a disability inclusion strategy that's global, that's a very interesting challenge. All right. Thank you for joining in that conversation. It's not easy, and there's no right answers, which is why I wanted to challenge you a little bit. And you're okay with the fact that there's no right answers.

I'm just going to really briefly talk a little bit about… I'm not going to spend too much time on this because I want to get to the actual scenario and I want to have time for questions. So okay. There we go. This is just some of the stuff.

And I apologize. This isn't the greatest slide and it's probably a little difficult to read. But I do think it kind of helps us understand what's possible at an organization with resources obviously and an organization that still has sort of legal parameters that they have to abide by, right, because there's, in the U.S., for example, our U.S. offices had to really abide by the ADA.

And I find the ADA useful, and I think it's a great starting point, but I always tell people that you have to go beyond the ADA if you really sort of want to encompass a social or human rights model. So we had sort of the accommodations policy, which was very much rooted in the ADA but also the UK equality law and [inaudible] the standard that we put out, and also, our German offices have a very different approach to disability. And so that was very interesting. So we had to embed that into a global accommodations policy. And as I…I know I'm stepping away soon. But what's been interesting is seeing sort of how we've been able to move away from a very difficult process of accessing accommodations to it's becoming much more accessible, much more easier just by the sheer fact of people participating in it and realizing that we shouldn't be calling it special anymore, that everyone should have access to accommodations.

So I also think having sort of a dedicated person who does this is useful. And I know that that's very difficult. I was hard-pressed to find other people in my type of job in other same-size organizations. So I think if you don't have someone working specifically in disability, then does your DEI work, organization, or your strategy, are they thinking about disability?

Is that vocalized, and is that part of their strategy and of the work that they're doing? Obviously, training and programming. So we never required our people to attend our training. We just made it so that everyone wanted to attend. So we sort of a slow build to the point where we had about 98% of our staff participating in these trainings and learning and having sort of ongoing programming to refresh learning.

So, again, this idea that one session isn't going to be the only thing that works. Having things ready to go when people arrive. So looking at your onboarding process, looking at how you bring new people into the team, your recruitment processes. We were embedded in every aspect of the operational system of the organization. So legal, IT, finance, space and facilities, security.

I actually did a lot with global security and how we talked about stability because global security was really important to our organization. And so sometimes, I think we don't think about those other places where we need to embed a disability lens. We're thinking more about training, learning, programming.

And that piece doesn't really work if you don't have all this other stuff embedded into the fabric of the organization. So I just wanted to talk a little bit about what's possible. And I think if you're thinking about it from a social model lens that the society is what's disabling the individual and creating a more accessible platform for people to enter into would help you with some of those tools and resources you can create.

So we're going to look at a really quick scenario. I'm going to check my time. Yeah, we're going to do this scenario. And then, I just have a couple more slides, and then we'll stop for questions. So this is my scenario. It's a virtual meeting. And so I would love if I can have two people read it.

So colleague one, colleague two. Rebecca, I can't see anybody. So if you can...if anyone's willing to read this out loud, that would be wonderful. I just need two people, two lovely, brave volunteers.

- It's Adrian. I will.

- Okay. Anyone else?

- I'm happy to help if you need a volunteer.

- Okay. So Adrian, you could be colleague one, and Karen, you could be colleague two. So just go ahead and read it.

- Thanks for making time to meet. It's a shame we can't meet in person.

- I actually prefer virtual since my schedule is so full. Are you just not into video calls?

- Well, since I am 75% deaf, it's just always easier to meet in person, but the captions make it a bit easier.

- Oh, wow. I had no idea you were deaf. You don't look it at all.

- Yes, I wear hearing aids, but I don't expect folks to notice.

- I am so sorry I never noticed before. You don't look deaf.

- Oh, well, let's just get started.

- Thank you, thank you. Lovely acting. Thank you so much. So yeah, so I'm just curious. One, what do you think went wrong? Did anything go wrong? Let's start there.

Did anything go wrong here or was anything uncomfortable?

- Yes.

- What is it exactly? Do you have an idea?

- It reminded me of a book, "Funny I not Look Autistics" where people have… as much as they say, "Oh, no, we not stereotype," they already have this image.

- Yes.

- Because I use the closed captions. So that wouldn't be a bubble response to try to stick me in there. But yeah, like Miss Tara said, she put it in all caps, "You don't look deaf." Yeah, it's the whole thing. This autistic guy did a book on it. It's a best-seller where people are going, "I didn't know you be autistics."

- Right. Right. Yes. Yes. Again, anyone… You could put so many different disabilities for these dialogues but yeah, that, "But you don't look that way," or, "I didn't know that," is this funny response.

- Well, they did that with the chair. Like, "Oh, well, you're not a chair," because there's a lot of people that have the park placards now. And sometimes, if you're not actually in a chair or whatever, or a lot of places did not have the proper blue lines.

