



EFL Brieflet: Engaging with Ability and Impairment

Kei tēnā, kei tēnā, kei tēnā ano. Tōnā ake ahua, tōnā ake mauri, Tōnā ake mana

Each and every one has their own uniqueness, life essence and presence¹

Each of us brings diversity to the workplace. How much does your team know about your - or your family members' - experiences of Impairment? How much do you know about their - or their family members' - experiences of Impairment? Some people's Impairments are more significant than others'. It is those people who live with Cerebral Palsy, as well as others facing similar and different challenges, who have inspired this EFL Brieflet. How might your organisation provide a work culture and environment where people are better supported?

Ability to Work Differently

Everyone, including those living with Impairment, likes to be consulted, included, understood, valued, respected and fairly accommodated. For some, this might mean having:

- Proximity to accessible transport, parking, office machines, restrooms and amenities
- Assistive technology or programmes, e.g. spell-checkers, voice-technology; and/or adapted keyboards and phones
- Specialised office furniture and grab handles
- Adjusted work schedules, and frequent rest periods
- Service dogs

Ability to Be Different

Organisations that fully engage with the diversity of their staff and communities are confident that their staff who live with Impairment:

- Enhance the brand of being a forward-thinking, multi-stakeholder-aware organisation
- Are skilled in their responsiveness to consumers and others in particular niche markets
- Are representatives of the wider- as well as their specific - community, and contribute diverse and innovative talent and perspective
- Are more planful about their care and health needs, and therefore may be less prone to sick-leave than some of their non-Impaired colleagues
- Might need environmental adaptations - which are often less expensive than anticipated, particularly if staff work from home a lot of the time
- Have better retention, less absenteeism, than some of their non-Impaired colleagues
- Increase the depth of talent for leaders from all perspectives and capabilities
- Evidence the organisation's ethics and values related to challenging discrimination and embracing inclusion

Ability to Think Differently²: Five Step Plan

1. Get buy-in from senior management
2. Assess where you're at in your disability-confident journey
3. Develop your action plan
4. Link up with helpful resources
5. Re-assess

"We live in a disabling society. Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are Impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other Impairments. Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the Impairments [of others]"
(New Zealand Disability Strategy, 2001)

¹Inclusion: cultural capital of diversity or deficit of disability? Language for change. T. Harris, 2014

² <https://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employment-for-disabled-people/plan-to-become-a-disability-confident-organisation/>

Where leadership is a team responsibility

Some Facts

- In 2013, 1.1 million (24%) of the people of Aotearoa were identified as disabled
- Cerebral Palsy (CP) refers to a group of disorders that affects a person's ability to move. It can also affect vision, learning, hearing and speech (and sometimes intellectual functioning). It occurs as a result of damage to the brain during the mother's pregnancy or childbirth. It is a complex and life-long condition, with varying effects that can improve or deteriorate over time
- CP - like all disabilities - is not infectious

In Aotearoa:

- Disabled people are more likely to have lower incomes than non-disabled people
- 45% of disabled adults are employed (compared with 72% of non-disabled)
- Māori, women and older people are disproportionately disadvantaged by disability. And 34% of disabled women have no educational qualifications (compared with 15% non-disabled)
- Approximately, ten thousand people have CP

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Preamble

- Discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person (Para h)
- Recognizing the valued existing and potential contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty (Para b)

Article 27 states

- The right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities
- Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment ...
- [The need to] promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment

Kotahi te kohao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro ma, te miro pango, te miro whero
Through the eye of the needle pass the white thread, the black thread, and the red thread
Kingi Potatau, first Māori King

Sources for your further interest

Cerebral Palsy Society, New Zealand - <https://cerebralpalsy.org.nz>

Disability Survey, 2013:

- http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/health/disabilities/DisabilitySurvey_HOTP2013.aspx#gsc.tab=0

“Michelle”, Living well in a wheelchair:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=30&v=Vk0v5K_fgRg&feature=emb_logo

Ministry of Health, New Zealand. Ngā mana hauora tūtohu: health status indicators.

Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand. Lead Toolkit: a guide for employing disabled people

Sam Farmer is Owner-Director of Enhance Facilitation Limited and strongly advocates that leadership is a team responsibility. Strength-based and Values-focused in his approach, he is passionate about collaborative coaching. As well as offering professional supervision, he facilitates psychosocial growth conversations with professionals working within high emotional impact contexts. He is a registered psychologist, has regular professional supervision and is bound by the Psychologists' Code of Ethics.