



HEALTHY 04

Physical and sensory impairment

What it is like to live with a physical and sensory impairment; some of the risk factors and what can you do to prevent them.

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Warsaw University
of Technology



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Physical and sensory impairment

In this module, you will learn about physical and sensory impairment, including techniques and strategies on how to cope with those conditions and how to slow or prevent their development.

What will you learn

- 1 You will understand the concept of physical and sensory impairment.
- 2 The impact of physical and sensory impairment.
- 3 How to reduce risk of physical and sensory impairment.
- 4 Key tips and good practices.
- 5 Support services and contacts.



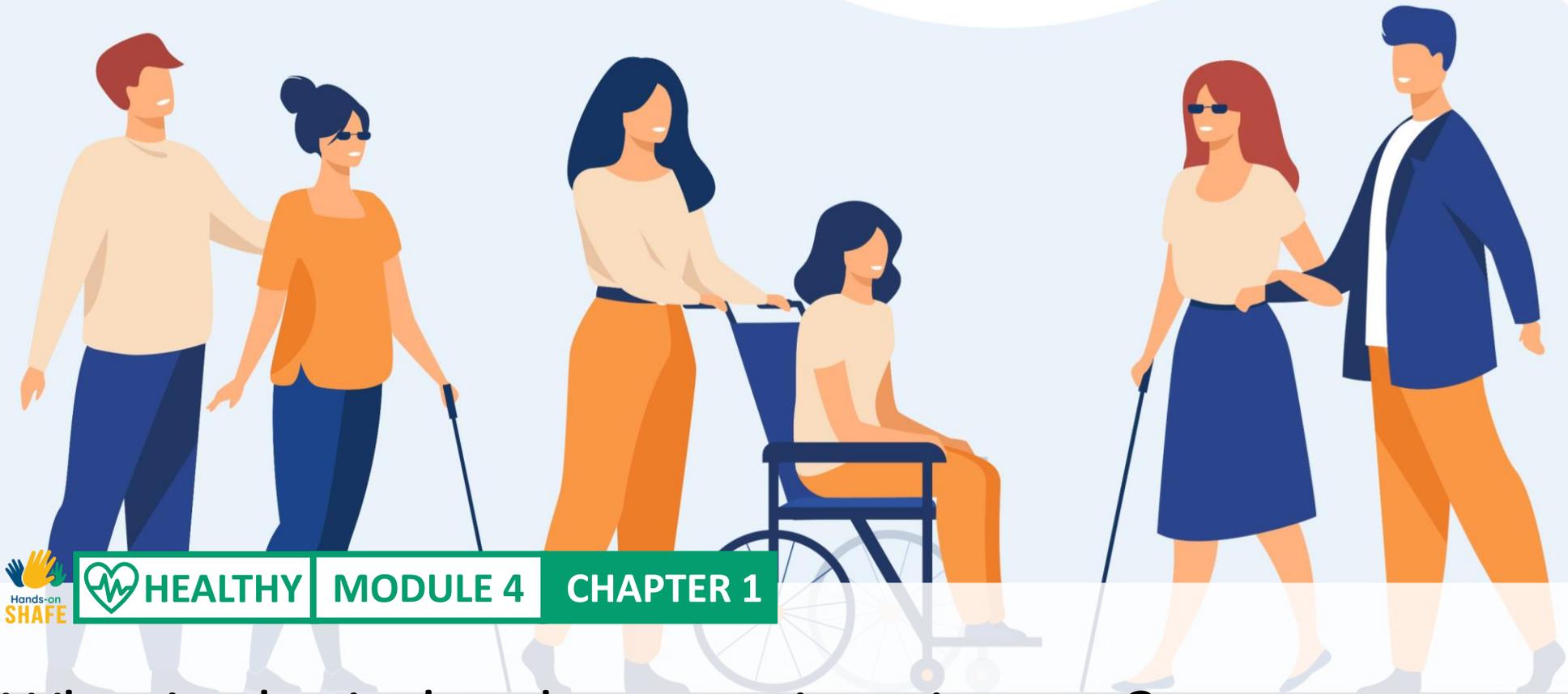
Chapters in this module

- 1** What is physical and sensory impairment?

- 2** The impact of physical and sensory impairment

- 3** How to reduce risk of physical and sensory impairment

- 4** Key tips and good practices for dealing with impairments and Support services and contacts



HEALTHY | MODULE 4 | CHAPTER 1

What is physical and sensory impairment ?

In this chapter, you will learn about the concept and the different types of physical and sensory impairments.

Introduction

“Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions.

An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives.”

WHO - World Health Organization



What will you learn

- 1 You will learn about the concept of physical and sensory impairments.
- 2 You will learn about the different types of physical and sensory impairments.



Physical and sensory impairment

Sensory needs can be hearing loss and/or visual impairment. Sensory processing difficulties **and physical difficulties** can occur for a variety of reasons. These could be **hereditary, congenital or acquired**:

- **Hereditary or congenital**

A person with a hereditary or congenital physical/sensory disability has had the condition since birth.

- **Acquired**

There are several factors that can lead to an acquired physical/sensory disability. These include severe accidents, brain injuries, infections, diseases and side effects of disorders and other medical conditions.



What is physical impairment?

A physical disability is any impairment that limits the physical function of one or more limbs or motor abilities, including sensory impairments and impairments which limit other areas of daily living.

A physical impairment can be exhibited as having difficulties in one or more of the following areas:

- physical and motor tasks;
- independent movement;
- performing basic life functions.



Types of physical impairment

Physical disabilities are categorised into groups. The main physical disability groups are:

- Musculoskeletal disabilities
- Neuromusculoskeletal disabilities

Common causes of physical disabilities include:

- Cerebral palsy;
- Acquired brain injury;
- Spinal cord injury
- Epilepsy;
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)

They are described on the next slides!



Types of physical impairment

1**2****3**

Cerebral palsy

Cerebral palsy occurs in young child age and is a group of non-progressive disorders that damage the brain and cause impairment of motor abilities. A person with cerebral palsy usually has movement and coordination problems, including associated disabilities such as intellectual and behavioural impairments.

Types of physical impairment

1

2

3



Acquired brain injury

Acquired brain injuries emerge due to brain damage after birth and can be caused by a wide range of factors, including strokes, head injuries, alcohol, drugs, a lack of oxygen, or various other diseases such as cancer.

This impairment can hinder persons to move certain parts of their body. Moreover, they often struggle with daily activities, like going to the supermarket.

