Twitter Thread by Irwin Gill



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THREAD: I hope this mistake can be used as an opportunity to learn why this kind of language is bad.

The Minister isn't the only person to say things like this- I've even heard parents of kids with autism refer to other children as "normal" & have had to rearrange my face. (1/n)

> Minister for Special Education Josepha Madigan describes children without additional needs as 'normal' | @Jessjcasey @aoifegracemoore https://t.co/4S1Y7vIRRC
>
> — Irish Examiner (@irishexaminer) January 14, 2021

The hard thing for those of us working in/ living with disability is that this is a mistake we'd NEVER make.

For others (who don't live and breathe disability), saying "normal children" is probably a slip of the tongue- not a betrayal of them secretly being awful people. (2/n)

Given her portfolio this is a bad gaffe for the Minister which has upset people. Rather than piling on, it would be better to use this as a rare opportunity for other people to learn why language matters so deeply in disability and why this kind of thing is so wounding. (3/n)

Children with disabilities or special educational needs have the same rights to education and participation as everyone else. The support they need to achieve this is not "extra help" it's the bare minimum responsibility of State to allow them participate in their own lives(4/n)

By separating children out based on disability and not guaranteeing their rights, we state that their rights only apply when it's convenient for us to meet their needs. Whether we like it or not, this is what we say when we abide appallingly underfunded services. (5/n)

Language which emphasizes division ("normal") furthers an unconscious bias that children w/ disabilities have a lower level of entitlement which isn't integral to them, but related to State ability to provide for their rights i.e. the opposite of a rights-based approach. (6/n)

No-one says it out loud (and most probably don't even consciously think it) but the notion that children with disabilities are not actually equal is very pervasive. It's baked into society. We expect disabled children to wait for essentials that others get automatically. (7/n)

As I've said elsewhere (on a bumper day for disability language issues!): medical conditions are not disabilities in and of themselves.

https://t.co/OgFGRpoYsy

(8/n)

> Diagnoses are not disabilities, they're potential causes of disability.
>
> The disability is the effect on function, activity & participation- not the condition itself. Some medical conditions are disabling for some people & not others.
>
> Disability isn't a dirty word. #SayTheWord https://t.co/ub0KeUwaUF
>
> — Irwin Gill (@IrwinGill) January 15, 2021

Anyone can experience disability- it's not something you "have"- and as such we ought to avoid othering and the consequent reduction of rights which comes with it. Disability is everyone's business. (9/9)

#disability #rehabilitation #paediatrics #ABI

https://t.co/sjQ3wPLrcr

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