

# Working with diverse people: Video 2

## Transcript

- [uplifting music]
- What do disability support staff...
- Most frequently misunderstand...
- Or dismiss about your needs?
- Well, I had experiences in the past where my support staff didn't really understand my needs.
- That comes across, because a lot of people think that you need someone with you like all the time.
- Yes, definitely They don't really understand, the importance of my independence.
- Yeah, 'cause I think it's kind of about facilitating independence. Yeah, so I also think it's really important that as a support worker, you understand when you just need to take a break and step back and let the person you're supporting have their say and their agency to do what they want to do.
- I always tell you when I need you.
- A big challenge is figuring out where the person you're working with is at. Like in the initial stages, finding out their capabilities and where they're at is always challenging, but once you, you know, get handle on that, it's easy. If you have a bad day, Rob, I mean that can be
- Challenging, what-
- You know, sometimes if you get a bit anxious or something, that can be challenging, but you know, you have the skills and you just deal with it.
- Yeah.
- It's just part of the day.

- I think the biggest thing I've had questioned is, food and cooking. They don't understand I can't actually cook, not because I'm just a really bad cook, but because I've tried and I've dislocated my shoulder, you know, it's just one of those things that I can't do.

- Like my body is riddled with arthritis, and every task is such a chore and such an effort and leaves you so exhausted and drained, so, you know, it's why are you sitting on your ass, or you know, get out, come do something with us, like, you know, we're going on a trip, let's go do something fun, and it's like, I'm in the worst pain imaginable right now, and I'm trying to just keep that under wraps, to be an enjoyable person to be around. And then so, you know, they drag you out, they convince you to go, they drag you out there and then wonder why you're miserable.

- Probably that I need time out and I might sort of say, well actually, I don't wanna talk anymore, I'm gonna ask you to sit in the lounge room for 10 minutes, I'm gonna have a cup of tea by myself. But that gets back to communication, and I think to be fair to the support worker, how do they know that, unless you tell them?

- All right, are there small things that

- People assume about you that annoy you?

- Only that I talk sometimes because my speech is hard to understand so they just think that I'm not as intelligent.

- That's the first thing that came to mind for me as well.

- Yeah.

- Yeah, I've seen that. People assume that quite a lot.

- It's really annoying.

- Yeah, I get a bit frustrated by it too.

- I'm like you.

- Yeah, I annoy you?

- Sometimes, if... You keep beating me at NBA.

- Yeah, well, you have to practice, if you lose, you lose.

- I do practice. They do assume that I perhaps been attending therapy, so they may assume that I'm seeing my doctor regularly. They assume that, well you must have some sort of illness.

- What are the micro-aggressions

- That wear you down in daily life? There are heaps of them from a disability perspective. What they are, are those little comments, or remarks that are said and that people perhaps may say because of fear. The most common one is when my wife and I go to restaurants, they might say, does he want to sit here? The other one is, how fast does your wheelchair go? Have you been drink-driving? You know, it builds up, you get 20 of those in one day, it really does your head in. You know, thank God for my Irish Whiskey at 5 o'clock of a night.

- Like being bullied.

- What, you were getting bullied?

- Yeah, getting bullied. If they annoy you, I'll walk away, I'll call Mum.

- John, what do you dread

- When you are faced with the arrival

- Of a new support worker?

- I start with energy, what the person's gonna be like, making sure that they can be respectful, if they've walked into my home. That they, if they're not flexible. That they've come in and they've got their notebook, and they've got high expectation about what they're expecting, and they're not open-minded. That's something I really dread.

- I think the biggest fear for me, is actually having my PTSD set off, like you can submit things to avoid, or people or ages, you know, just in case, but sometimes they don't read through your application, every single time they're allocating you someone.

- I've had some unfortunate experiences,

- Yeah.

- In the past. So when I meet a new support worker, I dread that they might do similar things. - Yeah, of course, that's a natural thing you'd look back to the bad experiences that you've had and assume that they're gonna happen again. And I guess it's also, trying to figure if you're gonna get along with that person, like on a different level, there is that scare factor, I guess.