Types of physical impairment

1

2

3



Spinal cord injury

Spinal cord injuries can result in a total or partial impairment of sensory and motor functions in the body and limbs. A spinal cord injury can lead to paraplegia and tetraplegia, also known as quadriplegia.

Paraplegia affects the lower limbs and results in a loss of movement, bowel and bladder control. Tetraplegia is a paralysis affecting the arms and legs, the stomach and some chest muscles. It results in total impairment of sensory and motor functions.

Types of physical impairment

4

5



Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a neurological condition that causes a person to have a tendency for recurring seizures. There are many types of epilepsy, which range in severity and each person experiences it differently.

Types of physical impairment



Multiple sclerosis (MS)

Multiple sclerosis is a condition affecting a person's brain and spinal cord, causing a range of physical problems including movement, sensation and balance limitations. Among others, symptoms can include fatigue, a loss of motor control, numbness and visual disturbances.

MS lasts for a person's whole life and can cause severe disability. Although there are treatments, the average life expectancy for people with MS is reduced.



Did you know?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) a disabled person is anyone who has “a problem in body function or structure, an activity limitation and a difficulty in executing a task or actions”.

Sensory impairments

Sensory impairment are obstacles affecting an individual's senses, such as hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste.

The main causes of sensory disabilities include accidents or injury, genetic factors, illnesses, or environmental factors.



Sensory impairments

1**2****3**

Blindness and low vision

Low vision is defined by permanent vision loss, which cannot be corrected using glasses and therefore affects the daily life of the affected. An individual is considered blind if their field of vision is less than 20 degrees in diameter.

Sensory impairments

1

2

3



Hearing loss and deafness

A hearing loss disability can range from mild to severe. Individuals with mild or partial hearing loss tend to hear normal but have difficulties under conditions such as loud sounds or a use of hearing devices.

The severity of the hearing loss is presented by total loss of hearing. In this case an individual has no hearing regardless of the sound volume and the problem cannot be reversed.

Sensory impairments

1

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3



Deafblindness

Is characterized by loss of both, hearing and sight. People with this disability have difficulties navigating through their daily life as they require assistance to communicate, access, and mobilize information.

Sensory impairments

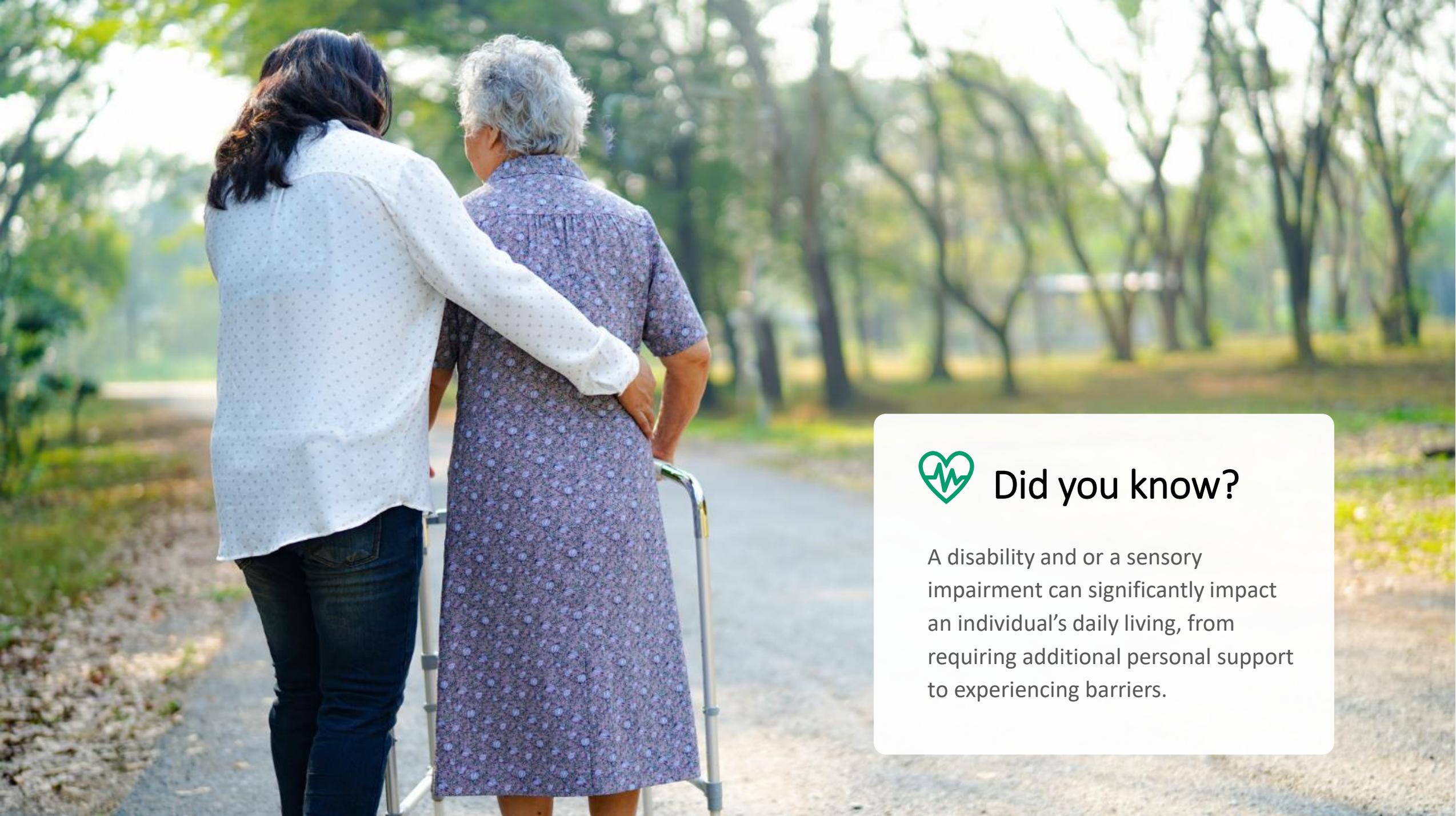
4



Sensory processing disorder

A sensory processing disorder is a disability where an individual has difficulties receiving and responding to information reaching the body through the senses.

Individuals with sensory processing disorder tend to misinterpret the sensory information as they either overreact, under-respond, or even do not react at all.



Did you know?

A disability and or a sensory impairment can significantly impact an individual's daily living, from requiring additional personal support to experiencing barriers.

