

The words we use to describe each other matter. People use lots of different words to describe me but some of them make me very uncomfortable.

When people use words like 'high functioning', I think they make lots of assumptions about me and my experiences. These assumptions can be harmful and inaccurate.

Everyone is unique. While it can be useful to describe similarities between people, it is important to use respectful words that people are comfortable with.

I want people to use words that reflect all my experiences, both the easy and the hard parts.

Questions

What do you think about the phrase 'high functioning'? Has anyone ever used it to describe you?

What ways do people compare you to others? How would you change those comparisons?

What inaccurate assumptions do people make about you?

What ideas and systems are phrases like 'high functioning' related to?

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All of
that and
more

My experiences of the
phrase 'high functioning'

I often get the same comments from strangers.

You're so high functioning!

I wonder why some people say that?



I wonder what my disability seems like to other people?

Some people only get to see:

Articulate

Busy

Good memory

Clever

Energetic

Kind



Some people only get to see:

Complex needs

High risk

Vulnerable

challenging behaviours

Extreme difficulties



In reality, I am all of that and more:



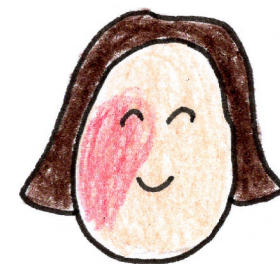
When you meet me in one place, you only see a little part of me.



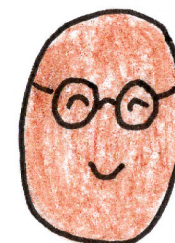
From one part, you can't judge my whole life.

My disability and life change a lot. You often can't tell how well or unwell I am from looking at me.

I don't like using words like 'high functioning' or 'low functioning'



People have such varied lives. These words unfairly compare people.



There are so many other words we can use to describe other people.

When talking about me, people can say:

Spikey profile

variable support needs

dynamic disability

communicates best using writing

needs help sometimes, not others