

Able Privilege

How to use this list: *To help raise awareness of everyday ableism, we offer scenarios describing the opposite of what many people with disabilities experience. We hope you will recognize the often-unacknowledged privilege, or unearned advantages, of people who do not live with disabilities. May this exercise stimulate thoughtful and prayerful reflection, and may your heart and mind be opened to take in and respond to evidence of able privilege you may uncover.*

- *Ask yourself how often you experience these scenarios or make these assumptions.*
- *Some of these statements may not be true for you due to the fact some of us have multiple identities that erase some of our privilege.*
- *Please do not argue with the statements or try to rationalize them!*
- *The point of the exercise is not to blame or shame anyone, but rather to help all of us come alongside each other to break down barriers to participation and belonging.*

Transportation and travel

- It is easy for me to get to meetings any time of the day or evening, any day of the week.
- When I arrive, I can almost always find a parking place wide enough for me to exit my vehicle, close to a pathway leading to the venue that poses no barriers to me.
- I can spontaneously change my plans when the event, trip, or meeting plans change.
- I can schedule my day and week with relative certainty, as I don't need to wait for unreliable transportation.
- Detailed information describing the facilities I want to visit is easily available, and I seldom arrive to find that the information I found on-line or was given is not accurate.
- If in an urban area I take it for granted that I will quickly be able to find and use any number of public transportation options with no prior notice or planning.

Public gatherings and meetings

- I can sit with my peers, friends, or family anywhere I like when I attend worship, a conference, or a performance.
- I have choices of ways to move from floor to floor in a multi-story building, and I can generally arrive at a class or workshop at around the same time as most others.
- I can count on easily exiting a space and building in case of an emergency.
- I can understand the speaker from most parts of a gathering space, and I can follow the presentation even when only spoken words, visual images, or gestures are used.
- Handouts, agendas, etc., are provided in a format that I can use during the event.
- When invited to speak or preach, I assume I will be able to safely use the chancel or speaker's platform.

Dining

- When I go out to eat with others, I can spontaneously pick from a number of restaurants, knowing I will be able to enter the building, have a choice of tables in the common dining space, and use the restroom without encountering barriers.
- The menu is available in a format which doesn't require someone else to assist me.
- When I dine with others, the waitstaff always ask me directly what I would like to order.

Public interaction

- Strangers do not typically stare at me or ask intrusive questions when I am in public.
- I have never had anyone come up to me and grab my hands, bag, or chair and try to assist me without asking first or insist on helping when I say I don't need assistance.
- Others tend to assume that I am of at least average intelligence and ability.
- People do not come up to me and offer to pray for me, insisting that my condition is caused by sin and would be healed if I just had enough faith.
- When I express concerns, people tend to take me at my word and not argue, rationalize, or dismiss what I have said.
- Random people do not ask me what is wrong with me, offer unsolicited medical advice, or expect me to share personal medical information with them.
- I have never experienced blatant discrimination, pity, or condescension from strangers.

Everyday living and safety

- I can find affordable housing that meets my needs in the neighborhood of my choice.
- If friends invite me to visit or meet in their home, I assume that I will be able to get into the house and use its facilities without needing assistance or taking safety risks.
- The supports I need for daily living cost about the same as anyone else's.
- I don't have many medical appointments or therapy treatments that drain my energy and get in the way of work, meetings, and other activities.
- If I use a cane, crutches, or other mobility aids, people don't take the devices from me to an unknown location with the promise to bring them back when I need them.

Roles and image

- When I meet new people, they don't typically interact awkwardly with me.
- I'm often asked to take positions of leadership, and others look to me for guidance.
- In organizational leadership, in educational and church settings, and in the media, I frequently see persons like me represented in a positive manner.
- I've never sensed that I was asked to join an organization as a token representative.
- I have not been made to feel that I'm not good enough as I am, but rather need to be fixed in order to be accepted.

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The Disability Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church is a partner ministry
of the General Commission on Religion and Race