Chapter summary

1

You have learnt about the general concept of physical and sensory impairments.

2

You have learnt more about the different types of physical and sensory impairments.

Chapter completed!

Congratulations! You have successfully completed this chapter!

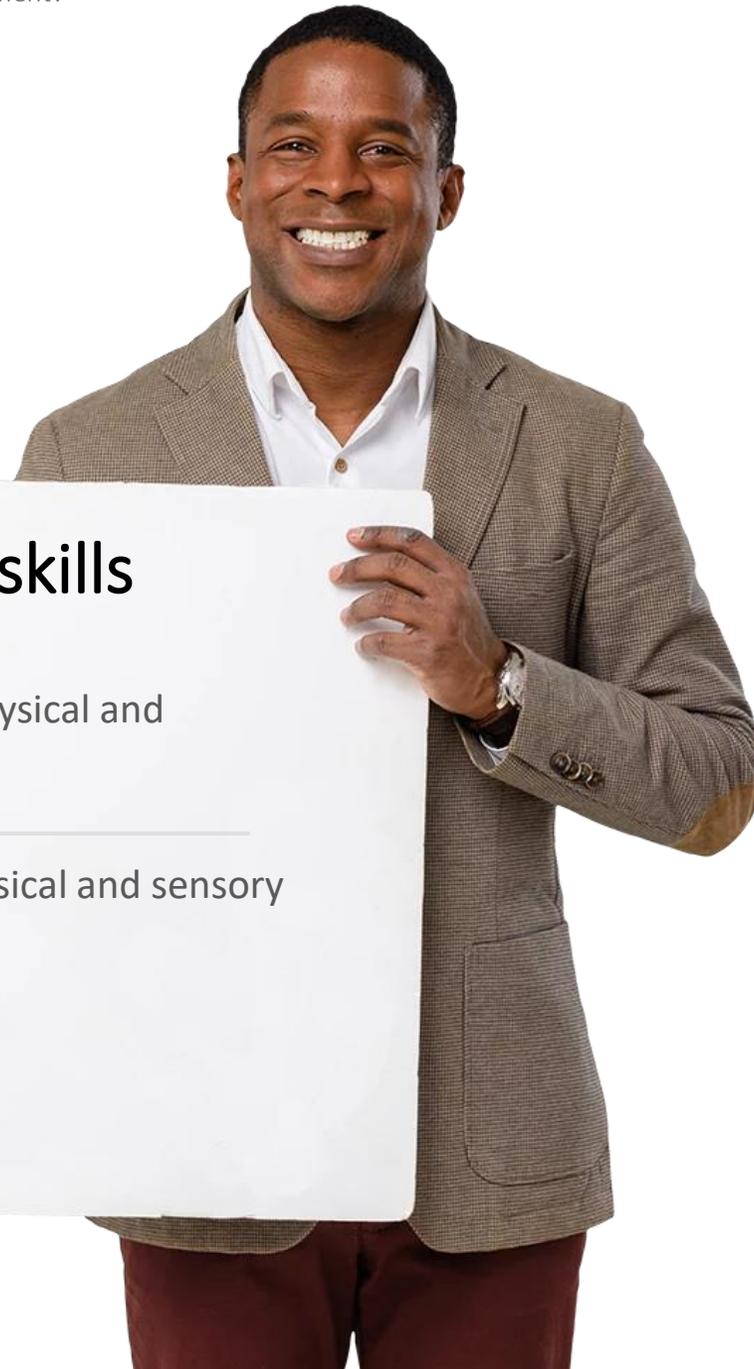
Summary of acquired skills

1

The general concept of physical and sensory impairments.

2

The different types of physical and sensory impairments.



What is next?

Now you can either repeat this chapter or follow our study recommendation by clicking on one of the buttons below:

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HEALTHY | MODULE 4 | CHAPTER 2

The impact of physical and sensory impairment

In this chapter, you will learn how physical and sensory impairments may affect the daily lives of the persons concerned and their caregivers/families and friends.

Introduction

People living with a disability have an ongoing impairment which limits their ability to plan, manage and coordinate their day-to-day needs and activities.

They may have difficulties with mobility, communication, maintaining relationships and independently completing activities.

These issues can affect the person's ability to fully participate in different aspects of life such as work, education and social activities.



What will you learn

1

You will learn and understand how physical and sensory impairments affect the daily life.





Did you know?

It is important to recognise that physical impairments and having difficulties in interpreting sensory information can impact how we feel, think and behave or respond.

Barriers to healthcare access and quality

People with disability encounter a range of barriers when they attempt to access health care, including:

- Stigma and stereotypes by health service providers and other staff at health facilities.
- Some service providers have limited knowledge and understanding of the rights of people with disability and their health needs.
- Some health services do not have policies in place to accommodate the needs of people with disability.
- Women with disability face particular barriers to sexual and reproductive health services and information.



Barriers to healthcare access and quality

- Health services and activities are often located far away or in an area not serviced by accessible transport options.
- Certain places are inaccessible. Examples are stairs at the entrance to buildings or activities located on floors that do not have elevator access.
- Inaccessible toilets, passages, doorways and rooms that do not accommodate wheelchair users, or are difficult to navigate for people with mobility impairments, are common.
- Fixed-height furniture, including examination beds and chairs, can be difficult to use for people with disability.
- Health facilities and other venues for activities are often poorly lit, do not have clear signage, or are laid out in a confusing way that makes it hard for people to find their way around.



Barriers to healthcare access and quality

- A key barrier to health services for people who have a hearing impairment is the limited availability of written material or sign language translators at health services.
- Health information or prescriptions may not be provided in accessible formats, including Braille or large print, which presents a barrier for people with visual impairments.
- Health information may be presented in complicated ways or use a lot of jargon. Making health information available in easy-to-follow formats – including plain language, pictures or other visual cues – can make it easier for people with cognitive impairments to follow.



Chapter summary

1

You have learnt how physical and sensory impairment affects daily life.

Chapter completed!

Congratulations! You have successfully completed this chapter!

Summary of acquired skills

1

The impact of physical and sensory impairment in daily life.



What is next?

Now you can either repeat this chapter or follow our study recommendation by clicking on one of the buttons below:

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HEALTHY

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 3

How to reduce risk of physical and sensory impairment

In this chapter, you will learn how to reduce the risk of getting physical and sensory impairments.

