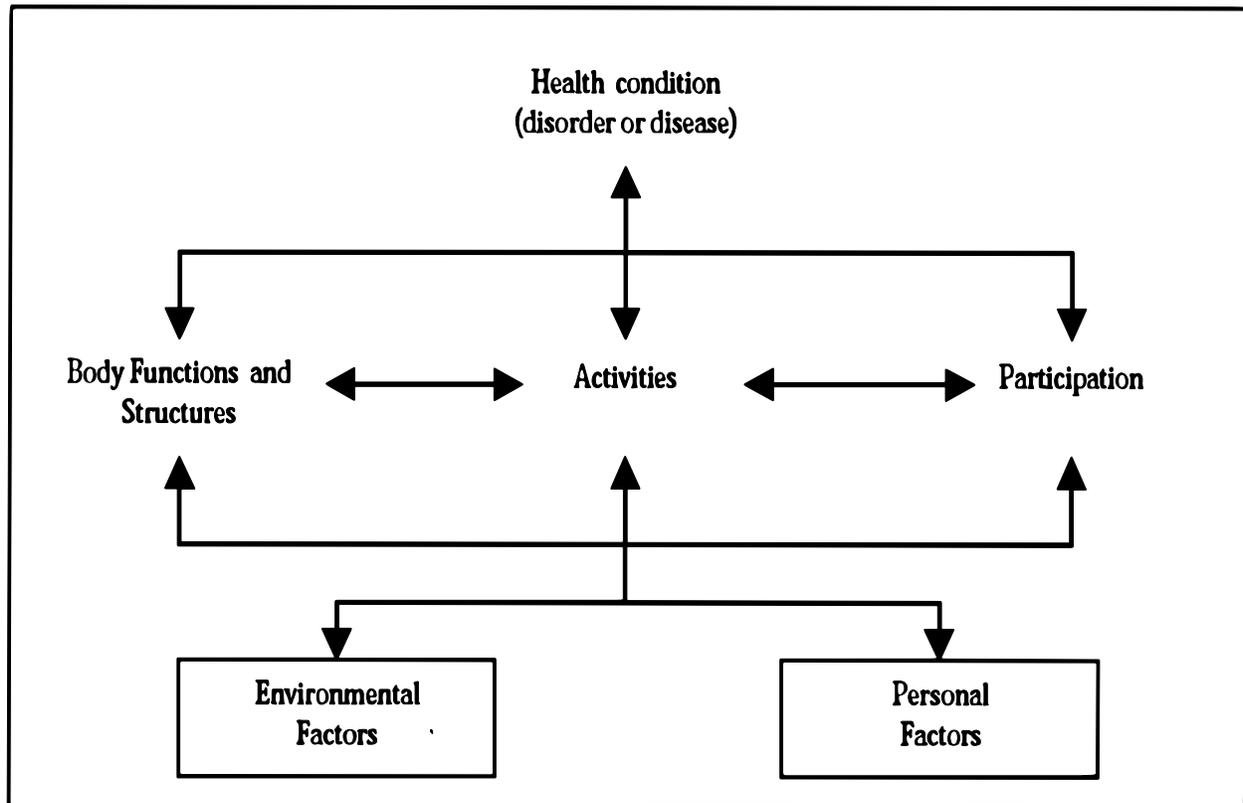


Understanding Disability, a paradigm shift: The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)

The ICF provides a uniform framework and language to better understand *the complex interaction between a person's health condition, environmental and personal factors*. **Functioning** is an umbrella term for body functions, structure, activities and participation. **Disability** is an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Complex **Environmental** and **Personal factors** impact a person's health and disability (World Health Organization, 2001, United Nations, 2008; see also the World Report on Disability (2011: http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/).



Body Functions and Structures

Mental functions, structure nervous system
Sensory (seeing, hearing, balance, pain)
Voice and speech
Cardiovascular, hematological,
immunological, respiratory systems
Digestive, metabolic, and endocrine systems
Genitourinary, reproductive functions
Neuromusculoskeletal and movement-related
Skin and related structures

Activities

Learning, applying knowledge
General tasks and demands
Communication
Mobility
Self-care

Participation

Domestic life
Interpersonal interactions and relationships
Major life areas
Community, social and civic life

Environmental factors

Products and technology
Natural environment and human-made changes to the environment
Support and relationships
Attitudes
Services, systems and policies

Personal factors (not classified)

Demographics, social economic status, education, self efficacy, coping, lifestyle, behaviors, and other characteristics

Recommended Disability-related Neutral Terminology March 13, 2014

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Understanding the concept accessibility, inclusion and disability	The concept that may lead to labeling, stigma
<i>Accessibility</i> is the recognition and commitment by stakeholders (incl. policy makers, managers, people with disabilities) to eliminate physical, communication, attitudinal, and other barriers and to replace them with attitudes of welcome, support, and <i>inclusive</i> policies.	The term <i>accessibility</i> is often misunderstood, and narrowly identified as the access of a building by a person with a mobility (e.g., someone in a wheelchair), hearing or visual impairment.
<i>Disability</i> is the outcome of complex interactions between a health condition and the physical, social, economic and other environmental factors. WHO, 2001*, United Nations, 2006.**	Most medical and legal <i>definitions of disability</i> are grounded on terms of defects and deficiencies, rather than variation. This perspective can lead to social stigma, inequality, isolation, and marginalization.
The <i>comprehensive bio-psycho-social model</i> combines the medical and social model and acknowledges that every person is unique. Disability issues concern each of us.	The <i>medical model</i> focus is often on deficits and “fixing” the disability; the social model focus is on social change, this may lead to labeling and (ableism). Both models have limitations.
Everyone will experience difficulty <i>functioning</i> at some point of their life.	At the core is a person’s (dis)ability, a <i>differently</i> able person (why different?).
Examples of recommended terminology	Terms that may lead to labeling, stigma
Disability-related language should be neutral and responsive to social change.*** A person with a disability is universal recognized terminology.	A person is disabled, crippled; the handicapped, the disabled.***
A child with Down’s syndrome (or any other diagnoses).	An a-typical child; a child with special needs; an abnormal, incompetent, challenged child.
She has intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.	She is retarded, she has mental retardation. She struggles with her disability.
What is this person’s gift, talents?	What is wrong with this person?
He has a hearing impairment; Deaf community.	The deaf people, the Deaf and dumb.
A worker has depression or other diagnosis (DX).	A worker suffers from depression or other DX.
My friend’s disability is invisible.	My friend has a hidden disability.
He uses a wheelchair.	He is confined to a wheelchair, wheelchairbound.
Accessible parking, entrance, restroom.	Handicapped parking, disabled restroom.
A service animal, or service dog.	A seeing eye dog.

***International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF)**, World Health Organization, 2001 <http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/>

** **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (2006), United Nations, <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

*****Nothing about Us without Us**, James Charlton (1998)

See also *Guidelines*: how to write a report about people with disabilities (www.rtcil.org)

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