

# **INTEGRATING DISABILITY JUSTICE INTO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE COUNSELING AND ADVOCACY**



Society for  
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02

## Disabling Systems

Learning objective: Outline how various systems marginalize disabled people and impact their health. Answer:

What is ableism?

What are the types of ableism?

How does ableism show up in reproductive health?

# What is Ableism?

Ableism is "a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be 'fixed' in one form or the other." - Center for Disability Rights

Ableism, like racism and sexism, is ingrained in our culture and society. It assumes the "normal" way to live is as a non-disabled person, leading to the exclusion of disabled people.



# Types of Ableism



## Internalized

Disabled person **absorbs ableist ideas**, feeling less valuable.



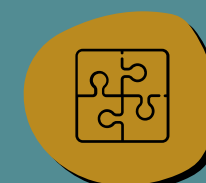
## Interpersonal

Individuals **discriminate, stereotype, or exclude** disabled people.



## Institutional

Ableist ideas in **policies** in hospitals and legal courts.

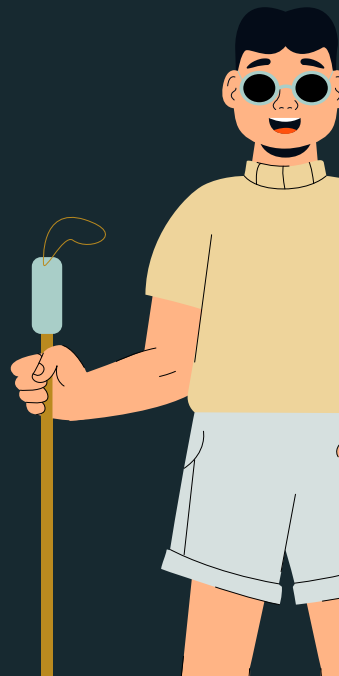
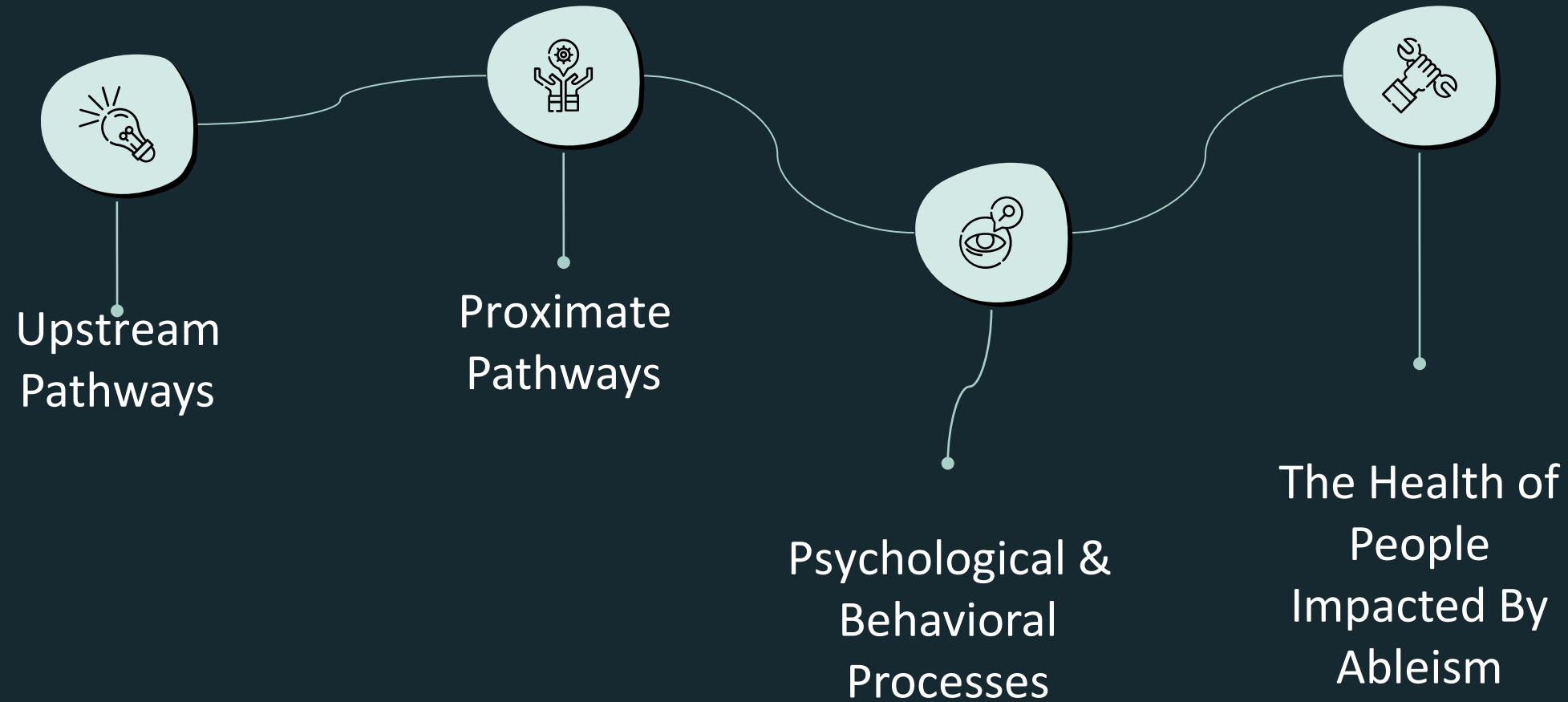


