<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Demystifying Disabilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Created by</td>
<td>Eva Cowen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended Audience</td>
<td>Children, teens, adults, lay leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials Needed</td>
<td>Optical illusion image – old/young woman and/or two faces &amp; a cup (see below) A blank piece of paper for every participant, 10 to 14 poster sized post-it note</td>
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| Program Description | 1. Start with a discussion about the fact that ALL take in and process information differently. Without telling participants that this is an optical illusion, show the group the drawing that is an old woman/ a young woman depending on how you look at it. Ask someone what he or she see, ask who sees something different. Repeat for the picture of the two faces/cup. Put each image on a separate sheet to display more easily.  
2. Discuss how we all generally perceive things differently for a variety of reasons.  
3. Give each person a blank piece of paper. Ask them to close their eyes and hold the paper over their heads. Keeping their eyes closed, ask them to follow the instructions:  
  - They cannot ask questions for clarification.  
  - Fold the paper in half, tear off the bottom corner of the paper, tear the paper in half again, tear of the top right corner, open the paper and fold it diagonally, tear of the lower left corner, etc. (Note: the leader can improvise the instructions)  
  - Everyone is asked to open their eyes and their papers.  
  - Even though everyone was given the "same" directions, everyone's paper looks different.  
4. Lead a discussion about how we all perceive and take in information differently  
5. Post poster size post-it notes around the room. At the top of each write:  
  - Write the name of a disability: autism, learning disabilities, Down's syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, etc. Ask participants to go around the room and write on the posters anything they know or have heard about that disability. Let them know it is OK to write something even if they are not sure it is true.  
  - On a second poster create two columns. Using the same disabilities from the first post, write "If I had ______ it would be hard for me to ___________" on one poster and "If I had ______ it would be easy for me to__________"  
6. Then gather the group together to review. It is important that no one is shamed for writing something that isn’t true or is a stereotype.  
7. Use the posters as a starting point to dispel myths about what people with certain disabilities can and cannot do. Also make sure to highlight all the things they CAN do.  
8. Remind the group that:  
  - We all perceive things differently – all of us, those with and without disabilities  
  - We should examine our own perceptions about disabilities and make sure to remember that there are things we all CAN do. |