

Practical Tips for an Inclusive World



Talking Mimes

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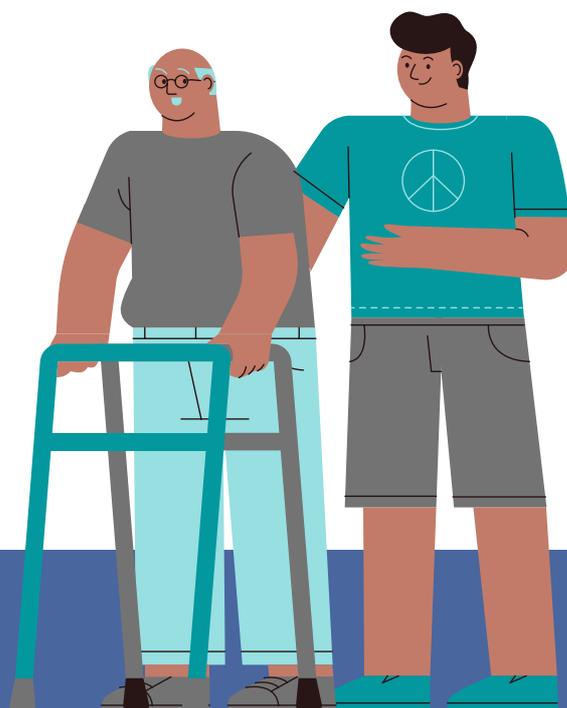




Thank you for taking part in the Talking Mimes experience

This handout is a reminder of some of the things covered during your experience, and workshop.

Here, you'll find some practical tips, and stories of people with disabilities to help you make our society inclusive for all.



Too often, people with disabilities aren't seen or heard, and are treated unfairly and inequitably

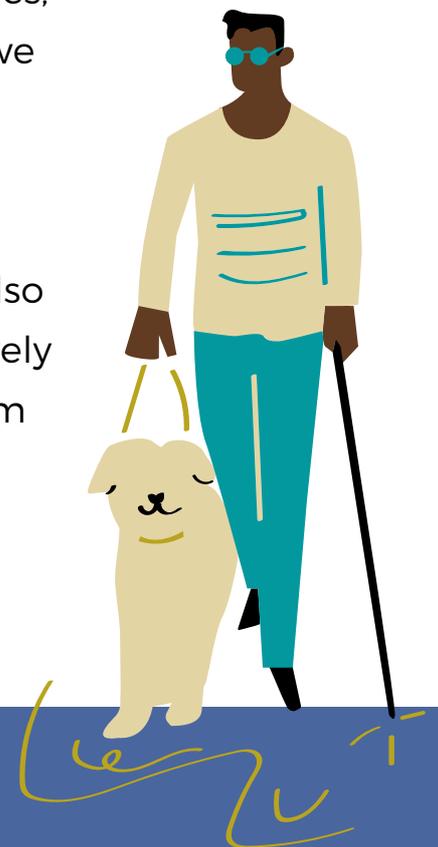
We need to change that

One in four people have some sort of disability - it may be a friend, family member, colleague or neighbour - and more than likely it could be you, now or in the future.

The way we as a society currently treat people with disabilities is unjust and costly.

When we don't provide equal access to opportunities, we create barriers for mental and physical health, we reduce their ability to gain an education, community/social integration, and employment.

The cost isn't just psychological and physical, but also financial. The global economy is short a conservatively estimated US\$2.6 trillion of missed opportunity from barriers to education and the workforce.



The more we learn, the more people with disabilities will be included in society

Having a more accurate understanding of disability will enable you to be supportive, and challenge other people's biased actions - from here the barriers start to break down.

People with disabilities are just that - people. People with diverse abilities and needs, just like the rest of humanity.

Diversity is something that we should celebrate and embrace, rather than shy away from, shun, or ignore.

Growing bodies of research show group diversity leads to significantly better outcomes. A more diverse and inclusive world will benefit everyone.



Get to know Professor Stephen Hawking



Renowned theoretical physicist and cosmologist, Professor Stephen Hawking, was diagnosed with motor neurone disease at the age of 21 - a terminal neurodegenerative disease which causes people to become “locked in”.

Although Professor Hawking was told he only had a few years to live, he proved everyone wrong by outliving his prognosis by more than 50 years!

As his condition deteriorated there were people around him who thought he would not be able to continue his work, or live a meaningful life.

Professor Hawking is a perfect example of someone who can live a full life, if the right support is available.

He completed his doctoral studies, published numerous books (including children’s books) and articles, won extensive prizes, married, had children, starred in TV shows, and continued his incredible research which has shaped how we understand the fabric of our reality.

Imagine if he was not given the support and technology to live such a fulfilling and meaningful life, and enrich the world with his genius in physics and science communication.



We believe in the social model of disability

not the medical model of disability

key differences:

The medical model says that disability is a deficiency or abnormality.

The social model says that disability is a difference, in the same way as a person's gender, age or race.

The medical model says that having a disability is negative.

The social model says that having a disability is neutral. It is a part of who you are.

The medical model says that the disability is in you and it is your problem.

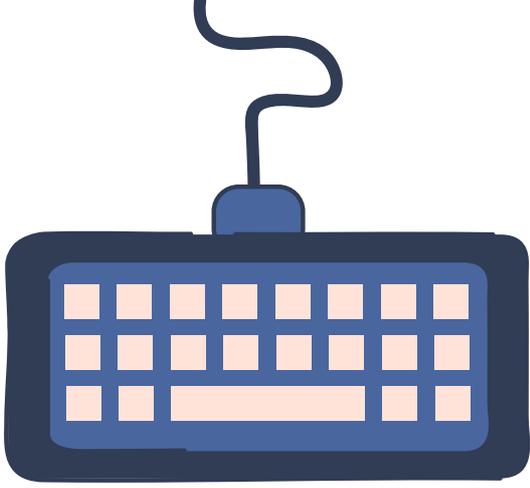
The social model says that disability exists in the interaction between the individual and society. It stems from trying to function in an inaccessible world.

