

THE ONUS IS ON THE INDUSTRY TO FOSTER A DISABILITY-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Jessica Cragg shares her personal experience of living with a disability and working in our industry, and suggests we all need an environment where we feel comfortable asking for support – or don't even need to be in a position to ask.



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In January 2017, I acquired autoimmune encephalitis and lost most of my memory from the prior two years, including the first year of my degree. The next few years were spent adjusting to this new life with epilepsy, reteaching myself that first year, and having a few more autoimmune diseases added to the mix.

Disability for me is nuanced. It's an ebb and flow, with some days being easy and others truly awful. It means I harbour an unreasonable resentment towards Mondays, which is my plasma infusion day. That means every Monday I have to insert needles into my stomach fat to keep my antibody levels up. It means taking half a pill cabinet each day to reduce seizures. It means frustration from being measured by tests every few months.

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My team knows all this and provide a lighter workload on days where I've had seizures if needed, to allowing for flexibility around my specialist appointments during the workday. They truly are some of my biggest supporters and have been great people to lean on. Ultimately, disability means laughing, it means crying, it means feeling a complex spectrum of emotions day in and day out, because I'm still a human being and not defined by it.

BUILDING PROACTIVE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS IS ON THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE

The media industry needs to foster an environment where people living with a disability can feel comfortable disclosing that, knowing their experiences will be valued. Where people don't feel like an afterthought in terms of design, employment, and ways of working, just because they don't meet the perceived status quo.

We all need an environment where people feel comfortable asking for support, or don't even need to be in a position to ask. They have already been thought of and the resources, flexibility and support are already in place. The onus is on the industry as a whole, and we should be harnessing our resources to drive equitable and personalised outcomes. Education can come through completing the MFA SBS Inclusion modules at a bare minimum.

LISTENING & LEARNING MUST RESULT IN ACTION

Listening and learning are the beginning, but it has to become action. Documents like a Disability Action Plan are key to making sure it's part of the business strategy, challenging companies to be better and holding them to their stated goals.

If an industry sticks with the status quo and isn't challenged to be better, how can we grow?