

Kia ora! Welcome to these conversation cards, which exist to support a kōrero between you and your team about disability. You can also use them to learn yourself.

The cards are organised into two main types:

1. **True or False Statements:** These cards present a statement about disability in the workplace and ask you whether you think the statement is true or false. The answer for each statement is on the back of the card.
2. **Conversation Starters:** These cards present a scenario or question to start a discussion about disability inclusion in the workplace and provide advice for responding or engaging with the topic on the back.

These are the digital versions of the cards - see our print version if you want to print them out at your work.

General Conversation Tips

The cards suggest ways to integrate learning about disability into your workplace:

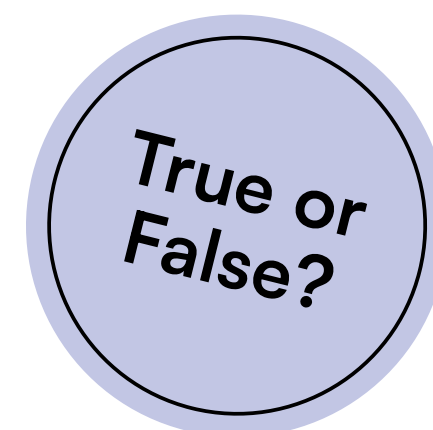
- **Keep it Light:** The conversation doesn't have to be "big, heavy, or daunting". It can happen during smoko or as a short discussion in team meetings.
- **Share the Responsibility:** Learning and talking about disability is everyone's responsibility, not just an additional role for a few people.
- **Create Learning Space:** Dedicate time, like 15 minutes in a team meeting, to discuss one key fact about disability and how it relates to the workplace.

How to use the cards:

True or False

Use these to challenge assumptions and learn key facts about disability:

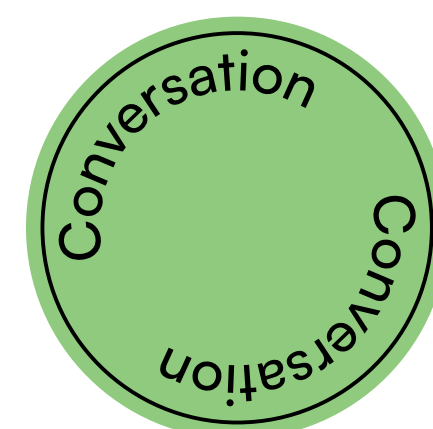
- **Read the Statement:** Read the True or False statement on the card.
- **Discuss/Vote:** Have the team or group discuss, or individually vote, whether they believe the statement is True or False. Or decide what you think if using the cards yourself.
- **Reveal the Answer:** Read the Answer and the detailed explanation on the back of the card.
- **Facilitate Discussion:** Use the explanation as a basis for a short discussion and shared learning.

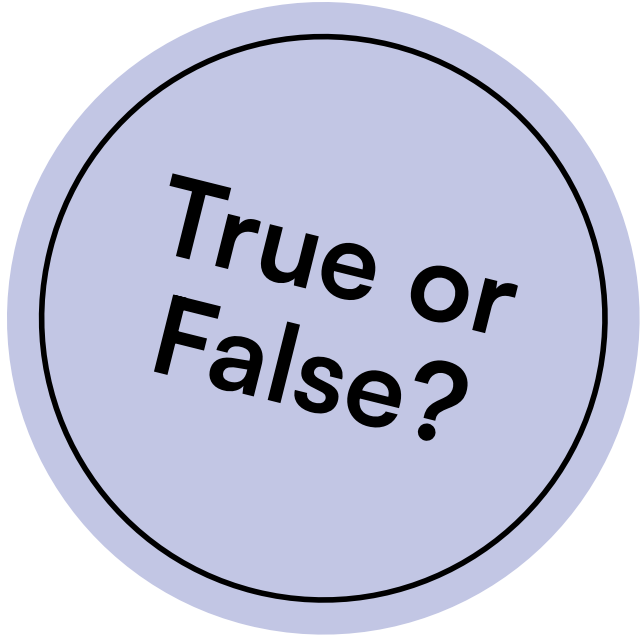


Conversation Starters

Use these to help you discuss disability at work:

- **Read the Scenario:** Read the conversation starter.
- **Discuss Responses:** Have the group discuss how they, as an individual or as a team/manager, would respond to this situation. If you're using the cards individually then think about this yourself.
- **Review Guidance:** Read the Guidance on the back of the card. This provides helpful tips for engaging in the conversation, such as:
 1. Don't dismiss the person who raised the issue.
 2. Come to the conversation prepared by doing some research beforehand.
 3. For an employee asking for an accommodation, you can frame the request around enabling them to do their job.