So if you is in a chair, how do you have the extra space to even get out of your vehicle proper? But they slap up a wheelchair sign with a blue straight line and think, "Okay, terrific."

- Yep. That's another good example, yeah. Yes. So we've established what sort of went wrong here, that's perfect. "You don't look it at all. I had no idea. You don't look deaf. I'm so sorry."

Right? "I'm so sorry you're deaf." So what could have happened differently for colleague one or colleague two? Any suggestions? What could be changed to make it play out better, play out differently? I'll also save it.

- [crosstalk] - Oh, go ahead, Michael. Go ahead. Yeah.

- I can wait. I'm sorry.

- No, no, please go ahead. I'd rather you go first.

- Okay. I just wanted to… This is not your specific question.

- That's okay.

- But I'm observing that even though it didn't go perfectly, it was probably better… The way I look at it, it was better for colleague two just to say, "I had no idea you were deaf," than to just hold it in and not say anything at all because at least by communicating, even though the communication was not perfect, but it does let the other person...give the other person some information as to where each person is coming from.

So I think what would be worse is if nothing was said at all and people were too afraid to make any comment. I think maybe that would be worse the way I look at it. But that's just how I look at it. Thank you.

- Oh, I appreciate you saying that because I feel like, again, I had planted you, because the next thing I'm going to talk about is making mistakes, right? So it's like if you don't make mistakes, then you're not learning anything about… This is a real thing that happened to me, and it's a real thing that happens to me all the time, that people say this to me. And this particular example, I love that you said that because the person who said it later on, we've had continuing conversations, we have continuing learning.

So this experience was so enlightening for them that they have now went on to really sort of, yeah, become an advocate and really want to learn more and to maybe respond differently. One way to respond differently would be to say, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know. Is there anything else I should be doing to ensure that I'm accommodating you?

Are you access needs being met," that kind of thing. But not everybody the first time, like you said, would know to say that. So it's like they had to have maybe this little uncomfortable thing first before they actually have some learning. So I think that that's a really important point. And another reason why I didn't have to sort of say, "Oh, well, I'm partially deaf," I didn't have to say that.

I felt okay in that moment to say those things. But sometimes, it's also a little bit easier for the other person just to be like, "Oh, I just like video calls," and not even have the dialogue. So it might mean that you're putting yourself, putting some energy that you didn't want to spend into the space. All right. I'm going to just move on to the next slide because I really want to talk about mistakes. And then, I'm going to stop for questions, and you can talk about anything at all.

So this on the left, I'm a huge nerd and a huge geek, and I love sci-fi and fantasy work. And Neil Gaiman is one of my favorite authors. And this is something that he put out into the world a while ago now, probably over a decade ago. He used to write New Year's wishes. And so his wish that year was that he hopes that New Year to come that you make mistakes because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world, and you're doing things you've never done before and, more importantly, you're doing some things.

So I think that that really sort of spoke to this idea that at least they said something, even though it was a mistake. And so I love this part where he says, "Make glorious and amazing mistakes. Make mistakes nobody's ever made before. Don't freeze. Don't stop." Did someone say something? I just wanted to stop in case… The basic thing is whatever it is that you're scared of doing, please do it.

And so I just...that's sort of my bottom line here. If you say the wrong thing, you can always apologize. I know that that's hard to do, accepting that you won't always use the correct language because you might not know what the correct language is. Responding with compassion, curiosity, instead of getting defensive. Respect how folks identify.

And if we're afraid to make mistakes, then we're not going to make any changes towards inclusion because it is a really long journey. And just my last couple thoughts, and I'm going to share this video with you at the end, it's not easy. So I hope, if anything, this conversation has made you understand that it requires constant dialogue.

I hope you have people around you that you can have that dialogue with, that inclusion promotes effectiveness for everyone. Be prepared to make mistakes, how you respond and how you learn and how that journey, where that journey takes you is the most important thing. And the future is multi-access. So I hope that we continue to find ways to share virtual experiences that are also in person for those of us that don't want to be in-person and for those of those that want to stay virtual and for those of us that need to be hybrid, but that we are all giving everyone an equitable experience.

My new job, this is part of my mission, is to create a multi-access guide book for convening. And yeah, I'm just going to share it with Rebecca when it exists because I don't have all the answers yet. But I think that… I used to say, "The future is hybrid," but it's multi-access. So all right. I'm going to stop. And I always run out of time at these sessions.

So I have eight minutes, eight glorious minutes, for you all. The floor is yours. Any questions at all about what I shared. And I hope you're feeling uncomfortable. I'm just seeing some of the comments here. Oh, my God, you don't look deaf at all.

Thank you, Tara, for that comment. Any questions, thoughts, comments, feelings, stories, anything at all? We have time.

