



# **Accessibility Beyond Physical Access**

Jillian Nelson



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# Today's Instructor: Jillian Nelson

- + Community Resource & Policy Advocate for AuSM
  - + Governor's Council on Disability
  - + Member of the State Rehabilitation Council
  - + Autistic
  - + Avid Ticket Holder and Event Goer!



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# Objectives

- + Why Accessibility Matters
- + Benefits of Inclusive Communities & Sensory Friendly Spaces
- + Tools for Your Events

Small things that make a big difference that don't break the budget



# **Inclusive Community**

**Accessibility**

**Physical**

**Sensory**

**Cognitive**

**Acceptance**

**Everyone is Different**

**All Are Welcome**

**Equity Requires Engagement**



# Why Accessibility Matters

- + It's the Law (this is the wrong motivation...)
- + Inclusion shouldn't be limited to basic needs
- + Social Justice (human and civil rights)
- + Accessibility increases your customer base
- + Anyone can benefit from it



# **What does the ADA say**

- + The ADA is the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- + It highlights the basic expectations for accessibility- typically related to physical access for mobility disabilities and Blind and hard of hearing communities.
  - ASL Interpreters
  - Accessible space and bathrooms (ramps and handrails)
  - handicap parking.

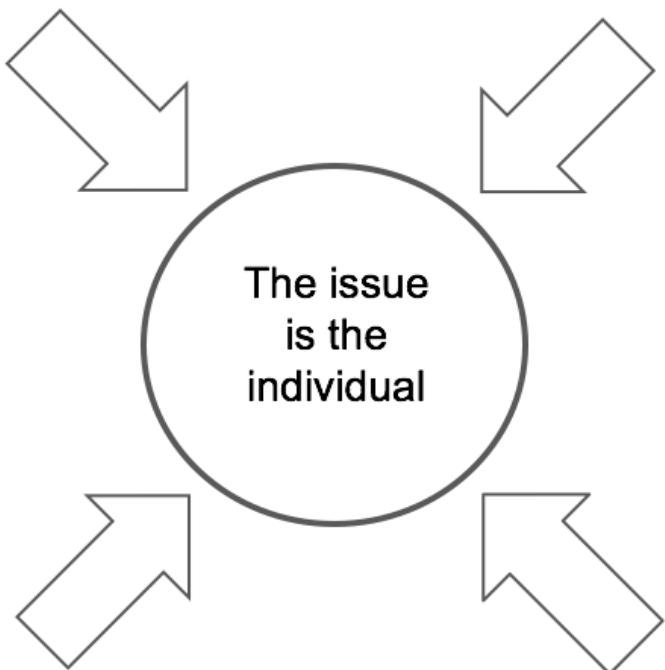


# **Understanding Disability**

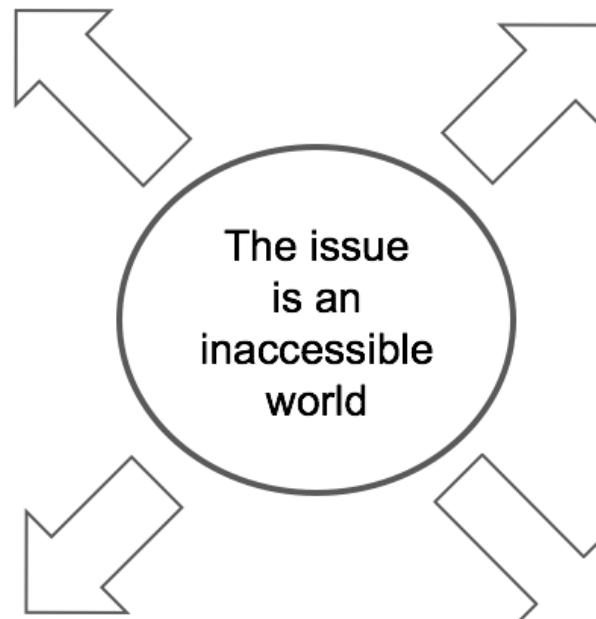
- + Disability Includes physical, cognitive, learning, developmental, sensory, and emotional-behavioral disabilities.
- + Also may include major health conditions such as diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV, etc.
- + CDC: 1 in 4 persons in the US has a disability
- + Many of these disabilities may not be visible.
- + Disability is the only group with “open enrollment”



# Understanding Disability



Medical Model



Social Model

# ADA Resources

- + Mn Access Alliance [www.mnaccess.org](http://www.mnaccess.org)
- + Metro Regional Arts Council [www.mrac.org](http://www.mrac.org)
- + Accessible Temporary Events (Great Plains ADA Center)  
<https://www.gpadacenter.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/AccessibleTemporaryEvents.pdf>



# **What about accessibility beyond ramps, bathrooms and parking though?**





# Benefits of Inclusive Communities & Sensory Friendly Spaces



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# Benefits of inclusive communities

- + Crisis reduction
- + Sense of Belonging
- + Culture of Acceptance
- + Greater Engagement