**True or
False?**

Statement:

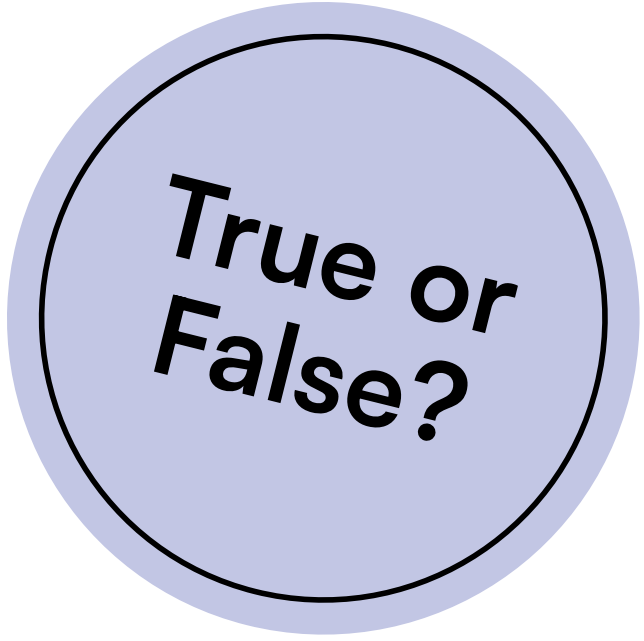
**‘Disabled’ is a bad word;
you shouldn’t use it.**

Answer - False

The word ‘disabled’ is not a bad word.

Over time, people have learned to see the word “disabled” as negative, often because society views being disabled as a negative thing. But in reality, disability is just a part of the diversity of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

- Many disabled people see their disability as part of who they are. Not something they wish they didn’t have, or want to change about themselves.
- ‘Disability is not something individuals have. Disability is the process which happens when one group create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of people with disability.’ (The New Zealand Disability Strategy)
- Don’t avoid the word or replace it with alternatives! Shying away from it can suggest it’s something shameful or “bad.” Terms like ‘differently abled’ or ‘physically challenged’ just confuse people.
- Always follow a person’s lead: If a disabled friend, colleague, or other individual tells you they prefer different language, simply use the words they prefer in interactions with them.



**True or
False?**

Statement:

**Disability is
always visible.**

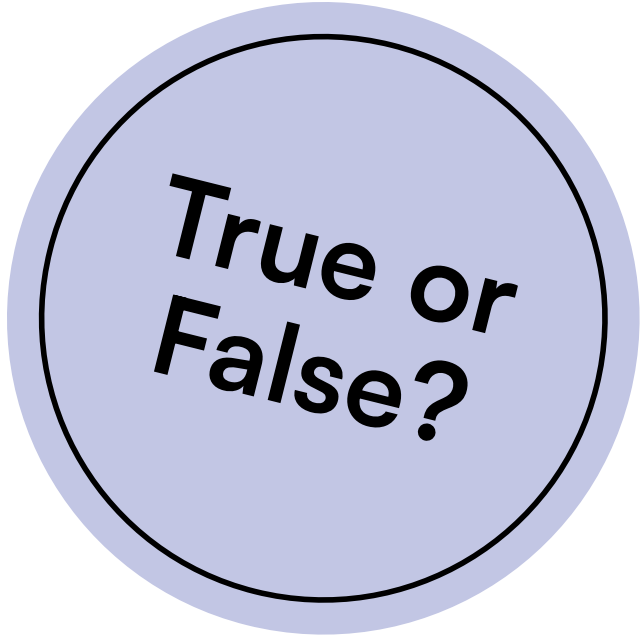
Answer - False

Disabilities can be visible and invisible.

We have particular imagery in our minds of what “disability” looks like; wheelchair users are often what we think about, but this is only one form of disability. Disability includes “long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder a person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” This means that disability can include things like Chronic Illnesses (such as endometriosis), being Autistic or Dyslexic or experiencing mental distress, such as anxiety. These aren’t things you can see.

