



Medical Model vs. Social Model

Adapted from Carol J. Gill, Chicago Institute of Disability Research

What is the medical model vs. social model of disability? This model was created by Carol Gill at the Chicago Institute of Disability Research to explain how people with disabilities are seen by society and how the Disability community sees ourselves. Disability studies scholars believe that an overemphasis on the medical model has detracted from full citizenship for people with disabilities.

Even though people who have disabilities are very different, we are all different ages, races, and different kinds of disabilities, we still share a lot of things in common – such as a common history and common experiences of being discriminated against (being treated different because of our disability).

MEDICAL MODEL

1. Disability is a deficiency or abnormality.
2. Being disabled is negative.
3. Disability resides in the individual.
4. The remedy for disability-related problems is cure or normalization of the individual.
5. The agent of remedy is the professional.

SOCIAL MODEL

1. Disability is a difference.
2. Being disabled, in itself, is neutral.
3. Disability derives from interaction between the individual and society.
4. The remedy for disability-related problems are a change in the interaction between the individual and society.
5. The agent of remedy can be the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society.

Youth Friendly Version—Medical Model (How society views people with disabilities)

1. Disability is seen as something that could hold a person back. It is seen as something that a person should not want, or that it makes people different in a bad way.
2. Disability is bad.
3. Disability is a personal problem – the disability is in you, and it's your problem.
4. What will make problems better is curing the person or making them seem as least disabled as possible.
5. Only professionals can help the disabled person fit in and be accepted in society.

Youth Friendly Version – Social Model (How the disability community sees themselves)

1. Disability is only a difference, like gender or race.
2. Being disabled is neither good nor bad, it's just part of who you are.
3. Problems come from the disabled person trying to function in an inaccessible society.
4. What will make the problems and issues that people with disabilities have better is a change in society (like making things accessible for everyone).
5. That change can come from the person with a disability, an advocate, or anyone who wants people with disabilities to be included equally in society.

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