



Getting Started with Inclusive Education

Audio file transcription 1

Interviewee:

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Amanda Kirby

Enabling can also be a relief. So I always thought that I had X or Y, now I know, I realise that these things are a challenge, but actually, I know who I am now and I can seek help and get some support and maximise my strengths. And I can talk to other people who've had similar experiences and I feel that actually they understand me. So actually, sometimes labels are really helpful to people, to help them understand who they are.

They can restrict you, because some people will say, "Well, I don't want to tell people who I am. I'm not gonna be defined. I'm not dyslexic; I'm somebody with dyslexia, I'm more than that label. I am me and I'm good at horse-riding, and I like shopping, and I'm very good at this, and I have dyslexia as part of who I am." So it's a very personal thing. And I think that's really important, is that when we're having conversations, it's understanding what works for that person and asking them how they want to describe themselves. And there isn't a right and there isn't a wrong.

Sarah Talbot-Joyce

It's quite empowering actually, that sense of, "Yes, I may have this, but that doesn't define who I am." I think that's an amazing message.

Paul Ellis

There's a lot of people that talk in those terms nowadays, or like with cancer for example: people talk about what you "can" do. It's quite useful that c-a-n is in the part of that word, but it's more about what you can do with something rather than what you can't do. So do you feel that is

happening, the kind of almost changing the dialogue towards the more positive aspects of labeling rather than negative?

Amanda Kirby

I do, I mean I think in the way, we are still in a sort of mixed sort of arena in a way because we need labels to get resources. So that then becomes, you have to be defined and we know that certain labels get you more resources, so then that might bias the labels you want and the labels you don't. The other thing is I think you've got a bit of, when somebody goes say for a job and says, "Well, actually I've got dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD." You go, "Oh, all of those!" (all laughing) Or you decide, actually I'm only gonna tell you about one of them, and the one that I think you're most likely to understand.

So there is a bit, which is neurodiversity also means we recognise that all of these things we call conditions overlap, and overlap often. And so actually somebody having dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD is quite common, and it's not unusual, and it doesn't necessarily mean real impact everywhere. It just means you might have a bit of reading, and a bit of concentration, and a bit of handwriting difficulties. And so actually these labels also can be constraining 'cause it can make people fearful about what that means. So that's why describing what are my strengths and my challenges in terms of functioning is probably easier for people to understand. Because then I can say, "Well it's reading and writing and I need some help with organising my files." You know, then people understand that, okay, then I know what to do about that.

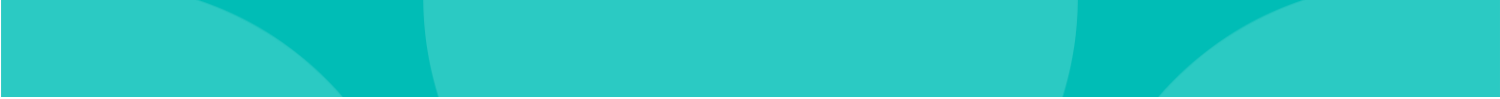
Paul Ellis

So somebody who's dyslexic for example, might struggle with reading, but they might be fine with writing. I dunno if that's likely, but, but you might then have kind of almost like a graphic equaliser. Different levels at different points of different things. But then also you explained to us earlier when we were chatting about how sometimes people have these multiple conditions, but none of them are ever significant enough for them to be recognised for any individual one of those. So that's quite an interesting thing to think about too.

Amanda Kirby

So, the way that somebody gets a label, quite often, or a diagnosis, is if they meet certain criteria. So if you can imagine in your head a bucket with a red line, which if it meets the red line and you fill the bucket up, then you get it. But if you don't quite meet the red line and you're filling the bucket, you don't get anything. So that's a problem. That's a problem in a number of ways. So the red line, if you don't meet it, 'cause organisations and services are met by a diagnostic criteria to get or not, those people who don't quite meet it sometimes don't get anything. So they're not recognised.

The other bit is that, so if you've got lots of symptoms which are related to dyslexia, then that's great, because somebody recognised that, and you get the diagnosis of dyslexia. But say you have a bit of reading, and a bit of attention difficulties, and you have difficulties handwriting, and actually meeting and working with people in a group is quite hard for you to do, you're not hitting the barometer of any one of those things, you actually then get missed completely. But actually cumulatively you've got more problems than that person who just got the diagnosis of dyslexia. More problems that are impacting your every day functioning than the person who's got dyslexia, who's actually using a spell checker and has got a list of words that he's got for his job and is



doing okay, or in school or whatever. So that's a challenge where we've got cumulative adversity that's not recognised 'cause it's not badged as something, as opposed to challenges which are hit the target, the bullseye, boom, you've got it. You know, it's that sort of in the fairground, you bang the thing and then the bell goes, you know? You are not banging the bell enough to get the gong to chime.