

Speaking from Experience Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

Transcript for chapter 8 of 10: Stigma

Delia and Cassandra: I think people who haven't experienced brain injury before, they hear brain injury and don't realise the multiple levels of brain injury that can be there in each individual, as to what it enable them to do.

Anita: Some friends might say to me that they think I am quite good. I don't know whether they are just being polite or if it's something else.

Delia and Cassandra: I think some people just assumed that mum, I'd say to them that she had a brain injury and they would automatically think that she was incapable of doing things.

Delia and Cassandra: Brain dead.

Delia and Cassandra: Being a vegetable, as people say. You realise that it only affects people in certain ways; other people have it a lot worse. I guess that's one thing that I used to think, was that it could've been a lot worse. At least she's here.

Anita: I feel like I can only tell the physical sign, but not too much about the memory side of things. I feel that if I say that, people might think that I'm too disabled. They would not want to be with me anymore. As if I couldn't think properly, or I cannot perform like a normal person. I try to be more normalised, like a normal person.

Delia and Cassandra: I think, being a kid, I went through the stages of being embarrassed by your parents. I think that's something that every teenager goes through. I had the added pressure on top of that, from the other kids.

Delia and Cassandra: I was probably more embarrassing than most.

Delia and Cassandra: Well, you know, you're friend would ring you up and think that your mum was drunk at three o'clock in the afternoon, because of the way she was speaking. I'd explain to them that it was because she has an ABI, not because she's been drinking in the arvo'. I'm not that bad of a kid, I don't think.

Igal, Anat, Illana: Anat mentioned a few times about taxi drivers. For example, when they were speaking, they were speaking to her carer and not to her. She didn't know why they were talking to her as a 'she', and not talking to her directly.

Igal, Anat, Illana: Sometimes the carer was looking at mum and not at Anat. This is mentioned, why they are looking at mum when we are talking together.

Igal, Anat, Illana: She is very sensitive to these issues, Anat.

Igal, Anat, Illana: Sometimes she asks me why people are speaking very slow.

Igal, Anat, Illana: [Exaggerated slowness] Do you understand? [Normal voice] That really annoys me. I'm not stupid.



Kerrie: My instinctive reaction is to just get it out there. However, the advice of my therapist is not to do that, because they feel that I am then opening myself up to prejudice.

Delia and Cassandra: With the stigma around having a brain injury, people have said to me, “Why do you tell anyone you have an ABI? You wouldn’t know it.” Before I had my walking stick and everything else, they just think, why bother? It’s so that people know that after a brain injury, you don’t grow horns and fang teeth. You’re just a person. You’re still a human being who needs to be treated like a human being.