

# Types of Attitudinal Barriers

Disabled people encounter many different forms of attitudinal barriers.

- **Inferiority**  
Because a person may be impaired in one of life's major functions, some people believe that individual is a "second-class citizen."
- **Pity**  
People feel sorry for disabled people, which tend to lead to patronizing attitudes. Disabled people generally don't want pity and charity, just equal opportunity to earn their own way and live independently.
- **Hero worship**  
People consider someone with an impairment who lives independently or pursues a profession to be brave or "special" for overcoming a disability. But most disabled people do not want accolades for performing day-to-day tasks. The impairment is there; the individual has simply learned to adapt by using his or her skills and knowledge, just as everybody adapts to being tall, short, strong, fast, easy-going, bald, blonde, etc.
- **Ignorance**  
Disabled people are often dismissed as incapable of accomplishing a task without the opportunity to display their skills. In fact, people with quadriplegia can drive cars and have children. People who are blind can tell time on a watch and visit museums. People who are deaf can play baseball and enjoy music.
- **The Spread Effect**  
People assume that an individual's impairment negatively affects other senses, abilities or personality traits, or that the total person is impaired. For example, many people shout at people who are blind or don't expect people using wheelchairs to have the intelligence to speak for themselves.
- **Stereotypes**  
The other side of the spread effect is the positive and negative generalisations people form about impairments. For example, many believe that all people who are blind are great musicians or have a keener sense of smell and hearing, that all people who use wheelchairs are docile or compete in paralympics, that all people with impairments are sad and bitter. Aside from diminishing the individual and his or her abilities, such prejudice can set too high or too low a standard for individuals who are merely human.
- **Fear**  
Many people are afraid that they will "do or say the wrong thing" around a disabled person. They therefore avert their own discomfort by avoiding the individual with impairment. As with meeting a person from a different culture, frequent encounters can raise the comfort level.

## **Breaking down Barriers**

Unlike physical and systematic barriers, attitudinal barriers that often lead to illegal discrimination cannot be overcome simply through laws. The best remedy is familiarity, getting people with and without disabilities to mingle as co-workers, associates and social acquaintances. In time, most of the attitudes will give way to comfort, respect and friendship.

***Ballyfermot Chapelizod Access Group 2017***

***'Disability Equality' information***