**Crip Chat Episode 13**

**Topic: Navigating COVID-19 Discrimination**

Key Points:

* As people venture out into society, they may experience more discrimination and intolerance than prior to COVID-19
* Why do people discriminate, why do we predict discrimination will rise?
* Coping with discrimination. – remember change doesn’t come about until we speak out. In calling out ableist attitudes and behaviour we bring them to light, we can then work with policy makers to ensure
* What to do when you’re discriminated against.

**Introduction**

This week, the U.S Open announced they had cut wheelchair tennis from their program during the COVID-19 crisis. The move comes as stark reminder that disability discrimination has not gone away while we’ve stayed hidden in our homes.

With COVID-19 comes a new wave of discrimination and judgement that we must face.

**U.S Tennis Open Cancels Wheelchair Events**

Dylan Alcott described the U.S Open’s move as "disgusting discrimination".

Although U.S. Open organisers have also eliminated the mixed doubles and juniors competitions, while reducing the number of teams in men's and women's doubles events by half in a bid to cut the number of players at the tournament for health reasons.

As Alcott pointed out in series of tweets,

"Please do not tell me I am a 'greater risk' because I am disabled,"

"I am disabled yes but that does not make me SICK."

"It is blatant discrimination for able-bodied people to decide on my behalf what I do with my LIFE AND CAREER just because I am disabled. Not good enough,"

**Experiencing discrimination**

The discrimination Dylan experienced is likely to become commonplace during this crisis. Organisers of events will likely leave people with disabilities out of the equation due to the belief that all people with disabilities are high risk/ sick. This leads to our next point, why do people discriminate.

Discrimination in a world emerging from COVID-19 may take on different forms, it could be organisational discrimination such as the type Alcott faced with the U.S open, or it can be more subtle and take the form of societal discrimination.

Societal discrimination refers to how people treat you, as a person with a disability in society.

**Some examples of what societal discrimination may look like.**

* People avoiding you (crossing the street/ giving you an abnormally wide berth when walking near you)
* Dirty looks or staring at you (especially if you are wearing a mask)
* On the flip side, you may have the opposite problem. People may disregard social distancing in an attempt to provide you unwarranted ‘help’ in public. Example, someone pushing your wheelchair from behind suddenly if they see you pushing up a hill or reaching for groceries on a shelf.

Don’t be afraid to be firm and say “please keep your distance, I don’t need help, thank you for your offer.”

**Why do people discriminate, why do we predict discrimination will rise?**Psychologists are still learning why people discriminate. Discrimination appears to be present acrro

Most common reasons are

* a lack of exposure to disability
* lack of understanding about disability
* ingrained, outdated attitudes towards people with disabilities (the trope that people with disabilities are a burden on society)
* Coping with discrimination. – remember change doesn’t come about until we speak out. In calling out ableist attitudes and behaviour we bring them to light, we can then work with policy makers to ensure  
    
  there’s a few ways to cope with discrimination, it depends on the type of person you are and/or the mood you’re in.  
    
  there’s the comedic / witty approach  
    
  E.g You may be wearing a mask in public and someone says “Gosh I hate people like you…” you could respond with something like “Who, the disabled or immunocompromised?”  
    
  Someone may stare at you while you’re out shopping.

a) stare back and see if you can out stare them

b) ignore them

c) smile at them

* What to do when you’re discriminated against.