- Like us.
- Yeah, like us. Yeah, which is really nice, but it's kind of like you're building a relationship with someone new.
- So, what about do you like meeting new people when they come?
- Yes.
- And what do you like, you like to tell them about football.
- Football, wrestling.
- Wrestling, what else?
- Um...
- So, do you think maybe sometimes you're annoying, because people don't like those things?
- Sometimes. What?
- I want to make sure that it's safe. And that people that are not going to be very angry. There will be friendly, that's my expectation.
- I know I've heard some of the stories. Can you remind me of some of the horror stories of some support workers you've had?
- There was one, that really stands out, when I was in year 9. She used to keep me very isolated from everybody else-
- Oh, no, I do remember this one, you were saying that she would separate you at lunch.
- Yeah.
- Like you couldn't eat lunch with your friends?
- I had to stay in the dining hall.
- Yeah, with her, for the whole of lunch time.

- Yeah.

- And he just said people who are fun, you know, he wants someone he can have fun with. If you're gonna spend hours of your day with someone, they might as well be happy, right?

- Is there something that makes you nervous, or not happy?

- I think I'm always happy.

- You're always happy? Okay. Yeah, he's always happy.

- John, what is the worst situation you have encountered in a disability support situation?

- They rolled up drunk. I've had carers come in to my lounge room, ten o'clock in the morning and they're drunk. And I'm saying, I'm smelling alcohol on you. I only had one beer, I was a bit nervous. I said, good, get out. So, that's been the worst scenario. And it wasn't you, was it?

- No way, that's totally wrong, because that's not work ethic.

- Yeah, of course, that's an extreme case, but it has happened.

- Yeah, I know, we all have our ups and our downs, but it's just some people that have their ups and downs more than others. And some of them just bring it on for no reason. Whether they're having a bad day, why bring it on to the person, who hasn't done anything wrong? Why should we be the victim because of their problems?

- Luckily, mine's not too horrific. I had a change over of council workers and she was really horrible. She questioned every product, she said she wouldn't use the Chucks wipes, because they left streaks. She even put in a big report to the councilor about my bedroom configuration. I'd never had an issue with that for like two years before and then she just came firing in and I'm standing there, just kind of deer in headlights, thinking, can I run away? Can we just stop?

- I get really frustrated, you know, it's interesting, because I do employ lots of people from overseas and I always start by sitting them in the lounge room, introducing my wife and give them a bit of an overview about what my expectation is and get a feel for theirs. And quite often, they'll sort of say, it's fine, I want the job, but why isn't your wife doing this? And that's sort of, come on, you know, you'd expect these days people have done their own homework to find out about our government funding situations and the role they're meant to play, so, it's really one of those situation, sometimes a carer can say something and say, right now we're either gonna work, there's a lot of hard work to go forward, or you just don't get it.

- So, there was a situation there, where Danny was accused of stealing another client's money. The situation, it was treated as if it was a theft, like the crime of theft in the community, rather than one disabled person, maybe misunderstanding with another disabled person over two cans of \_\_\_\_\_

coke. We felt that it was too strong, for this situation and when we wanted to meet with her. I remember, I went with my mum to meet with her, and every time we went to the center to meet with the board directors, she'd call in sick that day and it happened several times and we kind of, there wasn't really a resolution to it. So, we ended up leaving that whole center and going somewhere else.

- What have we got here? Tell us about a time when a support worker has done something great

- That showed they were aware of diversity and its importance.

- I guess, it's the people that respect the fact that halfway through my getting dressed, or my normal routine, that I've decided I'm getting bored, I want to go out half naked and water the garden, so the carer that gets that, I love it.

- Yeah, like when we're getting along.

- He was a nice guy?

- He was a nice guy.

- You know, he helped you with the activities?

- He did photography.

- He did photography as well?

- Yes.

- Okay. He taught you a good way to take photos?

- Yes.

- If you've got a good carer, client relationship, is ideally not a lot of words, because you get to know each other, you remain professional, but you know, the end goal is to have me back in my wheelchair, with clothes on, safe and comfortable, but the journey there can change, there can be diversity. Don't make it sound like that, I'm here to help with your disability. If you can get rid of that and it becomes a natural thing, and we're laughing and joking, life's fantastic.

- Yeah, we're not there to support disability, we're there to support the person.

- He loves good chinwag, happy to chat with anyone.

- Yes, I love chatting.

- Yeah.