



Uncovering Episodic Disability:
An Intersectional Perspective
On Accessibility and Belonging

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she/her

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Realize

realize

FOSTERING
POSITIVE CHANGE
FOR PEOPLE LIVING
WITH AND OTHER
EPISODIC DISABILITIES

Who Is *Realize*?

Established in 1998



Realize is the leading national non-profit promoting healthy living and universal inclusion in every area of life for people living with Episodic Disabilities.

Our goal is to effect positive and meaningful improvements in the lives of people living with episodic disabilities through research, policy change, advocacy, and education.

Realize is the convening organization of the **Episodic Disability Forum (EDF)**

Realize hosts the annual National Summit on Episodic Disability and Employment

Realize develops accredited online trainings for HR Professionals

What Is Episodic Disability?

Episodic disabilities are characterized by periods of wellness followed by periods of illness or disability.

Episodic disabilities can be intermittent, invisible, and unpredictable.

An Ever Changing & Expanding List

- Anxiety
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Bi-polar disorder
- Cancer
- Crohn's Disease & Ulcerative Colitis
- Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy (CIDP)
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Chronic Pain
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Fibromyalgia
- Hepatitis C
- HIV/AIDS
- Lupus
- Long-COVID
- Meniere's Disease
- Migraines
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Parkinson's Disease
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Schizophrenia
- Substance use disorder
- Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)
- other diseases and conditions

Intersectional Lens

Intersectionality:

The interconnected nature of social categorizations, and their ability to create interdependent systems of discrimination based on gender, race , sexuality, and of course, disability.

Privilege

Trauma

An intersectional lens is an important framework through which to examine how forms of privilege and disadvantage shape individual experiences of everyday life.

IDEA to IDEAL

IDEA on its own is not enough.

**IDEAL: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity,
Accessibility, Leading to Belonging.**

**Development of the IDEAL framework is
an ongoing process**

The IDEAL Community Consultations Project

- Community based research
- Build capacity
- Educate

12 disability serving intersectional partners

DAWN (Disabled Women's Network)

Pride at Work Canada

ASE Community Foundation for Black Canadians with Disabilities

Race and Disability

CMDC - Canadian Multicultural Disability Centre

NEADS - National Educational Association of Disabled Students

ASAAP- Alliance for South Asian Aids Prevention

ACAS - Asian Community Aids Services9.

LETS -Live Educate Transform Society

YouthCo

CAAN - Committees, Alliances, And Networks

CanAge

Methodology:

Focus group over zoom, facilitated discussion, one on one interview, on-line survey, WhatsApp chat, workshop.

Employment Status:

Unemployed, full-time, part-time, casual workers, entrepreneurs.

Impacts On Employment

Visibility of disability

Limited opportunities

Poor wages

Little flexibility

Challenges In The Workplace

Systemic: Access, Accessibility, Adherence

Social: Stigma

Culture: Perceptions, Relationships

**What do individuals with episodic disabilities
wish employers, managers and HR departments
knew, understood, and respected?**

How can workplaces cultivate a culture of inclusion and accessibility without requiring employees to disclose their identities and situations and without relying on visible indicators of disability?

How can workplaces support inclusive cultures?

“Employers must generate a space where their disabled employees do not hesitate to come forth with any concerns and/or needs that must be met.”

(NEADS)

“... the employer benefits when I can do my job well. Both my employer and I are working towards the same goal. It’s mutually beneficial. They are not doing me a favor...”. (Race & Disability)

“People don't always understand that episodic disorders aren't just about the physical symptoms. It's the mental toll too. You start questioning your own abilities. Can I commit to that project? Will I be reliable? It's this constant uncertainty that's mentally draining.” (ASAAP)

“... so it's not necessarily that I'm getting overt racism or ableism; it's just the assumption that I don't [or] I wouldn't be interested. [That] I don't have the skills, I wouldn't have the ability to do certain things that I have to kind of push back on.

(ASE)

"Disability is my power... my disability is letting me know that I'm not a tool, that I'm a human being... the pain isn't the issue anymore, it's how it's perceived by others." (ACAS)

IDEAL Accommodations

Workplace culture

Flex time

Frequent breaks

Technology & ergonomic furniture

Prayer space/room

Recommendations

Demonstrated IDEAL leadership

Revamp current practices

Flexibility & relationships

Provide ongoing training

Workshops and Courses

Zoom Workshops

- Episodic Disabilities at Work
- IDEAL Ready Certification
- Needs-based content

Online Courses – Self Directed

- Introduction to Episodic Disabilities
- Understanding Episodic Disabilities for Managers & Supervisors
- Episodic Disabilities: Accommodation Best Practices
- Living and Leading with Episodic Disabilities
- Post Secondary Education and Episodic Disabilities
- Returning to Work with an Episodic Disability in a COVID-19 Context
- Changing Jobs in a COVID-19 Context for People Living with an Episodic Disability

THANK YOU.

Contact me!

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