Introduction

People should be encouraged and enabled to look after their own health and well-being. We cannot assume that everyone has the personal resources or assets to be confident and knowledgeable in doing so.

Giving people the information and tools to make positive lifestyle choices and care for themselves is an essential step to help maintain good health and prevent illness.



What will you learn

1

You will learn and understand how to reduce the risk of get some of the physical and sensory impairments.



Meet Tom

Tom is a 70-year-old man with light cognitive and physical disabilities, specifically in motor tasks, such as maintain the balance and stay for a long time standing.

He lives with his wife in an apartment block close to a care home and is supported by their home care services (meal delivery).

His neighbour is a taxi driver, who helps Tom in and out of the building when he has difficulties with mobility. Moreover, he has a 17-year-old grandson, helping him sometimes.

Tom used to work for an IT company, so he is used to keeping in touch with his family through online calls and messaging in family groups.

Like his grandfather, Tom's grandson wants to work in an IT-related business. Noticing and experiencing his grandfather's mobility restrictions, he wants to work in a business that focuses on smart, digital and modern housekeeping solutions. One of his concerns is that Tom falls during the day or even at night and that he doesn't have any support at that time.



Health and the environment



What is important to Tom?

- His computer is very important to him: he pays his bills online, regularly checks his emails, and generally prefers online shopping.
- He goes to church every week and has a stamp collection.
- He likes to travel to places that are pleasant and safe and this would help him to connect more with others and stop thinking only of his conditions.
- He wants to feel more physically active and reduce the risk of falling during the day/night.
- He wants to feel secure in his house, with less obstacles.



What are the obstacles in his daily life?

- He and his wife are tired of housecleaning and doing their daily chores around the house. They would like to use their time differently.
- His relationship with care professionals is a bit difficult. He has some trouble understanding health terms and definitions.

Promoting good physical health

- Exercise regularly;
- Don't smoke;
- Get enough sleep;
- Maintain a healthier state of mind;
- Avoid stressful situations;
- Maintain a healthy weight;
- Eat a "healthy diet".



Promoting good hearing health

Hearing loss is becoming increasingly common in a society where the population is ageing and where young people are facing potentially dangerous levels of exposure to noise in their social lives.

Taking action to encourage the public to value their hearing and address hearing loss includes the need to identify treatable hearing loss as early as possible and then act on it.

Prevention of unnecessary hearing loss can be achieved through education and promotion of public health messages.

A programme of public awareness-raising about the dangers of overexposure to loud noise and encouraging them to take steps to protect themselves could have a positive impact on levels of hearing loss in the future.



Promoting good visual health

You can take simple steps every day to keep your eyes healthy. Use these tips to protect them from possible harm:

- Protect your eyes from the sun by wearing sunglasses;
- Safety glasses and goggles are designed to protect your eyes during certain activities, like playing sports, doing construction work, or doing home repairs;
- Looking at a computer for a long time can tire out your eyes. Rest your eyes by taking a break every 20 minutes to look at something about 20 feet away for 20 seconds;
- If you wear contacts, take steps to prevent eye infections: Always wash your hands before you put your contact lenses in or take them out;
- Schedule and attend regular eye examinations and always wear the correct eye prescription.





Did you know?

You may not see them in your everyday life, but the WHO has identified **over 1 billion disabled people**, 20% of whom live with great functional difficulties in their day-to-day lives.

Quiz

Click the **Quiz** button to edit this object



HEALTHY **MODULE 4** **CHAPTER 3** How to reduce risk of physical and sensory impairment

As you know, Tom has some physical complaints. He has some doubts about how to deal with his difficulties with mobility. Let's help him and select what he can do every day to promote his physical and sensory health.

- Exposure to loud noise
- Avoid stressful situations
- Maintain a healthier state of mind
- Not washing his hands before putting on his contact lenses
- Sit in the sofa all day
- Use the computer all day
- Protect his eyes from the sun
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough sleep
- Live a daily day in stress

Chapter summary

1

You have learned and understand how to reduce risks of get some of the physical and sensory impairments.

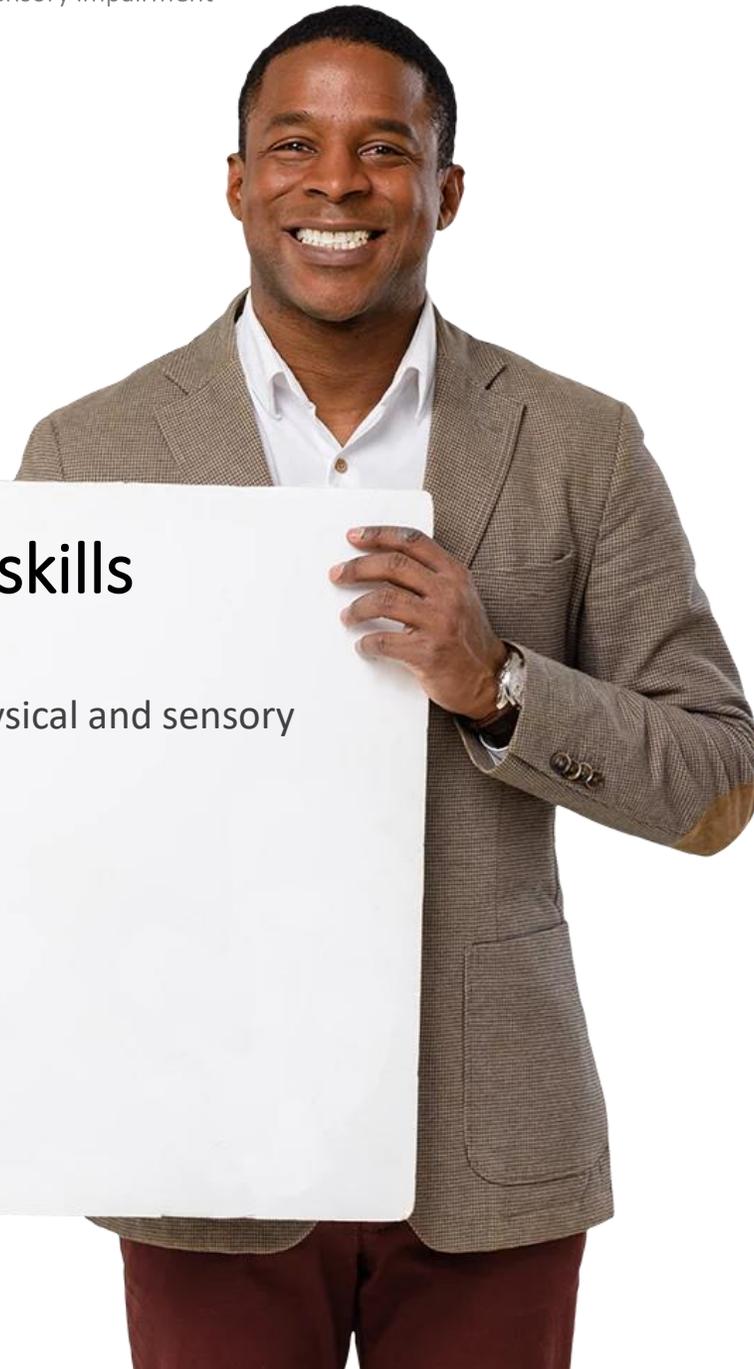
Chapter completed!

