

Speaking negatively about disabled people in front of someone with a disability and then saying “Oh I didn’t mean you”

Asking

“But you can walk – why do you need a wheelchair?”

- assuming someone is being lazy or using it as an excuse to help mobility if they’re able to walk

Saying

“I’m so OCD about my desk”

- making casual remarks that trivialise disability

Asking “What’s actually wrong with you?” or “Oh, no, what happened to you?”

- signalling there is something wrong with someone with a disability and directly pointing it out regardless of whether they are comfortable sharing

Asking

“Shall I help you with that? Here let me do it for you”

- assumes helplessness or incompetence, as well as impatience at a slower pace. Applies to both physical disabilities and neurodivergence

Asking

“Can you check prescriptions accurately when you’re dyslexic?”

- assuming people with a learning difference are incompetent

Asking someone who is neurodivergent to “Keep to the point” in a meeting, or telling them “You have five minutes”

- publicly setting a time limit, and signalling they talk too much

Saying

“They’re definitely on the spectrum”

- Highlighting and making light of neurodivergent behaviour

Saying

“But you were alright yesterday, what’s wrong today?”

- not understanding how individuals health and abilities fluctuate

Asking

“Oh, you can do that, too?”

- assuming someone’s capabilities due to their disability, such as assuming someone one with a physical disability also has a learning disability

Asking
“Why don’t you understand? It’s easy!”

- signalling to a neurodivergent individual they’re not understanding because they’re not thinking in neurotypical ways

Asking

“Are you dyslexic? You seem perfectly normal to me”

- assumes all disabilities are physical or visible

Saying

“Have you tried this remedy or this medication/exercise - it worked for a friend/family”

- assuming someone with a disability wants your advice

Saying

“Oh she’s off again. Probably because of her condition – you know what she’s like”

- minimises someone’s disability

Saying “Oh you look so normal” or “You don’t look disabled!”

- should someone with a disability look unwell? You do not decide what counts as a disability

Asking

“How do you cope? Life must be difficult for you”

- makes assumptions about individuals health and wellbeing

Asking

“Oh, sorry am I boring you?”

- some medications can cause yawning. As pharmacists, we should recognise drug side effects and behaviours

ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY

Disability Related Microaggressions

Disability related microaggressions are a form of discrimination and ableism.

We’ve collected some examples of disability related microaggressions, with an explanation of why these comments or questions can be offensive, insulting or insensitive.

