



585-340-2051

Roles and Responsibilities of a  
Vocational Support Professional  
Manual



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**Table 1: Examples of Disability Microaggressions in Everyday Life**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Message</b>
<p><b>Denial of personal identity</b> Occurs when any aspect of a person's identity other than disability is ignored or denied.</p>	I can't believe you are married.	There is no part of your life that is normal or like mine. The only thing when I see you is your disability.
<p><b>Denial of Disability Experience</b> Occurs when disability related experiences are minimized or denied.</p>	Come on now, we all have some disability	Your thoughts and feelings are probably not real and certainly not important to me.
<p><b>Denial of Privacy</b> Occurs when personal information is required about a disability</p>	Someone asking what happened to you.	You are not allowed to maintain disability information privately.
<p><b>Helplessness</b> Occurs when people frantically try to help PWD's.</p>	Someone helps you on to a bus or train even when you need no help.  Someone feels incapable of rescuing you from your disability.	you can't do anything by yourself because you have a disability.  Disability is a catastrophe. I would rather be dead than to be you.
<p><b>Secondary Gain</b> Occurs when a person expects to feel good or be praised for doing something for a PWD.</p>	We're going to raise enough money tonight to get Johnny that new wheelchair.	I feel good and get recognition for being nice to you.
<p><b>Spread Effect</b> Occurs when other expectations about a person are assumed due to one specific disability.</p>	Those deaf people are retarded.  Your other senses must be better than mine.	Your disability invalidates you in all areas of life.  You must be special in some way. You're not normal. You have "spidey sense".
<p><b>Infantilization</b> Occurs when a PWD is treated like a child.</p>	Let me do that for you.	You are not really capable. I know better than you how to do this.
<p><b>Patronization</b> Occurs when a PWD is praised for almost anything.</p>	You people are so inspiring.	You are so special for living with that.

<p><b>Second Class Citizen</b> Occurs when a PWD's right to equality is denied because they are considered to be bothersome, expensive and a waste of time, effort and resources.</p>	<p>People work hard not to make eye contact or to physically avoid a PWD.</p> <p>a person in a wheelchair waits 15 minutes outside a restaurant for access through the kitchen. She then complains to the manager.</p> <p>at a staff meeting the question is raised about improving accessibility to the restaurant and the official plan is that changes will be made when more PWD's come to eat.</p>	<p>PWD's are disgusting and should be avoided.</p> <p>Those people expect too much and are so difficult to work with. They have no patience.</p> <p>Your rights to equality are not important to me.</p>
<p><b>Desexualization</b> Occurs when the sexuality and sexual being is denied.</p>	<p>I would never date someone who uses a wheelchair.</p>	<p>PWD's are not my equal, not attractive and not worthy of being with me.</p>

[https://nau.edu/uploadedFiles/Offices\\_and\\_Committees/CDAD/Forms/Microaggressions.pdf](https://nau.edu/uploadedFiles/Offices_and_Committees/CDAD/Forms/Microaggressions.pdf)

# Language of Learned Helplessness

Read each statement and in column write:

**LH** if the language induces Learned Helplessness

**I** if the language supports Independence and Autonomy

1. Let me get that for you.		
2. I'll do it.		
3. I'll get you started, you can do the rest.		
4. Let me demonstrate it for you.		
5. Let me handle that.		
6. Let's see if you can do it.		
7. What possibilities or options do you see?		
8. Sounds like you have a problem. What have you thought of so far to help fix it?		
9. I'll fix it for you.		
10. I will talk to the supervisor to get you more time.		
11. Just let me know if you'd like any help.		
12. That's too hard for you.		
13. It's late so you can let it go this time.		
14. Would you like me to show you how to do that?		
15. You could do your own laundry; would you like me to show you how		

# ABLEISM

The concept of ableism *has* drawn increasing attention in recent years. More and more people continue to point out ableist language, beliefs, and attitudes as things to challenge and avoid.

Ableism often begins with the failure to acknowledge the different types of disabilities people can experience. You may not have any negative intentions or ill will, but unintentional ableism can still have a major impact.

Ableism can also stem from good intentions. Maybe a classmate who uses a cane drops their backpack. You rush to pick it up and gather their spilled belongings *without* waiting to ask if they'd like any assistance. Maybe they even say, "Oh, I've got it, thanks." But you continue to insist they need your help.

Factors that play a part in ableism?

- Fear of disability – if someone meets a person with a disability, they may have feelings of discomfort or fear.
- Not sure how to behave – Should you acknowledge a person's disability? Maybe offer assistance or say nothing? If we don't know how to treat someone with a disability, we may be overly helpful or go to the other extreme and ignore them for fear of making a mistake.
- Lack of disability awareness – this can lead to intrusive questions or assumptions about what the person may or may not need. Often possible accommodations don't even come to mind.
- Learned Social Behavior - Ableism can stem from attitudes you learn from your parents, peers, and even the media. Plenty of shows treat people with disabilities as plot points or inspirational stories rather than actual human beings, if they are included at all.