Disability is broad. Not everyone who has a disability will consider themselves disabled, and they don’t have to. The important thing is that when we think about disability and making our workplaces accessible, we should consider this broad range of experiences.

These cards were developed with Hanga-Aro-Rau Workforce Development Council for the manufacturing, engineering and logistic sectors.



**True or
False?**

Statement:

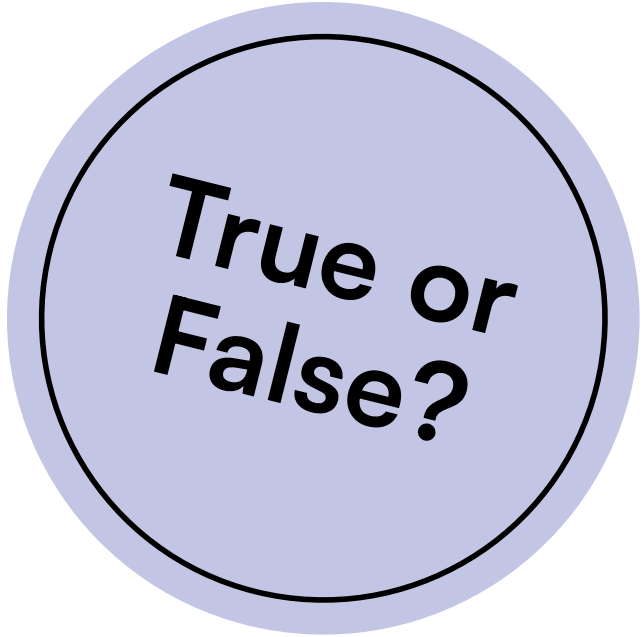
**Disabled people are
in my workplace.**

Answer - True

Yes, they already are!

One in six New Zealanders lives with a disability - these can be visible and invisible. Things like Chronic Illnesses, mental distress (anxiety, depression), hearing loss or long-term injury are considered disabilities. We often hear from people that “they haven’t worked with a disabled person”, but this is because we have a particular image of what disability should look like. Disability includes a range of experiences that are likely already a part of your workplace. Looking at ways to increase accessibility will support your existing workforce. P.S. Don’t fret, if you don’t want to use the word “disabled” to describe your experience, that’s okay - but your needs are still considered under the definition of disability.

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**True or
False?**

Statement:

**Reasonable
Accommodations in
the workplace are
only for people with
physical disabilities.**

Answer - False

No, all types of disabilities may require people to have accommodations at work.

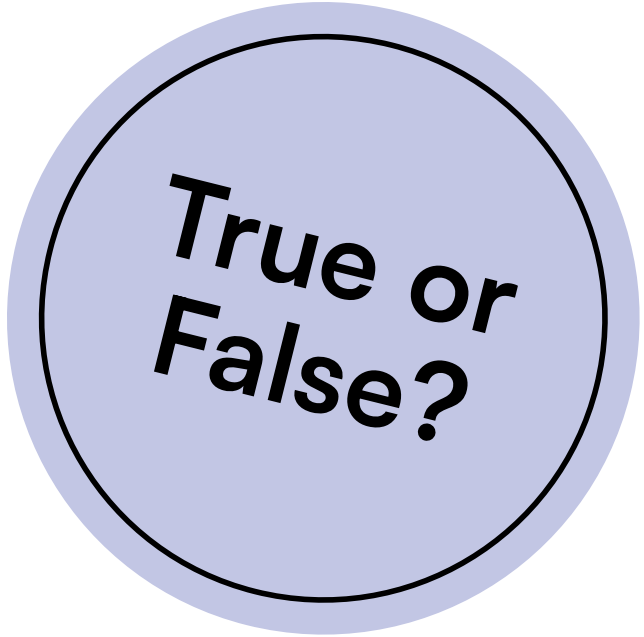
An “accommodation” is a “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustment that is made to ensure disabled people can equally participate at work.” This may include things like:

- Supporting people with dyslexia to use text overlays on their devices to make reading easier.
- Enabling people with anxiety or neurodivergence to provide feedback in meetings via the meeting chat, sticky notes, or in non-verbal ways.
- Creating a comfortable space and flexibility for people with diabetes to be able to manage their insulin.