## Structural

The cumulative and reinforcing ways **discrimination manifests** in policy and institutions.



# Structural Ableism

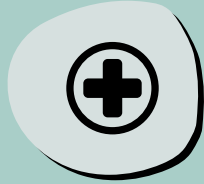


# Examples of Upstream Pathways



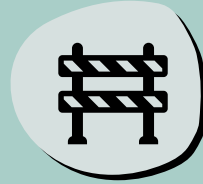
- Social, economic, health, and other policies.
- Sociocultural attitudes and depictions of disability.
- Exclusion from decision-making and research.
- Reliance on the biomedical model of disability.
- Legacies of eugenics and institutionalization

# Examples of Proximate Pathways



1.

Disability incompetent  
and non-affirming  
healthcare



2.

Barriers in education,  
housing, and  
employment.



3.

Physical and virtual  
inaccessibility.



4.

Adverse childhood  
experiences.



5.

Assault, victimization,  
and harassment.



6.

Carceral and other  
types of state violence.

Structural ableism is, "the cumulative and reinforcing ways in which willful or unconscious discrimination manifests in policy and institutions, threatening the survival and success of people with disabilities in favor of an able-bodied status quo.

-Hassan et al.





# Examples of Psychological and Behavioral Processes

- Chronic stress & allostatic load.
- Minority stress and health effects of trauma.
- Health risk behaviors as a coping strategy.



# Ableism has Social, Economic, and Health Consequences...

1

Disabled people have inequitable access to transportation, education, housing, and employment, which may in turn affect their ability to adequately achieve the healthcare they want and need.

2

People with disabilities are disproportionately more likely to encounter sexual violence in their lives.

3

People with disabilities are less likely to receive sex education in schools.

4

Living in an ableist system impacts the decisions people make about their lives, including their reproductive health.

# How Ableism Shows Up in Reproductive Healthcare



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# How Ableism Shows Up in Reproductive Health Care



## Harmful Policies

Buck v. Bell, a 1927 supreme court decision, legalized forced sterilization of people with disabilities and has never been reversed.

Abortion bans that allow access to abortion only in instances of perceived future of perceived future disabilities.

## Inaccessible Spaces

Websites that have no text enlargement feature, buildings that have no ramp for wheelchairs, and sidewalks with no obstacles that make walking more difficult.

Ableist language in reproductive health advocacy, such as “I stand with \_\_\_\_” which may isolate or exclude people with disabilities.

# How Ableism Shows Up in Reproductive Health Care

## Lack of Insurance

One of six people with an insurance coverage gap have a disability.

Abortion care is not universally covered by private insurance. For public insurance, the federal government bans coverage of abortion care through the Hyde Amendment, and many states also ban use of public insurance to cover abortion care.

## Socially-Ingained Biases

Not providing adequate sex education or counseling in part due to the persistent myth that disabled people are asexual or are incapable of intimacy

Over-emphasizing the need for contraception disproportionately to patients with disabilities.

Believing that a patient with a disability must have a high-risk pregnancy.

Assuming that traveling for abortion care or other reproductive care is accessible to everyone equally.





# Reflection

Can you think of a time you've observed ableism? Was it structural, institutional, interpersonal, or internalized?