Now let's talk about the other part of this, **unconscious bias**.

Most folks genuinely try hard to avoid stereotyping or treating others differently solely because of a factor such as gender, race, religion, or disability. Despite efforts though, prejudice can occur outside of one's awareness. These underlying assumptions or attitudes are known as unconscious bias. As a VSP, we need to be aware the even "nice" people sometimes say or do things that negatively affect others, including us.

A few of the ways in which unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias) shows up in a workplace include:

- Assuming an older employee will resist technological change or experience problems when learning something new.
- Giving a choice assignment to someone without kids because a parent may not be able to put in overtime.
- Presuming the youngest person in the room is not the team's leader.
- Inadvertently passing over job applicants with non-white sounding names because they do not seem like a good fit with workplace culture.

Many of us have seen this type of scenario, or even been on the receiving end of these behaviors. All the behaviors and interactions of our lives can create the basis for your own unconscious bias. Because unconscious biases are triggered by the brain making quick decisions, unconscious biases “pop up” rather than arise from beliefs someone knows she possesses. The person displaying an unconscious bias may feel embarrassed or guilty when made aware but reversing the tendency can prove difficult.

To help address issues of unconscious bias, we as VSP’s can hold people accountable for their actions, comments, and behaviors. We need to offer grace and allow people to misstep, but provide corrective paths for them to acknowledge, learn, and grow.

Lastly, adopt a mindset that communication – not silence – is golden. If you see examples of bias or ableism, speak up. Create an atmosphere so people are comfortable bringing up the issues you or they experience.

Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, can impact anyone. Humans are thought to consciously process 40 pieces of information per second and 11 million pieces of information subconsciously, leading our brains to create mental shortcuts based on our backgrounds, experiences, cultures, values, norms and the environment in which we operate. It is these attitudes, stereotypes and pre-conceived ideas that impact our actions, views and decision-making, with our brains being liable to make “snap-decisions” when processing the vast quantities of information which can at times be poorly informed and subject to unconscious bias. We often talk about Unconscious Bias in that we need to be aware that unconscious bias can impact workplace decisions by influencing hiring processes, workplace relationships, lack of workplace diversity as well as opening the risk for discriminating against others.

What about our own unconscious bias. By becoming more aware of our own thought process and decision making we can start to identify areas of unconscious bias, this can be tricky to do and may take time to accomplish. As a VSP many of you know part of our role is to help people we support navigating the unconscious and conscious biases in the community. We often must educate businesses and coworkers about disability. We also need to look at how our own bias might impact how services are provided.

## Unconscious Bias

“Unconscious Bias” impacts both personal and business decisions. How much do you know about unconscious bias? This quiz will test your knowledge on the subject of Unconscious Bias.

1. Unconscious bias is a hidden preference for or against something? True / False
2. Unconscious bias exists in all of us, and are necessary to keep us safe. True / False
3. Unconscious bias almost never results in suboptimal outcomes. True / False
4. What causes unconscious bias? (choose one answer)
  - A. Discrimination and prejudice
  - B. Autopilot processing
  - C. Absence of training
  - D. Absence of experience
5. The percentage of information processed unconsciously by the human brain is: (choose one answer)
  - A. Less than 10%
  - B. More than 75%
  - C. Less than 50%
  - D. More than 99%
6. Recent research the most fundamental need that humans have is:
  - A. Food, clothing, shelter
  - B. Safety
  - C. Belonging
  - D. Esteem
7. If we can be more \_\_\_\_\_ about some things tat we are normally \_\_\_\_\_ about, we can mitigate unconscious bias.
  - A. Reflexive / Reflective
  - B. Reflective / Reflexive
8. Choose the best answer to fill in the blanks. Labeling a reaction or a thought as unconscious bias ascribes neither favorable not unfavorable \_\_\_\_\_, even though it may have unfavorable \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Intent / Impact
  - B. Impact / Intent
9. Choose the best answer to fill in the blanks. One of the most commonly experienced unconscious biases that could result in nondiverse environments and non-inclusive behaviors is \_\_\_\_\_ bias, which causes \_\_\_\_\_ with people similar to us.
  - A. Affiliation / Affinity
  - B. Advocacy / Inquiry

Link to OPWDD EMP Billing Guidebook:

<https://eiversity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/SEMP-Doc-Billing-Full-Guidebook-9.9.19.pdf>

Please check out the Quality Indicators for different OPWDD Services and Programs beginning on page 46