**“We can’t let the fact that we can’t do everything  
be the excuse for not doing anything.”**

**John Waldo (Attorney / Disability Rights Advocate)**



# AuSM's Sensory Friendly Event Partners



**Pride**



**Irish Fair**



**Rock the Garden**



**Guthrie**



**Disability on the Hill**



**MN Orchestra**



**The Wild**



# **Small things that make a big difference but do not break the budget**



PHYSICAL  
SPACE



KITS &  
TOOLS



SPECIAL  
TIMES



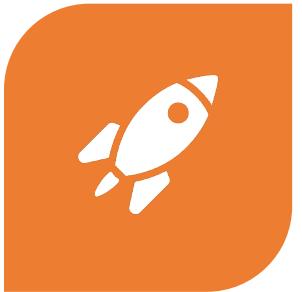
SOCIAL  
NARRATIVES



STAFF  
TRAINING



CHANGE  
THE SPACE



# Physical Space

- + This is a quiet space that people can use to take a break
- + Location
- + Noise options
- + Sensory Tools
- + Support Staff





## Kits & Tools

- + Tools on site that participants can take with them to use throughout the event.
- + Think about what challenges your event may have.
- + Also great promo!





# Special Times

- + Earlier start times
- + Earlier access times
- + Special dates





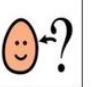
# Social Narratives

- + This is a specific way of writing that prepares the reader for the expectations of the event or space.
- + May highlight where they should go
- + Can explain sensory challenges
- + Can explain expected behavior
- + Can explain potential challenges.

 Asking Politely

Communication Symbols  
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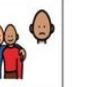
by: Sasha Hallagan

When I want something, sometimes I forget to ask nicely.



I say things like, "give me that" and reach out for what I want.

It is rude to act like that. People will not want to help me if I don't ask nicely. I need to ask politely so people will answer me.

I can ask nicely like, "Excuse me, can you please give me that." Then I wait for them to answer before I reach for something.

When I am polite, people will want to help me and I will be happy.



# Staff and Volunteer Training

- + Accessibility planning isn't effective unless the people on the ground know about it.
- + Should be led by the community



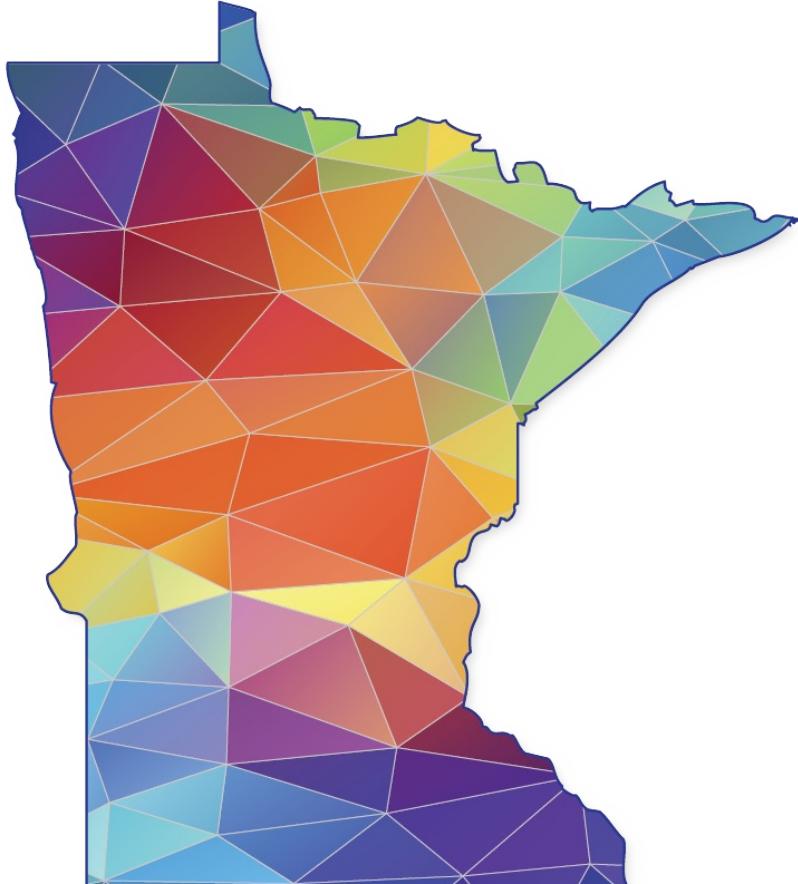


# Change the Space

- + Lower lights
- + Lower Volume
- + Different expectations of program
- + Sensory tools available



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# **Outreach and Awareness (if you build it they will come)**

- + Make it intentional
- + Note accessibility in all messaging / materials / PR
- + Include disability access symbols
- + Reach out to list-servs and community contacts
- + Engage the disability community in planning

## **ONSITE:**

- + Central information location for accessibility
- + Signage / Visibility



- + First Impressions set the tone! The Customer Service Lens
- + ASK how you can help (and listen)
- + Offer info and options (but don't make the decision)
- + Remember not all disabilities are visible to you
- + Communication ≠ Cognition



# Thank You!

Web site: [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ausm.org](https://www.facebook.com/ausm.org)

Twitter: @autismMN

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*Established in 1971, the Autism Society of Minnesota is committed to education, advocacy and support designed to enhance the lives of those affected by autism from birth through retirement.*

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