Congratulations! You have successfully completed this chapter!

Summary of acquired skills

1

How to promote good physical and sensory health.



What is next?

Now you can either repeat this chapter or follow our study recommendation by clicking on one of the buttons below:

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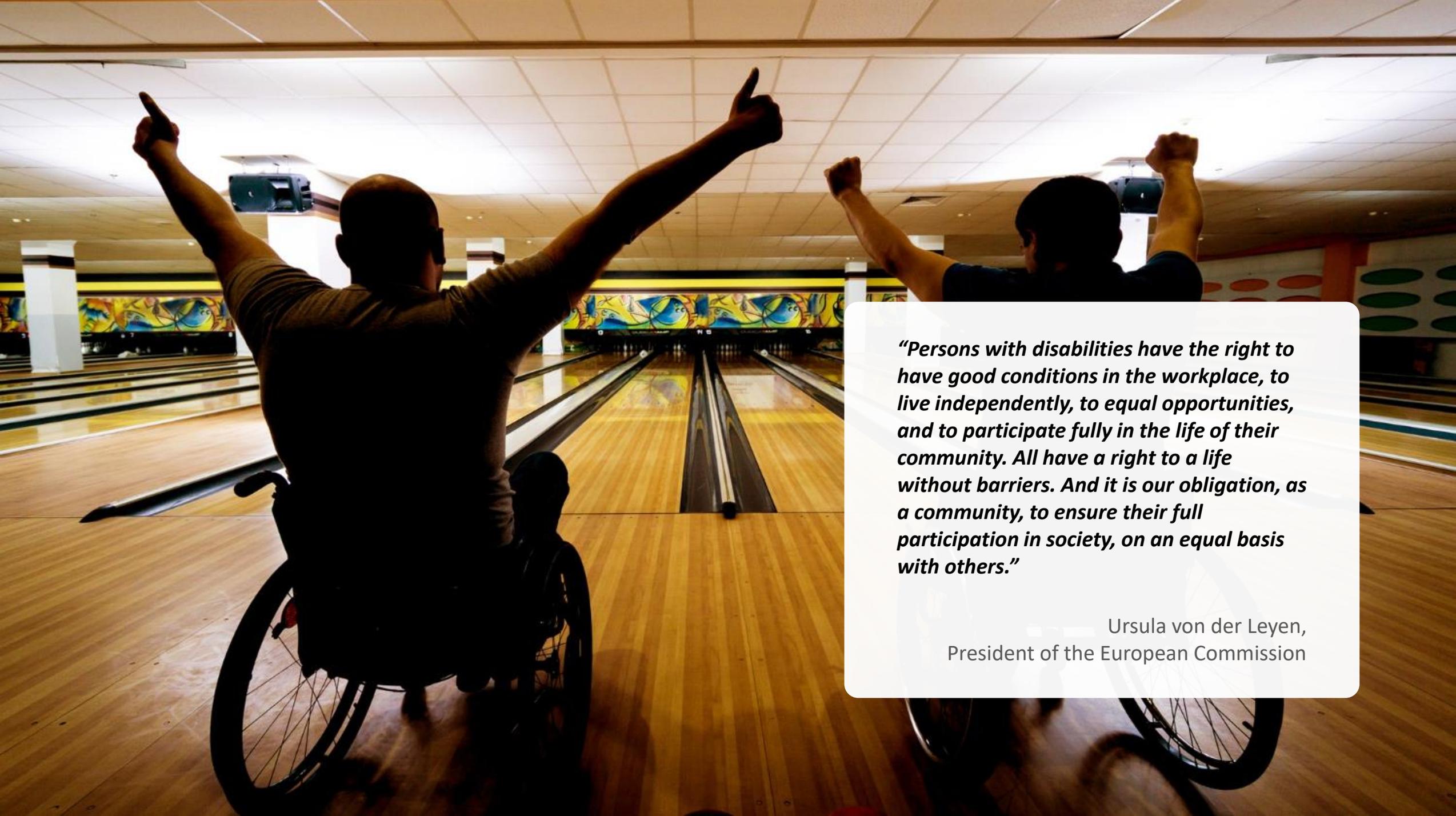
HEALTHY

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 4

Key tips and good practices

In this chapter, you will learn more about some tips and good practices on how to live with a physical and sensory impairment and help a friend or relative that has a physical and sensory impairment.



“Persons with disabilities have the right to have good conditions in the workplace, to live independently, to equal opportunities, and to participate fully in the life of their community. All have a right to a life without barriers. And it is our obligation, as a community, to ensure their full participation in society, on an equal basis with others.”

Ursula von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission

Diversity, inclusion and equity

People with physical and sensory impairments can fully participate in almost every aspect of life, namely in education, employment and community living.

Whereas diversity refers to all the many ways that people differ, equity is about creating fair access, opportunities, and advancement for all those different people.

Inclusion provides people with disabilities the same opportunities to participate in society as others. This goes beyond encouraging people – ideally, inclusion should be a key part of policies and practices everywhere.





Did you know?

People with a physical disability and sensory impairment are more likely to experience problems with hate crime or harassment - a quarter of all disabled people say that they have already experienced these hostilities.

What will you learn

- 1 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 2 Inclusive communication, information and accessibility.
- 3 Digital inclusion.
- 4 Social inclusion and opportunities.
- 5 Key tips and good practices.



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2006. The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches towards persons with disabilities.

It is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.



Inclusive communication

Do you know about inclusive communication?

Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that can be understood by everybody. The language we choose is very important in enabling everyone in feeling like they belong. Whether we intend to or not, the words we choose may include or exclude those around us.

