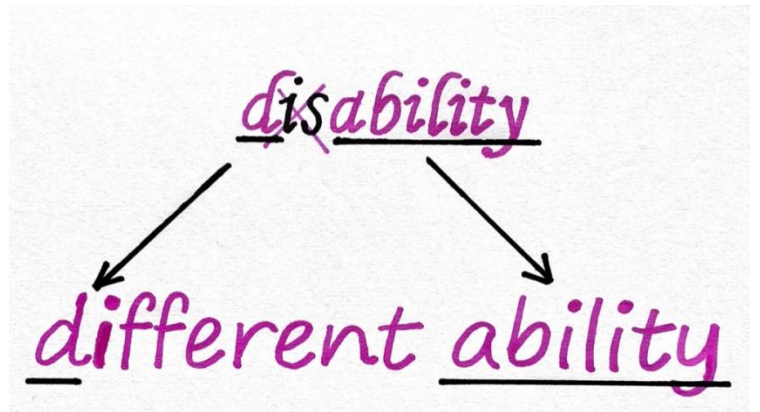


Why fit in when you are born to stand out!

When I look back on my life, there is so much pressure from society and social constructs to fit in. This is particularly the case when you have a hidden disability. It was only until a few years ago when I started to believe in myself and accepted myself for who I am that I realised it is amazing to STAND OUT!

The same philosophy of this quote applies working in the NHS and having autism. I am very much of the mindset that hidden disabilities give people an incredible level of understanding others don't have. It makes us better clinicians for it! I am determined to get this message out so everyone can understand the value diversity can add to the NHS. However, the word disability makes it seem like you aren't as able as others or aren't as capable. I don't see myself as having a disability; I see it as a **different ability!**



The first step of becoming a staff member in the NHS is navigating through recruitment. Although it is illegal to discriminate against anyone who declares having a different ability, sadly it still happens in the NHS. The most common misconception I face with autism is people wrongly categorising it as a learning disability. Although I do declare I have a disability, it is for this reason and due to discrimination, that I choose not to declare what my disability is. It saddens me that staff in our health service carry this misconception. Autism and a learning disability could not be more different. It is my passion to help staff to understand this in a way that they can see the remarkable skills and talents this diversity can add to their teams.

Running training programs for CWP staff challenging these misconceptions and inspiring them how much of a difference they can make by understanding and applying simple reasonable adjustments has been one of the best highlights I have had working at CWP. I have been in such a privileged position to be able to share my story with people. The whole motto I use in my training is to inspire people about how much of a difference we all can make even if this difference seems small. Therefore, with the recruitment process, by understanding how incredible staff with hidden disabilities are and how much diversity and value they add to our health service, I very much hope the diversity as an NHS staff group will grow and enable more people to share their story. We are all human and learning continues all throughout our lives so it makes me so excited for future diversity and openness we can create in our health service.

Own your different ability. Let it inspire you for how much you have achieved! Believe in yourself and never let anyone tell you that you are not worthy or that you can't do it because your uniqueness, talent and determination to prove people wrong will always shine through. Happiness is everything. YOU ARE AMAZING