

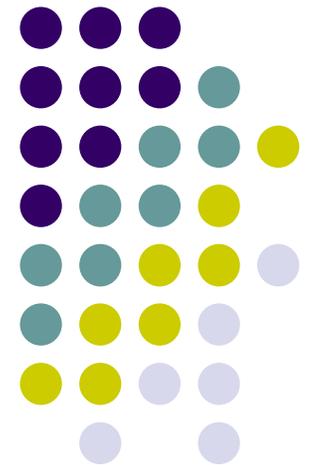


# **The Victimization and the Strengths of People with Disabilities**

**“Disability is a complex psychological, social, and political reality with which one lives day by day”**

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**(Benefield and Head 1984:60).**



# Historical Background



**People with disabilities have a long history of pain, sorrow, discrimination and objectification.**

- Earliest record ancient Mesopotamia, Greek, and Roman civilizations
- Middle Ages treated as outcasts
- Rise of Capitalism increased oppression and segregation
- By the Nineteenth century they were a social problem
  - Placed into institutions -Asylums
  - Special Schools -Prisons

# Prevalence of Violence Against Persons with Disabilities



- 54 million Americans with disabilities  
(U.S. Department of Justice, 1998)
- *The rate of violent crimes against people with disabilities is 4-10 times higher than the general population.*  
(Sorensen 2001:1)



# Prevalence...

- People with disabilities experience abuse for longer durations of time
- Experience abuse by a greater number of perpetrators
- Report higher numbers of health care workers and attendants as the perpetrators
- The existence of a disability makes one more vulnerable to violence due to dependence on others and mechanical devices

# Types of Abuse

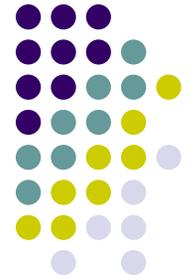


- Physical
- Sexual
- Neglect (Omission)
- Verbal/Emotional
- Financial Exploitation

# Why leaving is difficult?



- FEAR
- LOVE
- Negative attitudes towards disability
- Dependency on care
- Feeling of powerless
- Communication abilities
- Physical capabilities
- Perceptions about the credibility of pwd as victims
- Exclusion, isolation and poverty of pwd and their families
- Societies denial of sexual education
- Disbelief and further harm
- Fear of being alone
- Lack of supports, advocacy and safeguards



# Resources

- Limited resources
- Challenges to the typical resources
- Some specific resources:
  - Commission for Deaf & Hard of Hearing
  - Independent Living Center
  - State Rehab Centers
  - Disability Law Center



## Interacting with People with disabilities

- Person first
- Assumptions
- Be aware of your own bias and cultural stereotypes
  - Different, abnormal, and inferior
  - Expected to uphold able-bodied norms
  - Suffering or sick
  - Incompetent and a menace
  - Fear of becoming disabled



## Interacting with People with disabilities

- Stay calm and remain non-judgmental
- Be supportive and discuss the individual's safety
- Listen closely if the victim wants to talk
- Explore the circumstances of disability  
(if it applies to the situation)
- Clarify the batterer's role in everyday activities
- Understand and listen how the existence of disability creates another category of abuse

# Characteristics of People with Disabilities



- Determined
- Independent
- Creative problem solver
- Kind, caring and loving
- Inventive
- Outgoing and shy
- Knowledgeable
- Intelligent

## I AM NOT

Mangled, frail, delicate infant  
Weak, poor, ignorant infant, I was NOT!

You did not have the power  
to define my fate with Death

Cripple, feeble-minded, pitiful child  
Unable, immobile, lame child, I was NOT!

I defied your prediction, then  
I deny your position, now

Undetermined, incapable, paralyzed woman  
Lesser, negative, powerless woman, I am  
NOT!

Fear forced your prediction of my Death  
Fear created your insecurity  
Fear does NOT rule me

Complete, strong, unbreakable infant  
Bold, healthy, aware infant, I WAS!

I chose to prove you wrong  
The power to live was mine

Whole, intelligent, witty, child  
Able, mobile, bright child, I WAS!

I believed in myself  
I knew success was coming

Determined, capable, secure woman  
Brave, confident, powerful woman, I AM!

I fought against your fear  
I fought against your insecurity  
I chose LIFE when you would Not!

