



Evolving Towards Equity

Disability Inclusion Part 3:
Advancing Rights & Activating Change

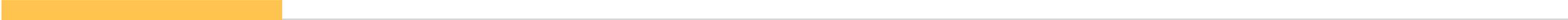
Ashley Oolman & Alli Strong-Martin
Lifeworks New Business Development



Facing the
injustice in
our society,
and our
responsibility
to take action.

Lifeworks

Session Objectives



- Address gaps in knowledge and understanding; acknowledging that learning about societal inequity has rarely been required.
- Identify and understand the Social Model and Disability Rights Model of disability and how these models should influence our actions.
- Reflecting on our intentions, resulting impacts, and take responsibility for a different path forward.

Your Facilitators



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Shared Understanding

A few grounding definitions before we move forward.

Disability is normal

- A part of human variation
- An asset
- Caused by disabling societal barriers, not by individual differences

Disability is lived experience

Disability is a diverse identity group; no two people experience disability the same way.

People with disabilities are not a monolith. We're leaders, parents, fashion icons, comedians, co-workers, athletes, activists, romantic partners, etc. etc. etc.

Disability is intersectional

All non-disabled people are "TAB" – temporarily able-bodied.

People with disabilities make up one of the only identity groups that *any* person can join at *any* given time at *any* point in their life.

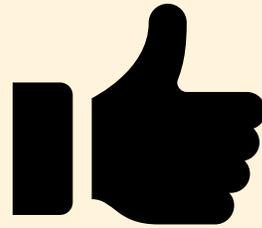
Shared Understanding

A few grounding definitions before we move forward.

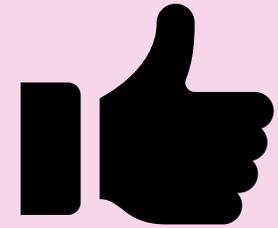
**Disability is
normal**



**Disability is
lived experience**



**Disability is
intersectional**



How This Works Best



CENTER THE MARGINS

This is a safe space, meaning we take responsibility for our contributions.

GET UN-COMFORTABLE

It's hard to recognize we inherited this legacy and benefit from it.

RESIST DISTANCING

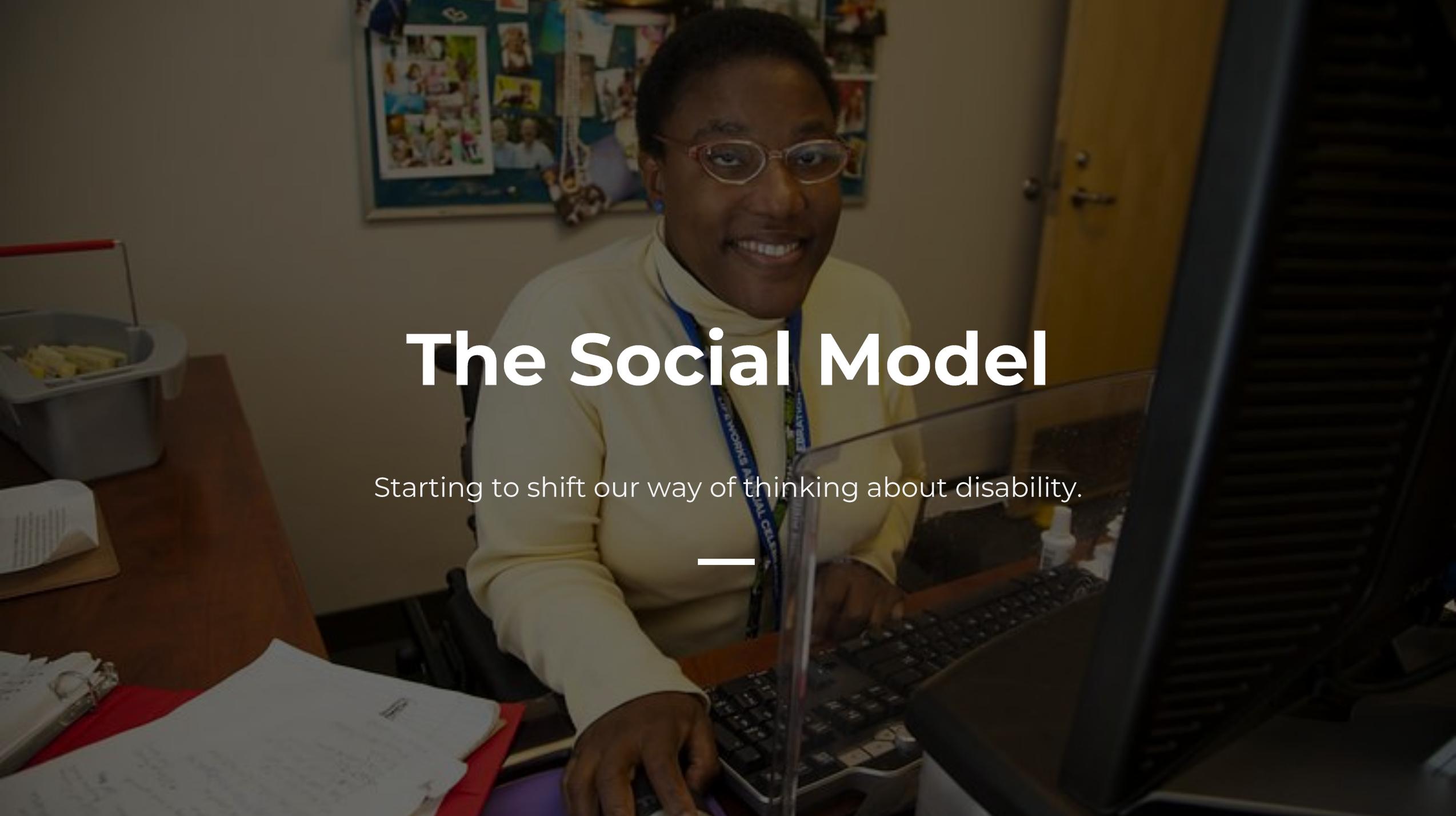
Own your part in this work. Fight the urge to focus only on positives.

