# Video: Vicky Fisher’s podcast

## Transcript

## Vicky Fisher, Community arts worker at Gentown Community and Business Hub speaking

**Creating practical change for people with disabilities.**

Hello, I am Vicky Fisher.

You might know me as one of the Community Arts Worker at GCBH. I also have a career as a sculptor and painter.

I’m pretty proud to say I’ve had a great career so far. I’ve exhibited and sold my work around Australia and the world. A few years ago, I was an artist in residence at the Cite internationale des arts in Paris. I lived there for three amazing months soaking up the French life, meeting fellow artists, and making work in a great studio.

Here’s something else you might not know about me, I have low vision and can only see out of my left eye. But I am not here to be your inspiration or to attract your pity, I am here to do the work that I love.

I am a successful artist and I love my job. I experience all the same joys, fears, hopes and disappointments in life like anyone else. My partner is always telling me off for working too hard and not spending enough time with her. It’s like any other relationship.

You might understand that people with disabilities experience particular challenges that people without disabilities don’t have to experience. And you might understand that women and gender-diverse people experience more inequality than men in society.

But what you might not understand is that when you’re a woman, or gender diverse person, who also has a disability, you experience more complex challenges.

People say I’m courageous but I just want to get on with my work. And for my work to be recognised and respected.

It’s true - I have a different perspective and my disability has helped me develop a unique artistic style. It’s part of my strength and I’m not afraid to use my voice.

Language is a powerful tool and can really make a huge difference to someone’s sense of pride, identity and agency. Here are a few things that can help when you’re talking about disability.

* Focus on the person, not the impairment.   
  So, you could say a person with a disability rather than a disabled person. Or a person with low vision rather than a vision impaired person. You put the person first and then the impairment.
* Don’t think of people with disabilities as inspiration or objects of pity.   
  Like I said earlier, I’m just living my life like anyone else. And I’d rather be recognised for my achievements. Think about how patronising it would sound if people thought you were amazing for making a cup of tea!
* Avoid euphemisms and made-up words like ‘Differently abled’ or ‘special needs’. Again, it just sounds patronising and awkward. I am a person with a disability. That’s just a fact, it’s neither good nor bad. So, let’s be direct and talk as equals.
* And finally, just relax.   
  Remember that you’re simply talking with another person. So, don’t let your fear of saying the wrong thing get in the way of having a conversation at all! As long as you’re willing to chat, listen and learn, you’ll be ok.

There are also some really practical things that people can do to be more inclusive.

I’m reminded of something that the late, great Stella Young, a disability activist, used to say, “No amount of positive thinking can turn a staircase into a ramp.” You’d be surprised how many galleries are up several flights of stairs with no lift in sight! I’ll put a link to Stella’s TED talk in the podcast credits.

I remember at one of my first group shows someone wrote a catalogue but I couldn’t read it because the print was too small. Instead of consulting me first, the show organisers did all the work, thinking they knew what I wanted to say and how I wanted to tell my story. When I found it was in a format that was not accessible to me, I was disappointed, and felt frustrated and disempowered by the experience.

I always tell people without disabilities to think about how their words and their actions will impact someone with a disability. And to consider new ways of doing things that are more inclusive of people with disabilities.

Women with disabilities can help you see this world through different eyes. Work with us, not for us, and together we can make it a better place.

**Links for credits:**

Australian Network on Disability Inclusive language: https://www.and.org.au/pages/inclusive-language.html

Stella Young’s TED Talk: <https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much/discussion>

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