

# Carmen Papalia

## Open Access

### 2015

## Conceptual framework

In 2015 artist Carmen Papalia responded to the failures that he experienced as a recipient of institutional disability support services with Open Access, a conceptual framework for accessibility that moves beyond a policy or accommodation-based model with guidelines for mutual care. Consisting of 5 tenets that describe what it means to offer support in the midst of an oppressive system, Open Access mobilizes an interrogation of the social, cultural and political conditions that restrain agency over strengthening accessibility measures that are the result of legal and regulatory compliance. Since first presenting it as his personal position statement in 2015, Papalia has used the Open Access framework as the basis for performances, public interventions, curatorial proposals and a movement building campaign at cultural institutions across Canada, the US, UK and EU.

---

Open Access relies on those present, what their needs are and how they can find support with each other and in their communities. It is a perpetual negotiation of trust between those who practice support as a mutual exchange.

Open Access is radically different than a policy that temporarily removes a barrier to participation for a group with definitive needs. It acknowledges that everyone carries a body of local knowledge and is an expert in their own right.

Open access is the root system of embodied learning. It cultivates trust among those involved and enables each member to self-identify and occupy a point of orientation that centers complex embodiment.

Open Access disrupts the disabling conditions that limit ones agency and potential to thrive. It reimagines normalcy as a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities and learning styles, and operates under the tenet that interdependence is central to a radical restructuring of power.

Open Access is a temporary, collectively-held space where participants can find comfort in disclosing their needs and preferences with one another. It is a responsive support network that adapts as needs and available resources change.