CONSTANTLY REFLECT

Dig deep, lean into humility. This is inner work as much as it is external societal work.

Disability in Historical Context



A woman with short dark hair, wearing glasses and a yellow turtleneck sweater, is sitting at a desk in an office. She is smiling warmly at the camera. In front of her is a large computer monitor and a keyboard. The background shows a bulletin board with various photos and a yellow door. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the text overlaid in white.

The Social Model

Starting to shift our way of thinking about disability.

Confronting Our Beliefs

How do we view individuals and groups most impacted by our work?

Oppression Mindset

“People with disabilities are **dependent** upon society.”

Liberation Mindset

“People with disabilities are **equal members** of society.”

Adapted from
The National Black Disability Coalition

Conceptual Models of Disability



Social Model

Focuses on tangible and intangible access barriers created by mainstream society. Asserts that people with disabilities are **disabled by the inaccessible environment they live in**, and not by the features of their own bodies or minds.

Reflection Question:

How can using this lens impact how we approach accessibility both at work and in the community?

Social Model

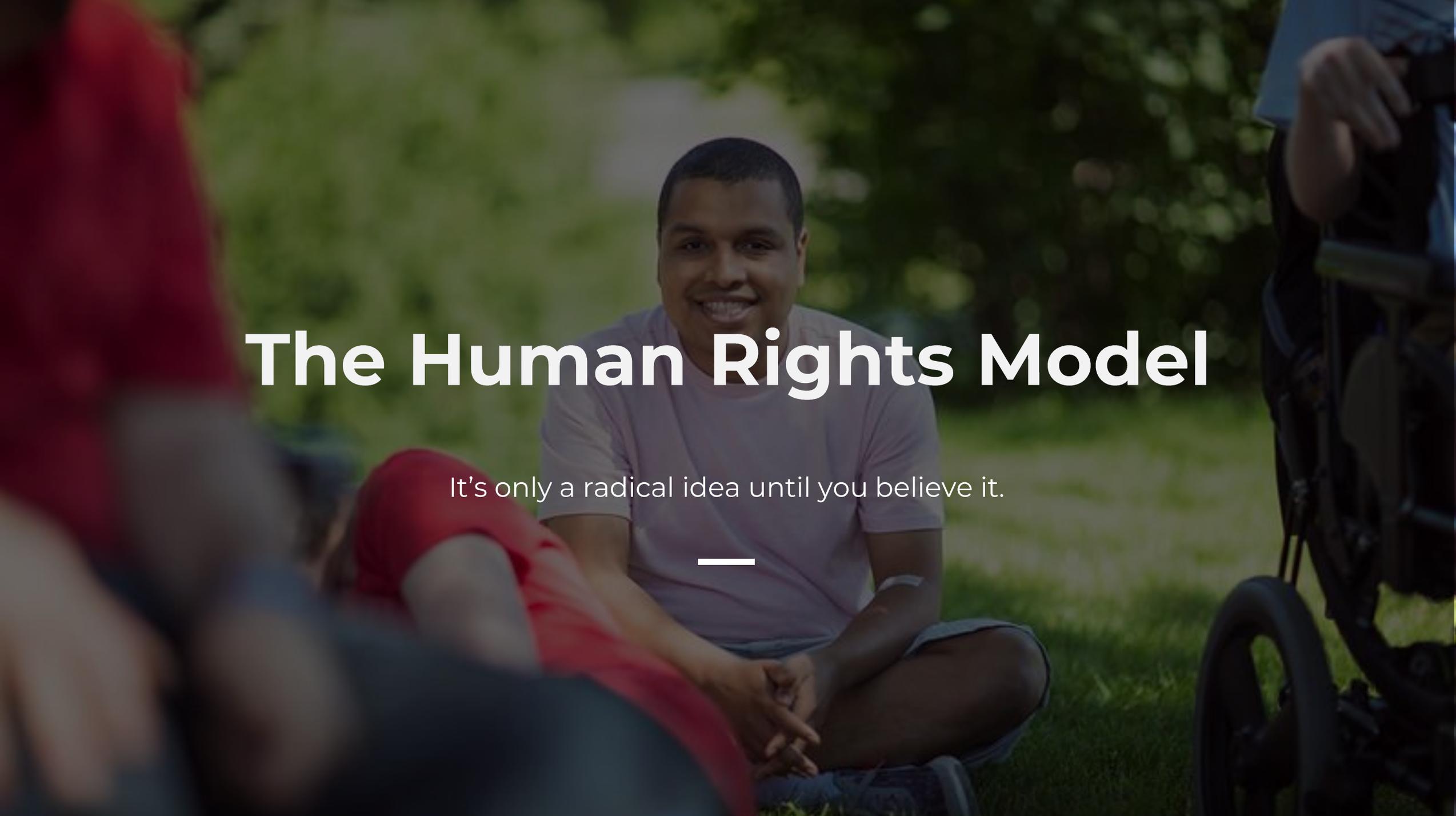
“Because people with disabilities are equal members of society...”

- “People with disabilities are not the problem.”
- “What we built does not work for everyone.”
- “Solutions should address our inaccessible society more broadly.”



Reflection Question