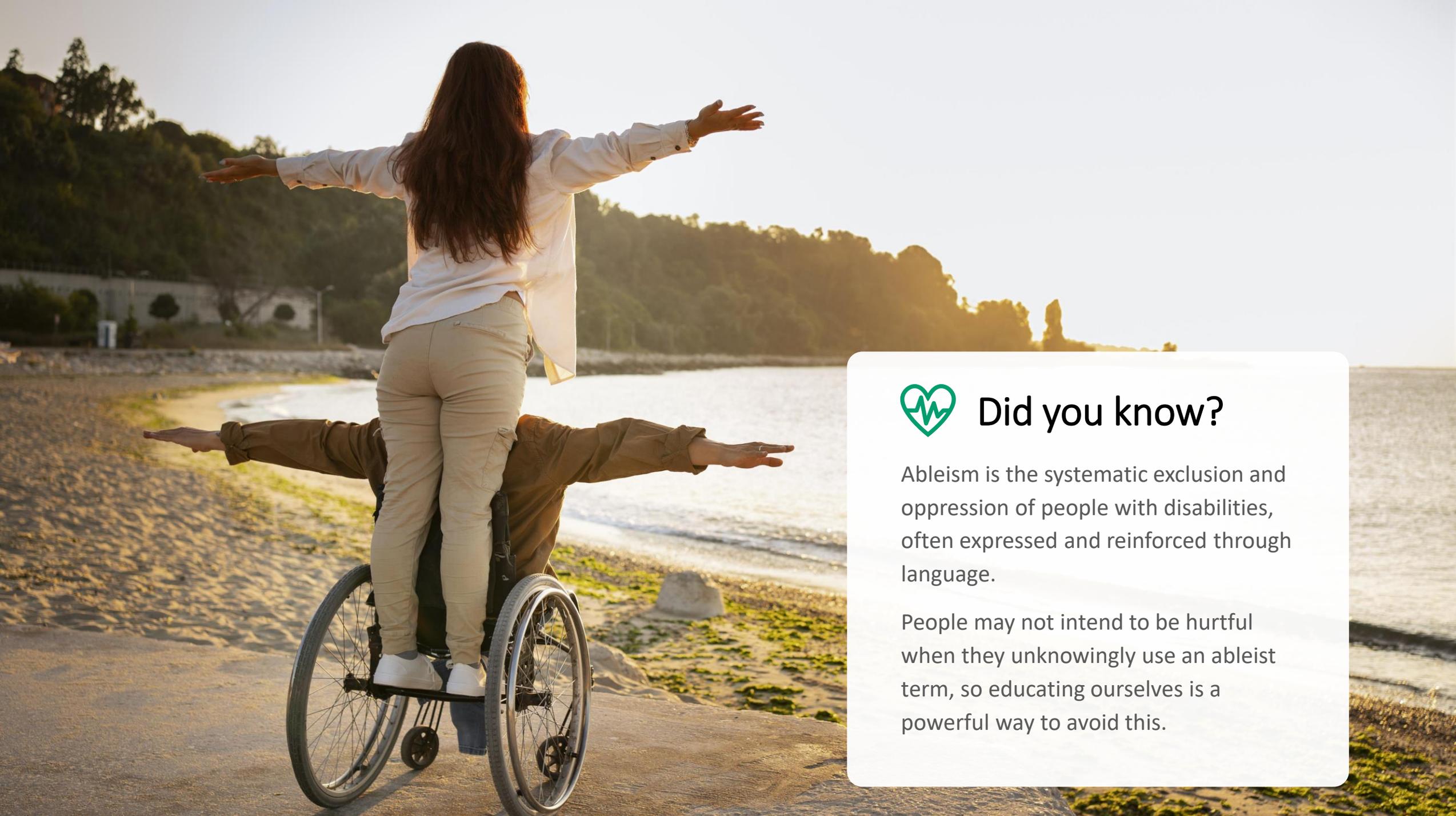
Inclusive communication should be respectful, accurate and inclusive for all. It should be free of words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotypes or discriminatory views of particular people or groups.



How to be more inclusive in your language

- Use person-first language like “**persons** of all abilities”, “**person** with a disability”, or “**person** living with a disability rather than “**the disabled person**”.
- If you’re unsure about how to refer to someone, do not hesitate to ask them how they would prefer to be addressed respectfully.
- Choose to share information about the disability promoting a perspective of acceptance rather than disability denial.
- Focus on the accessibility or disability barriers, instead of the person’s impairment.
- Be empathetic and make sure your messages do not offend other people.





Did you know?

Ableism is the systematic exclusion and oppression of people with disabilities, often expressed and reinforced through language.

People may not intend to be hurtful when they unknowingly use an ableist term, so educating ourselves is a powerful way to avoid this.

How to address people with disabilities:



Do

- Wheelchair user
- Person with intellectual disability
- Deaf people/People with hearing impairment
- Blind people/People with visual impairment
- Person with a certain condition or impairment



Don't

- The disabled
- Normal person
- Handicapped
- Wheelchair or mobility scooter bound/confined
- Able-bodied person

Key tip: When referring to people with disabilities, acknowledge “invisible” disabilities, such as learning disabilities, mental conditions or chronic pain.

Quiz

Click the **Quiz** button to edit this object

 **HEALTHY** **MODULE 4** **CHAPTER 4** Key tips and good practices

Which terms will you use to be more inclusive in your language?

- Wheelchair or mobility scooter bound/confined
- Person with intellectual disability
- Wheelchair user
- Handicapped
- Able-bodied person
- Normal person
- Deaf people/People with hearing impairment
- Blind people/People with visual impairment
- Person with a certain condition or impairment
- The disabled

Inclusive information

When communicating online or through print, the text is your main tool to make sure the information is received effectively. Here are some key tips:

- Fonts must be comfortable to read, visible and simple.
- Font sizes must be responsive, meaning that the user should be able to choose a more suitable font size and type.
- Use left-aligned text instead of justified text.
- Include spaces between paragraphs to help people keep the lines and the general idea of the text.



Inclusive information

Alt-text is a written description that accompanies a picture. Text-to-speech tools use the alt-text property to provide a description of an image to people with visual impairments. A good example of an alt text description for the image on the right could be: *"An image with two women. One of them is using a wheelchair and the other is by her side. They are surrounded by trees and are on the grass."*

Here are some more key tips:

- Design the alt-text with colourblind people in mind.
- Maintain a high contrast between the background and foreground colours.
- Avoid stereotypes and text-as-image. If you have a website, make sure that it has a simple and comprehensive layout.