Accommodations are also not just for disabled people; working parents, people of different faiths, people going through menopause and people recovering from a short-term injury may all require accommodations. Providing reasonable accommodations is necessary under the Human Rights Act 1993.

Under the Human Rights Act, employers must be willing to provide ‘reasonable accommodations’. Individual requests for reasonable accommodations must be considered constructively, and careful thought given as to whether any modifications can be made to assist disabled staff to realise their potential.

Support and funding are available to businesses supplying accommodations through MSD and ACC.



**True or
False?**

Statement:

**We shouldn't talk
about disability in
the workplace**

Answer - False

We definitely should talk about disability!

Talking about disability and helping people be comfortable with understanding what disability is is really important. Learning and talking about disability is something everyone should do; it's not only the responsibility of some people in your workplace, and it shouldn't be additional to someone's usual role. Create space in your workplace to learn about disability:

- Add 15 minutes to your team meetings to discuss one key fact about disability, and how it relates to your workplace.
- Encourage your employees to send you their thoughts on accessibility in the workplace.
- Read books by disabled authors, listen to podcasts by disabled people and then carve out time to discuss these together at work.

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Having a Conversation:

I am worried about stereotypes of disability in our workplace. I'd like us to talk about ways we can work together to understand disability better.

Answer

When responding to a question like this or having this conversation;

- Don't dismiss the person - just because you may not see stereotypes, or feel like they are there, doesn't mean they aren't. Create the space for the employee to speak with you; it is significant that they have come to you with this kind of question.
- Come to the conversation prepared to contribute - a conversation like this isn't all on the shoulders of the person who brought it up. Do some research beforehand, by looking at things like the MSD Lead Toolkit.
- Listen - Hear the conversation, don't shut it down. Create space to discuss the topic as a team and hear other perspectives too, make a plan together that is actionable, achievable and tangible.
- The conversation doesn't have to be big, heavy, or daunting; it can be over smoko or a conversation during team meetings.

It is about shared learning together, not about what is being done wrong. But prepare people to come into that meeting confidently, give them the time and tools to learn some of the basics around language, breadth of disability, and other foundations, so they can contribute confidently and help uphold the conversation well.



Having a Conversation:

As a manager / leader,
I'd like to understand
how I can better support
you in the workplace.

Answer

When someone asks you this question:

- Make your needs known, don't dismiss the conversation or say that you can just "get on with it" - use the opportunity to have an open conversation about what you need and how you can work with your manager or people leader for that.
- If you need more time to prepare, then ask for more time to respond. You may like to take notes into the meeting to help you remember what you want to ask for.
- Make the conversation two-way, you could respond to the question by asking, "what supports are you able to provide?"

If you are a leader or a manager:

- It is wonderful that you are asking this question!
- Don't expect a reply on the spot; give people time to reply to you and prepare their answer. This is a big question to be asked.
- Before you have the conversation, you may like to get some support or resources, such as the MSD Lead Toolkit. You can also look at the Employment NZ website or the Human Rights Commission website.
- People may be uncomfortable talking about their own needs, so you could frame the conversation around workplace-level improvements that can benefit current and future employees.



Having a Conversation:

I would like to ask for
an accommodation,
but I am unsure how
to go about it.

Answer

Start by identifying exactly what accommodation you need to make the ask easier. If you are uncomfortable talking about your specific needs or disability, you can frame it as “I am asking for this workplace support to enable me to do my job, or do X particular aspect of my job.” Asking for an accommodation is about helping you to do your job; it is your right - it isn't a weakness, so don't feel bad about it. If you find it difficult to speak about this, you may like to write your needs down and set expectations that they'd be sent in an email.

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Having a Conversation:

I feel like I need to have
everything sorted / done
right for disability inclusion.
I am nervous about saying
/ doing the wrong thing.

Answer

Don't be! It is important to start a journey or conversation, even if it isn't perfect. Some tips:

- Do some research first for your confidence, so you feel like your language and positioning are clear. You can use things like the MSD Lead Toolkit.
- Start light - the conversation doesn't have to be heavy, you could start by celebrating some disabled engineers or professionals in your sector throughout history.
- Create a space for questions and learning; you may like to use tools, like Slido, to support questions being asked.

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