What do you think is holding disability services (and the broader community) back from using the **Social Model** to frame our thinking on disability?

A man in a white t-shirt is sitting on the grass, smiling. To his right, a person is sitting in a wheelchair. The background is a blurred green lawn with trees. The text is overlaid on the image.

The Human Rights Model

It's only a radical idea until you believe it.



Treating people with
dignity is different
than not treating
people **inhumanely**.

Conceptual Models of Disability



Rights Model

Asserts that people with disabilities are **fully equal members of society** who have the same civil, political, economic, and social rights as non-disabled people.

Reflection Question:

Beyond written laws and policies, what else is necessary for equal rights to be fully realized?

Rights Model

“Because people with disabilities are equal members of society..”

- “Disabled people have the same rights as non-disabled people.”
- “Laws, policies, and practices need to change.”
- “Non-disabled society needs to fix what we’ve built.”



"Ableism is you feeling like I should be **grateful** for the ramps and the parking spaces as if access was not a **basic right**."

MARIA PALACIOS, 2017, "NAMING ABLEISM"



Civil Rights & Social Change

The difference is leadership by those most impacted.

Disability-Led Activism: A Long Legacy



Legal Timeline of Our Past

1970

1975

1988

1990

1999

TRANSPORTATION

The Urban Mass Transit Act:

Required all new mass transit vehicles be equipped with wheelchair lifts. Implementation was delayed for twenty years by the American public Transit Association.

