

Inclusive Language for EBMC Teachers, Informed by Disability Justice and Cultural Humility

EBMC TeacherSangha 5/6/19, Deb Kerr and Mushim Ikeda

A. Two primary ways language is used oppressively:

1. Privileging able-bodiedness as inherently “better than” (for our purposes here— especially via narrow views of what meditation is— “sitting” and “walking”)

2. Viewing people with disabilities as inherently “less than”

“If you routinely use disability slurs, you are adding to a narrative that says that disabled people are wrong, broken, dangerous, pitiful, and tragic.”

“When a critique of language that makes reference to disability is not welcome, it is nearly inevitable that, as a disabled person, I am not welcome either.”—Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg

B. Viewing inclusive language use as a practice.

Inclusive language and language that is non harming is part of "right speech."

Can inclusive language for EBMC teachers become part of our practice, as one of our precepts?

“I undertake the training precept...to use speech that is non harming, and that allows my teachings to be as accessible as possible to everyone.”

We will never "get it perfect" and that's okay.

Targeted people must be allowed to self-determine what terms they want used; then it is our role to respect those terms as much as possible. Sometimes, one person's preferred terms may contradict terms we've heard that others want. So we need to do two things:

1. Relax around it, AND
2. Commit to learning and growing in our use of inclusive language.

****Very important:** we need to use mindfulness to scan inside ourselves for contraction / resistance / overwhelm: "Oh, that's too much to remember -- I'm doomed to never get it perfect and I'll look foolish/ I'll end up hurting people's feelings..." and then try to open and soften around the resistance and to heal the feelings of overwhelm by reminding ourselves that we can do our best, learn as much as possible, ask for forgiveness, **forgive ourselves**, and keep trying to learn and grow.

C. Resources:

Mia Mingus on “Access Intimacy”

<https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/>

“10 Questions About Why Ableist Language Matters, Answered”

by Rachel Cohen Rottenberg

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2014/11/ableist-language-matters/>

[“Access Alternatives Grid” by Jess Schlesinger, available at teacherweb.eastbaymeditation.org](https://teacherweb.eastbaymeditation.org)

This is only to be used for the teachers in the room and not to be used for other trainings/etc. Contact Jess if you would like further training, or to take this to other organizations, and please support Access-Centered Movement.