The medical model tries to remedy disability purely through a medical cure, or by trying to make the person appear less disabled.

The social model says that the remedy involves a change in the interaction between the individual and society.

This does not take away the importance of medical and engineering research and intervention. Rather, it says that these must be undertaken with a conscious investigation and understanding of the broader social context of the work.





Get to know Martin Pistorius

Martin Pistorius is best known for his best selling book *Ghost Boy*, which describes his experience living with locked-in syndrome.

At the age of 12, he started losing motor control and eventually fell into a vegetative state. He regained full consciousness, but was still completely paralysed (locked-in) for 12 years.

Everyone around him thought that he remained in a vegetative state, and treated him so. Only, he was completely conscious and aware of everything happening around him.

One of his carers noticed that Martin was trying to communicate with her through his eyes. She contacted specialists to run tests on him, confirming that he was 100% conscious.

After this realisation, his parents gave him a speech synthesiser to help him communicate. By this time, he began slowly regaining some upper body functions and was able to access the computer on his own.

This access to technology enabled him to train as a web designer/developer, start a successful business, author a New York Times best selling book, and deliver a hugely popular TED Talk.



People with disabilities aren't 'inspiration porn'

People with disabilities don't appreciate being referred to as "inspirational" because of their impairments. These remarks are made for ordinary mundane things like going to the supermarket, attending a party, or building lego (yes, this was in national news!).

People with disabilities are trying to live their lives like everyone else. Your praise for everyday activities will have a negative effect, reminding them of how different or pitiable people still think they are.

Don't use people with disabilities as thresholds to make you feel inspired to do more with your life, or to make you appreciate how good life is without a disability.

Avoid saying things like "if he can run a marathon with no legs, then what's my excuse?" and "seeing you struggle with your wheelchair makes me so thankful for being mobile."

It's not the person's abilities that are barriers to living a full life, it's our societal attitudes and environments that are disabling.



Get to know

Stella Young



Stella Young was born with severe osteogenesis imperfecta (also known as brittle bone disease), which meant she lived with chronic and complex health needs, and used a wheelchair for mobility.

At the age of 14, Stella became a fierce advocate for accessibility in Australia - starting with the physical environment.

She went on to study journalism, worked as a secondary school teacher, became the editor of ABC's Ramp Up magazine, host of a TV show, public speaker, and comedian.

She is known internationally for her stance on people with disabilities being used as "inspiration porn", and her incredible TEDxSydney talk "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much".

In her talk she teaches the audience to be more proactive about changing the face of disability:

"no amount of smiling at a flight of stairs has ever made it turn into a ramp. Smiling at a television screen isn't going to make closed captions appear for people who are deaf. No amount of standing in the middle of a book shop and radiating a positive attitude is going to turn all those books into Braille."



Actions to take now to be an ally/change maker

Do not victimise people with disabilities.

Referring to someone as a “spinal cord injury victim,” or “cerebral palsy victim,” takes away that person’s power.

It robs them of their strength and ability to overcome because the emphasis is on what happened to them, as opposed to what they did about it.

Don’t assume they see their disability as a tragedy. People with disabilities can and do live hugely full, meaningful lives. Remember, it’s more often our attitudes that hold people back.

Talk to the person, like you would a friend

Don’t assume that someone cannot understand or respond. Always speak to the person before approaching a caregiver.

By approaching the caregiver first, the person with the disability assumes you see them as unequal or incapable.

Don’t talk louder, and don’t speak to people as though they are children or can’t understand you. Speak as though you are talking to a friend, unless they indicate they can’t hear you.

If someone has a hearing impairment, you’ll need to find alternative means of communication.

Give the person your full attention

Don’t interrupt or finish the person’s sentences. If you have trouble understanding, ask them to repeat.

In most cases the person won’t mind and will appreciate your effort to hear what they have to say.

If you are not sure whether you have understood, you can repeat for verification, or suggest another way of facilitating communication.



Actions to take now to be an ally/change maker

Ask before helping

People with disabilities are generally good at asking for help, so always allow them the opportunity to do so.

If you do want to help, take a moment to assess the situation, then ask the person first. Don't jump into their personal space and assume that help is needed.

Make sure you don't move people who use wheelchairs without their permission, as it's disrespectful and could compromise their safety

Design for EVERYONE

If you're designing or building something, whether it's a physical or electronic product or service, consider how someone with a vision, hearing, cognitive or physical impairment would interact with it.

Universal design benefits everyone (think of the wheelchair ramp that's also used for courier trolleys and baby strollers; the curb cut effect).

People who designed for disability have given us modern wonders, from the humble keyboard to the backbones of the Internet.

Adjust your body position to be eye-level

The height difference between yourself and people in wheelchairs can create an unspoken feeling of superiority and inferiority.

To be safe, sit or stand at eye-level with the person who has a disability when it is appropriate and possible.



Resources for further learning

- Attitude Live: The world's largest collection of videos about chronic health and disability
<https://attitudelive.com>
- Able Magazine: An online magazine all about disability
<https://ablemagazine.co.uk>
- The Disability Visibility Project: An online community dedicated to creating, sharing, and amplifying disability media and culture
<https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com>
- Accessibility Insights: Excellent free resources/tools for accessible web and desktop application design
<https://accessibilityinsights.io/>
- Perceived Weakness is Actual Strength: An excerpt from an interview about Talking Mimes highlighting some of the extraordinary upsides of disability
<https://talkingmimes.com/pwac>