EDUCATION

Education for All Handicapped Children Act:

Establishes the right of children with disabilities to a public school education in an integrated environment. This later becomes IDEA.

HOUSING

Fair Housing Amendments Act:

Adds people with disabilities to those protected by federal fair housing legislation. Established minimum standards of adaptability for newly constructed housing.

RIGHTS

Americans with Disabilities Act:

A civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all places open to the general public.

INTEGRATION

Olmstead v. L.C.:

Supreme Court decision that public entities must provide community-based services to persons with disabilities when such services are appropriate, the persons do not oppose community-based treatment; and community-based services can be reasonably accommodated.

Disrupting Oppression

When we start to challenge what has “always been.”

- Centers for Independent Living (1960s)
- Curb Ramps in Berkeley, CA (Early 1970s)
- Section 504 Sit-Ins (1977)
- The Gang of 19 & ADAPT in Denver, CO (1978)
- Gallaudet University Deaf President Now (1988)
- The Capitol Crawl (1990)





Change doesn't just happen. **Things were not okay**, and disabled people had to force them to change.



If you're requesting that **change slow down**, you likely already have the access you need, or are centering those who do.



Confronting Injustice in Real-Time

Unbroken barriers that remain in our society today.



In order to realize
disability **justice**,
injustice must first be
acknowledged and
then addressed.

Confronting Injustice



HEALTH CARE

Research shows that medical professionals commonly believe that people with disabilities have a lesser quality of life just because of their disability. Disabled people are constantly viewed by non-disabled society as disposable and less valuable.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Continually denied equal rights in access to justice, people with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled people to experience victimization, be arrested, be charged with a crime, and serve longer prison sentences if convicted.



COMMUNITY LIVING

On continuous full display, our communities repeatedly fail to fulfill basic requirements necessary to uphold human dignity (such as transportation, housing, bathrooms, recreation.)

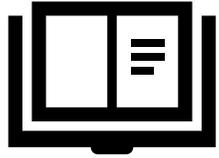


Reflection Question

Why is **recognizing & challenging oppression** in healthcare, criminal justice and community living critical?

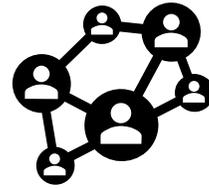
How can we **do better moving forward** advocating in these areas?

Confronting Injustice



EDUCATION

Students with disabilities face inaccessible classrooms and curriculum, ableist policies, segregation and bias within their schools.



EMPLOYMENT

Jobseekers and employees with disabilities face unaddressed barriers such as ableist business practices, and inaccessible work spaces. Stigma continues to be a major factor contributing the disparities this group faces at work, all across the US.



GUARDIANSHIP

Guardianship, and other forms of court-appointed decision making, has been used to control choice and limit options in day-to-day plans, employment and even relationship status.



Reflection Question

Why is **recognizing & challenging oppression** in education, employment and guardianship critical?

How can we **do better moving forward** advocating in these areas?



Allyship is **moving beyond** the acknowledgment of something you didn't previously know existed and using what you know to **act and create change.**



Reflection Question

How will you **bring people in** on what you now know?
How will you stand firm even when **facing resistance**?

Actual Allyship

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Stay Informed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek out people with lived experience of disability (disabled artists, activists, authors, comedians, etc.)• Search online for local, national, and international leaders with disabilities and learn from their perspective. |
|  <p>Speak Up</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on moments you could have said/done more.• Make a plan for “disruptors” to open dialogue if you see something that needs to be stopped (or started.) |
|  <p>Search Beyond</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shift our mindset beyond the disability service provider/recipient framework.• View our own intentions through a critical lens to better understand potential or actual impacts. |
|  <p>Start Connecting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include disabled people in discussions about planning and value their perspectives equally.• Explore divergent approaches within day-to-day tasks. |



Closing Dialogue

What's on Your Mind?



Closing

Evolving towards equity requires uprooting historical perspectives, confronting our influence, and advancing rights.

WorkLife™

Traveling Exhibit

lifeworks.org/worklifemn

#WorkLifeMN



Lifeworks

a nonprofit serving people with disabilities

Thank you!



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