# Video: Mila Janssen’s podcast

## Transcript

## Mila Janssen, Client 2 speaking

**Looking for work, the experience of a woman with a disability.**

Hello I am Mila Janssen and I am participating in the arts program here at GCBH.

It’s such a great program, I really recommend it. I started here a while ago after I was in a car accident. During my rehabilitation, I found that the classes really helped my stress management and I loved meeting all the other participants. I’ve really made some life-long friends here. And I’ve discovered that I’ve got a talent painting. I’ve even sold some work at the Art Centre.

People have suggested that I could do art as a career, and I’ve also been looking into studying graphic design.

I’m looking for work at the moment. You know, just temp work or office work, which I’ve done off and on in the past. Money is a bit tight at the moment. Luckily, I was raised by Dutch parents, so I’ve got a black belt in bargain hunting!

But it’s been hard to find opportunities ever since the accident. I have muscle damage in my right leg, which means that I use a cane when I walk.

Sometimes I think that’s the only thing a potential employer sees in me. Maybe they get worried that I won’t fit into their workplace? Or that I won’t physically cope in the workplace? In one interview, a guy asked me if I was able to use stairs, because they didn’t have a lift, but the way he asked, well, I didn’t feel like he was just confirming my access needs. Another even asked me if I had a husband who helped me at home.

For a start, it’s not even their business if I have a partner or not! I’ve always been an independent woman, whether I was in a relationship or not, so that made my blood boil!

And having a disability has not weakened my independence. Employers don’t realise that when you live with a disability you become an expert problem solver. Because this world is not often set up to consider people with disabilities.

You should check out The Disabled List, it’s a US based disability-led, self advocacy organization that is creating the opportunities in design for people with disabilities.

I’ll put a link to the website in the podcast notes.

Liz Jackson, who is one its founders says, and I quote, “Disabled people are the original lifehackers. Our lives are spent cultivating an intuitive creativity, because we navigate a world that isn’t built for our bodies.”

I think she’s spot on.  Every day I am finding new and better ways to do things.

For example, I’m an excellent time manager because I need to work in shorter bursts of time than other people, so that I can rest my body. That means that I can switch on and focus without having to go through all the time wasting and procrastinating that my colleagues seem to do.

I also think I’m a much more observant and empathetic person now, which I think is a strength for any workplace.

If people and businesses thought more about what people with disabilities can do, rather than what they can’t do, then everyone would be better off.

**Link for credits:**

The Disabled List: <https://www.disabledlist.org>

Australian Government Job Access site: <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>