Digital inclusion

Think of how many everyday activities have shifted online in recent years. Every day, we use digital tools to perform a range of tasks.

Indeed, digitalization has brought us many new and exciting opportunities. However, not everyone has equal access to these. For some people, these tools are not yet fully accessible. Others were just not taught the skills to participate in a digitized society.

According to the [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#), in 2022 the European Commission will launch a European resource centre (AccessibleEU) to increase coherence in accessibility policies and facilitate access to relevant knowledge.



Accessibility and inclusion

It is important to know that inclusion is intended to create a universal design for all people. When thinking about solutions, create a universal design, which includes designing products and environments to be usable by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or status in life:

- The design should be useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- Use of the design should be easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- The design should minimize risks and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.



Some helpful tips for someone caring a person with physical and sensory impairments

Caring for someone with physical and sensory impairments can be both physically and emotionally demanding for both parties. Let's learn some helpful tips!



Be patient Offer to help if you can and avoid showing impatience. If they have a speech impediment, let them finish their sentences to avoid any misunderstandings. You can also repeat what you have understood that they said to confirm that you have understood correctly what was said.



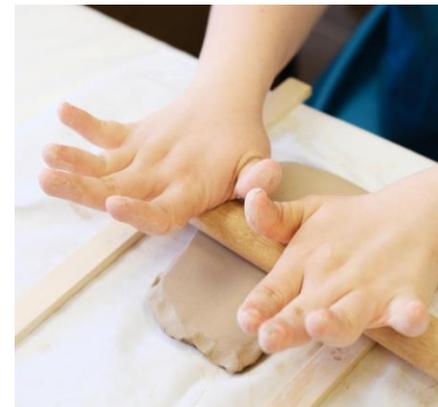
Respect the service dogs

Service dogs for people with disabilities and guide dogs for blind people can have access to all public venues. They aren't like any other dogs: they have attended a special school and know how to behave!



Respect boundaries

Even if you mean to help, it is essential to ask before helping or providing assistance and respect the boundaries that the person has established.



Celebrate wins

No matter how small the win is, celebrate it as the person needs to be motivated as much as possible.

Social inclusion and opportunities

1**2****3**

Dignity and respect for individual differences

Support people with disabilities to become well-informed and experts in their own needs. It is very important that they know and exercise their rights, choices and life opportunities.

Social inclusion and opportunities

1

2

3



Health and wellbeing

Promote health and well-being and maximise the potential of individuals, by the continuous development of an inclusive and effective range of high-quality health and social care services.

Social inclusion and opportunities

1

2

3



Equality of opportunities and access to services and facilities

Encourage the social inclusion of people with disabilities and work to address the stigma associated with disability. For example, clear and achievable recommendations should be developed, which are capable of being monitored and evaluated.



Social inclusion and opportunities

4



Family and person-centred services

Encourage family and person-centred services and the promotion of independent living options.



Hands full and hands-on: list of useful contacts and services (PT)

Here are some useful contacts in Portugal! Can you name some contacts for your country?

- ✓ SOS voz amiga helpline – emotional support:
213 544 545 / Daily from 15h30 to 00h30.
- ✓ National Help Line for the Disabled (Linha Nacional de Apoio à Deficiência): 217 959 545
- ✓ Saúde 24: 808 24 24 24
- ✓ Segurança Social: 210 545 400 or 300 502 502
- ✓ [ePortugal Public Service website](#) with information on the rights of people with disabilities
- ✓ Portuguese Cerebral Palsy Association (Federação das Associações Portuguesas de Paralisia Cerebral) : 967 214 823
- ✓ Association of the Blind and Weak-Sighted (Associação de Cegos e Amblíopes de Portugal - ACAPO): 213 244 500
- ✓ Association for Sport for Mentally Disabled People (Associação Nacional de Desporto para a Deficiência Mental - ANDDEM): 227 129 138/9
- ✓ Portuguese Federation of Sport for the Disabled (Federação Portuguesa de Desporto para Deficientes - FPDD): 219 379 950

Good practice: the LEGO® Braille Bricks

The LEGO® Braille Bricks concept is a play-based methodology that teaches braille to children who are blind or have a visual impairment.

Each brick in the LEGO® Braille Bricks toolkit retains its iconic form and is fully compatible with the LEGO System in Play. The only difference, unlike a regular LEGO® brick, is that the studs are arranged to correspond to numbers and letters in the Braille alphabet.

The bricks also feature printed letters, numbers and symbols that they can be used simultaneously by sighted peers, classmates and teachers in a collaborative and inclusive way.





Key tips checklist

- Treat every person with physical and sensory impairment with dignity.
- Be respectful and adaptable to different situations and needs.
- If you want to assist, make sure you ask the person what is the best way to help.
- Recognise that it may take more time to provide help or service to a person with a disability to ensure that their needs are appropriately met.
- Listen and make sure the other person feels comfortable.

Chapter summary

1

You have learnt more about diversity, inclusion and equity, namely the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2

You have learnt about the importance of inclusive communication, information and accessibility, as well as digital inclusion.

3

You have learnt about some tips and good practices about social inclusion and opportunities to implement them.

4

You have learnt about some tips and good practices in handling physical and sensory impairments.

Chapter completed!

Congratulations! You have successfully completed this chapter!

