

Medical Model of Disability Vs Social Model of Disability

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Medical model of disability

- The medical model of disability says people are **disabled by their impairments or differences**.
- Under the medical model, **these impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments**, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness.
- The **medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person and not what the person needs**.
- It **creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence**, choice and control in their own lives.

Social model of disability

- The social model of disability says that **disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference**.
- **It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people**. When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.
- **Disabled people developed the social model of disability because the traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability** or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.
- **Barriers are not just physical, Attitudes found in society**, based on prejudice or stereotype also disable people from having equal opportunities to be part of society.
- **Social model of disability Examples**

- **A wheelchair user** wants to get into a building with a step at the entrance. Under a social model solution, a ramp would be added to the entrance so that the wheelchair user is free to go into the building immediately. Using the medical model, there are very few solutions to help wheelchair users to climb stairs, which excludes them from many essential and leisure activities.
- **A teenager with a learning difficulty** wants to work towards living independently in their own home but is unsure how to pay the rent. Under the social model, the person would be supported so that they are enabled to pay rent and live in their own home. Under a medical model, the young person might be expected to live in a communal home.
- **A child with a visual impairment** wants to read the latest best-selling book to chat about with their sighted friends. Under the medical model, there are very few solutions but a social model solution ensures full text audio-recordings are available when the book is first published. This means children with visual impairments can join in with cultural activities on an equal basis with everyone else.

Following key differences between the two models.

- The medical model says that disability is a deficiency or abnormality whereas the social model says that disability is a difference, just as a person's gender, age or race is a difference.
- The medical model says that having a disability is negative whereas the social model says that having a disability is neutral. It is a part of who you are.
- The medical model says that the disability is in you and it is your problem, whereas the social model says that

disability exists in the interaction between the individual and society. Disability issues stem from someone with a disability trying to function in an inaccessible society.

- The medical model tries to remedy disability through a medical cure or by trying to make the person appear less disabled or more “normal”, whereas the social model says that the remedy is a change in the interaction between the individual and society. When society changes, the issues of a person with a disability disappear. If a building is fully accessible it doesn't matter if a person walks in, runs in or comes in with a wheelchair or walker.
- The **medical model says that the fix is found with a professional**. The only person who can help a person with a disability fit into society, and be accepted, is a professional. The social model, however, says that the fix can be found within the individual with a disability or anyone who wants people with disabilities to be equally included in society, including you, the person reading this blog right now.