**HACKED OFF**

**A JOURNALIST’S GUIDE TO DISABILITY**

**Want to avoid making 10 million people Hacked Off with you racked reporting, but unsure of the correct language to use when it comes to disability? Disability Now (DN)**

**newspaper and the National Union of Journalists have joined forces to end the confusion. Written in consultation with leading disabled people’s groups, this leaflet forms part of DN’s campaign for better representation of disabled people and their increased employment at every level of the industry.**

*‘This leaflet is an essential tool for journalists – a vital part of the campaign to tackle the discrimination faced by millions of people and a wake up call for the industry’*

**Jeremy Dear, NUJ General Secretary**

**www.disabilitynow.org.uk**

[**www.nuj.org.uk.o**](http://www.nuj.org.uk.o)

**The way disabled people are represented by the media has a big impact on how they are regarded. The disabled people’s movement has fought hard for disability to be recognised as a human rights issue rather than a medical one.**

**Under this “social model” of disability, people are disabled by barriers within society, rather than being victims of their impairments or conditions. For example, a wheelchair user is disabled if the**

**counter in a bank is too high for them to use.**

**Disabled people’s organisations campaign for equal opportunities and for services to allow them to live bindependently, not for charity.**

**The terms opposite are those disabled people’s organisations prefer and are empowering rather than passive. If in doubt, ask people themselveshow they want to be described.**

**Ditch the super-crip stories** – they are patronizing and set disabled people impossible standards. Report disability sports as you would any other sport.

**Disabled people aren’t all sweet and innocent** – and they do have sex lives.

**Life isn’t a “trial over adversity”** – most disabled people don’t see it that way.

**Don’t call disabled people brave or amazing for doing normal things** – would this be a story if theperson was not disabled?

**The “tragic victim” is an offensive stereotype** –focus on barriers to disabled people empowering themselves instead: inaccessible housing and

transport, lack of personal care services and barriers to education and jobs.

**Is it cos I am disabled?** Is the person’s impairment really relevant to the story?

**Disability issues can be newsy** – why not cover institutional “disablism”, abuse and violence towards disabled people, assisted dying or genetic screening?

**Talk to disabled people about disabled people** –not theirmums /dads /carers /charities. Don’t forget many impairments are “hidden” e.g. epilepsy, dyslexia and mental health problems.

**And, finally, relax when interviewing disabled people; nobody is going to criticise you for telling a person with a visual impairment that**

**you might “see” them later. And, if in doubt, do not be afraid to ask.**

**Language to Use**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Use** | **Don’t Use** |
| Disabled | Crippled, handicapped,  an invalid |
| Disabled people | The disabled (disabled people are not a  generic group – would you say “the blacks”?) |
| Has…(an impairment) | Suffers from, victim of, is…(epileptic/dyslexic etc) |
| Non-disabled | Able bodied, healthy, normal |
| Has learning difficulties | Mentally handicapped retarded, backward has a learning  disability |
| Wheelchair user | Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair, in a wheelchair |
| Deaf/hard of hearing people | The deaf |
| Deaf sign language (or British Sign Language) user | Deaf and dumb, deaf-mute |
| Blind or partially sighted people, visually impaired people | The Blind |
| Has mental health problems/mental ill health (Psychotic is  only to be used in relation to particular symptoms of  psychosis, not as a general description) | Mentally ill, insane, mad, crazy, nutter, psycho, psychopathic,  schizo, split personality |
| Has cerebral palsy | Spastic |
| Has restricted growth, short stature | Dwarf, midget |
| Has autism or Asperger syndrome | Antisocial, out of control, retarded, has behavioural problems |

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WHAT DESCRIPTION DO I USE?

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