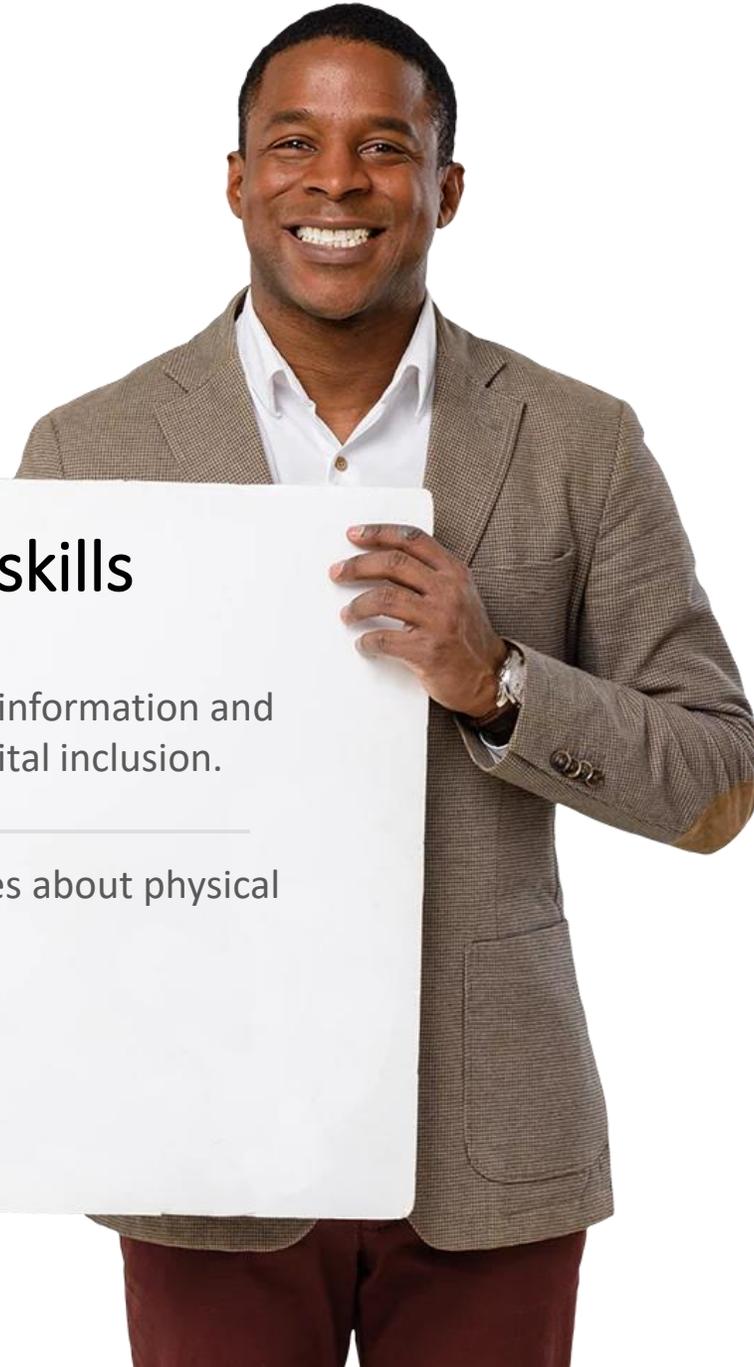
Summary of acquired skills

1

Inclusive communication, information and accessibility, as well as digital inclusion.

2

Key tips and good practices about physical and sensory impairment.



What is next?

Now you can either repeat this chapter or follow our study recommendation by clicking on one of the buttons below:

[Restart](#)[Next](#)

Module summary

- 1 What is physical and sensory impairment?

- 2 The impact of physical and sensory impairment.

- 3 How to reduce risk of physical and sensory impairment.

- 4 Key tips, good practices, support services and contacts of reference.

Module completed!

Congratulations! You have successfully completed this module!

Summary of acquired skills

1

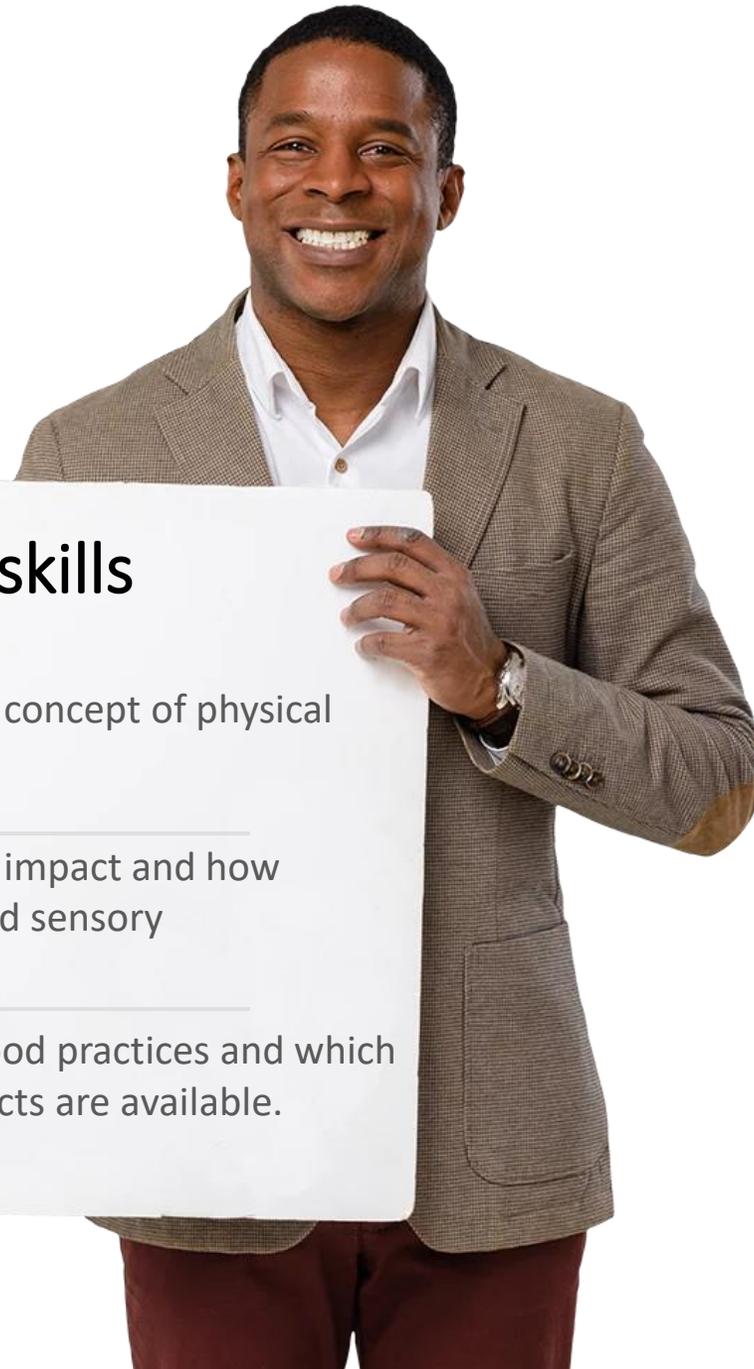
You have learnt about the concept of physical and sensory impairments.

2

You have learnt about the impact and how reduce risks of physical and sensory impairments.

3

You have learnt key tips, good practices and which support services and contacts are available.



What is next?

Now you can either repeat this module or follow our study recommendation by clicking on one of the buttons below:

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