

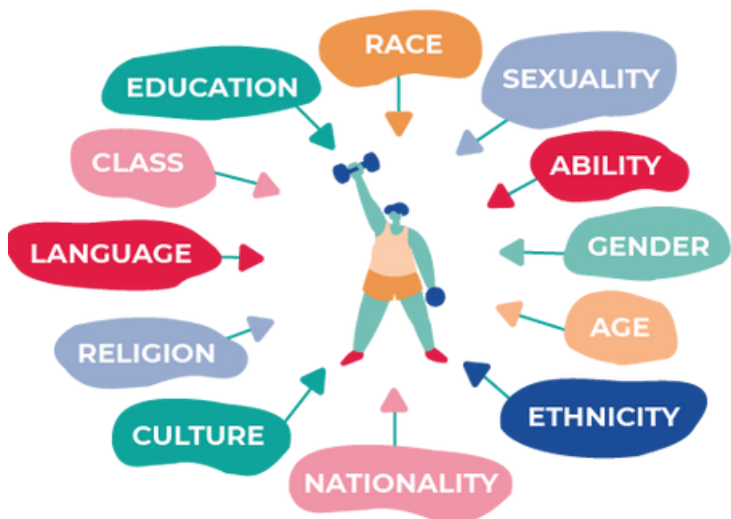
Creating Accessible Spaces for Women

A Tool for Fitness and Physical Activity Organizations and Providers



Accessibility for Women: What is it and why is it important?

Accessibility is an idea that can involve many different elements. Designing accessible environments requires consideration of multiple factors that may create barriers to participation for women. When these barriers are overlooked or inadequately addressed, women in the community may feel unwelcome or uncomfortable using physical activity resources, which can impact health outcomes. An accessible environment takes into consideration both physical spaces as well as behavioural and psycho-social atmospheres.



This toolkit offers actions you can take to enhance physical activity environments to be more accessible for women experiencing barriers to participation.

Accessible environments for women may include some of the following features:

- Free or inexpensive admission
- Women-only hours
- Childcare programming
- Family-oriented programming
- Communication of organizational values
- Diverse people in images and visual materials
- Plain language and signage
- Welcoming and approachable staff
- Orientation for beginners

Barriers to Participation

Women living in marginalizing conditions often face a variety of circumstances that can create barriers to participation. Some examples of life circumstances that contribute to health inequity include having low income and/or unstable housing or employment; having children that need care; or having experiences of racism, sexism, trauma, or violence. Tailoring services to meet the needs of women with such experiences can help to reduce the barriers to participation that reinforce health inequities.

What Can Physical Activity Organizations Do?

- Ensure staff **can access and take part in training** to enhance their knowledge, skills, and awareness about trauma and violence.
- Ensure staff are supported to **remain healthy** while working with people who experience trauma.
- Create **policies** that reflect the diverse needs of people with experiences of intersecting marginalizing conditions.



Personal

- Recognize, understand, and control one's emotions
- Be confident and trustworthy
- Be adaptable to difficult and changing situations
- Participate in ongoing self-reflections

Technique

- Have awareness of personal strengths and limitations
- Use clear explanations and plain language
- Use adaptable techniques
- Take time to develop alternative approaches

Methods

- Plan for multiple situations
- Set clear and flexible objectives
- Plan progressive steps toward goals
- Offer alternative choices
- Offer ongoing discussion

Social

- Be enthusiastic and encouraging
- Provide constructive feedback
- Use empathy
- Set clear rules and boundaries
- Encourage personal decision-making

[Adapted from [1]]

[1] Ammann, P. & Matuska, N. (2014). Women on the Move: Trauma-informed interventions based on sport and play: A toolkit for practitioners. Swiss Academy of Development (SAD).

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