- Mike here. If no one else has anything.

- Yeah, please, jump in.

- This is Michael again.

- Hi, Michael.

- I don't know… As I said, I arrived late, so I don't know if this was covered. I apologize, but I know that one idea that I've come across of other people saying is that even though I would want to advocate or help the people who have a special need… I have special needs myself. I have mental illness, but if someone had a disability, I would want to help and listen to them.

But the tricky thing is that I wouldn't want to speak for them. I would want to...because they can speak usually for themselves. I know as a person with a disability, I can speak for myself. So I'm a little sensitive to wanting to help other people, but not speak for them or take away their sense of independence or whatever.

So I just wanted to bring that up. Thank you.

- Right. Yeah. We didn't really cover that in particular. We talked a little bit about the idea that in a disability services model or charity model or if you're looking at it form a medicalized perspective or the sort of a legal perspective, the idea of choice and independence is sort of left out of that conversation, that we know what's best for you because we know everything there is to know about disability.

I always have a very difficult time with folks who sort of advocate but don't have the lived experience, or don't have least have the lived experience perspective as part of their framework or jointly sort of share those ideas. So I think that that's a very important perspective.

And I think that having… If you're doing something at your organization and you want to be helpful to folks with disabilities, then I think you need to make sure that you're hiring or having disabled folks at the table and building that table so that it's accessible and making sure that you're including all of… Because, again, I think what's beautiful about the disability justice movement and sort of the movements in the past just around disability rights, is how inclusive they were, a variety of people with disabilities.

It wasn't just people needing physical access. It was people who needed access across disabilities, right? And so having all those amazing lived experiences in the room, I think the world you can build. And so I think that "The Future is Disabled" is a great book if you haven't checked it out, looking at sort of this amazing disabled future and looking at it from a very sort of, yeah, dreaming big about what's possible when you allow folks to live independently and being able to make their own decisions.

Oh, yes, Tara, I know. Don't worry. No, I understand. I think you were elaborating on how ridiculous that comment is, and it really is. It's kind of ridiculous but yeah. Go ahead, Rebecca. I'm sorry.

- We have one more question.

- Oh, please.

- I just want to draw attention that Allison has a hard stop at 1:30. And we're so grateful… - Gotcha.

- …to have her. So if we go past that time, she's going to have to drop off the call.

- Okay. And I would hate to proceed without an interpreter, so… - The question was about how do disability allies differ than allies of other personal identities?

- I don't think it really does differ, to be honest. I think I prefer the word advocates because I think ally is such a passive term. And so I always think that we need more disability advocates, especially since disability is such a changeable identity, right?

Any one of us at any given time can become disabled or whether it be temporary or not. So I think that that allows for a little more understanding and empathy in that category. I think that's why it's a little bit different. But I do have… I think any ally, any good ally, has to take time to listen, to stop talking too much, taking up space, and creating more space for people in that community to, I believe it was Michael, to be more independent and to be able to make those decisions of their own.

So creating that space for those things to happen is what I think an important ally is. And that's, I think, true across the spectrum of allies. But yeah, I do think it's special because people with disabilities have such a changeable identity. And what's been really fascinating, and I'm sorry, this is a little bit of a tangent, but for folks that have had long COVID and had suddenly become disabled and suddenly need all these things, but then they recover because I know of people who have had long COVID, and it sounds like my day-to-day existence.

And I'm like, "Oh, wow, they kind of are experiencing what I am experiencing every day." But then, they recover, and they don't really look back. So that's really interesting. And so I also think about disability mentorship. So I recently found somebody who in my community that has the same problems as I do. So I reached out to them and let them know they're not alone and that this doesn't have to be the end of their life, and how they can proceed and live a very full life with this disability.

And so I think that that's really important too to provide mentors, yeah, empowerment. Tara, thank you. Yeah. These are great. Thank you. Thank you.

- I think we're going to have to end on this note. But I just want to say, Sarah, I always wish that we just had hours and hours more with you. This was so informative, so useful, I think, for a lot of us in so many ways. So thank you so much for presenting this for us today. I would, again, like to thank Allison for being here to interpret.

And I would also like to give one last thanks to the New Jersey Division of Disability Services who makes these trainings possible, as well as the IHC grant program. Thank you all for your time and attendance and your great participation. We appreciate you.

- Sarah, one quick question for you before we wrap. In your new role, are you looking at stuff from Priya Parker? Okay. Can you hear me now?

- Sarah, you're muted.

- Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry. Did you say are we using it, or are we going to?

- I was curious if Priya Parker was on your radar.

- On my radar, but I haven't even started the work yet, but thank you. Yeah, send it my way if you have anything in particular, yeah.

- Will do.

- Thank you.

- Sure.

- Thank you. Thank you, Allison. It's exciting. Thank you.