

# Working Well with People with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities

**WWILD Sexual Violence Prevention Association Inc.**

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We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land and waters on which we are on, the Yugara and Yugarabul people.

We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge any First Nations colleagues present, and the important role First Nations Peoples continue to play within our community and in advocacy for change in systems.

**It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.**



### **Sexual Violence Prevention Program**

- Individual support and counselling
  - Therapeutic and psycho-educational groups
  - You & Me
  - Domestic and Family Violence
  - Women's Group
  - LGBTIQ+ Group
  - Advocacy, information and referral
- Community and Professional Education and Training

### **Projects**

- Listen Up!
- Equal Access
- Easy Read

### **The Victims of Crime Program**

- Queensland-wide information, advice and referral
- Case Management
- Community Education and Training
- Court Support and Advocacy.

### **Disability Royal Commission Program**

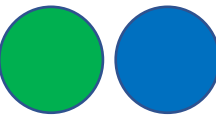
- Counselling
- Case management support



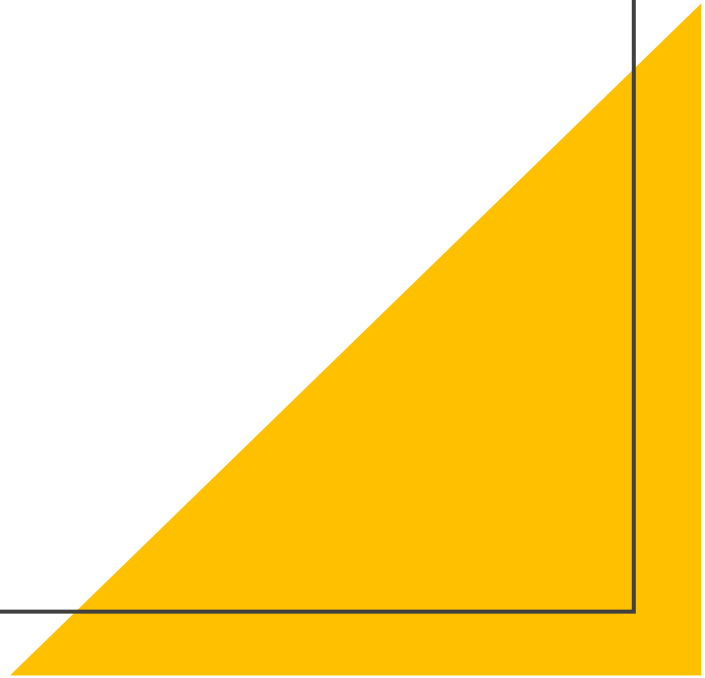


# What we will cover:

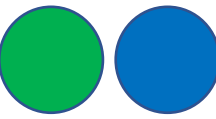
- What is Intellectual Disability
- How you can tell who has intellectual disability
- Communication tips
- Improving accessibility
- Helpful Resources



**What do you think of when you hear the phrase "intellectual disability?"**



# Attitudes & Assumptions



## **Attitudes that Disempower**

- 'People with an intellectual disability are like children, or are asexual'
- 'Reporting or going to court will be too hard for the person with intellectual disability, so we shouldn't do it'

## **Attitudes that Devalue, Depersonalise and Trivialize their Experience**

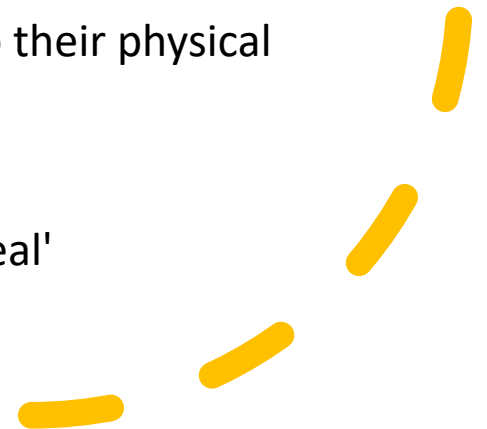
- 'The person with intellectual disability doesn't really understand what happened to them, so it doesn't hurt them as much'
- 'People with intellectual disability are all the same'

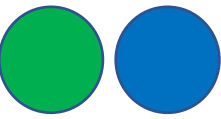
## **Attitudes that Contribute to Risk of Violence**

- 'No one would take advantage of a person with an intellectual disability.'
- 'They mostly have high levels of support and are protected.'
- 'You can tell who has an intellectual disability due to their physical characteristics.'

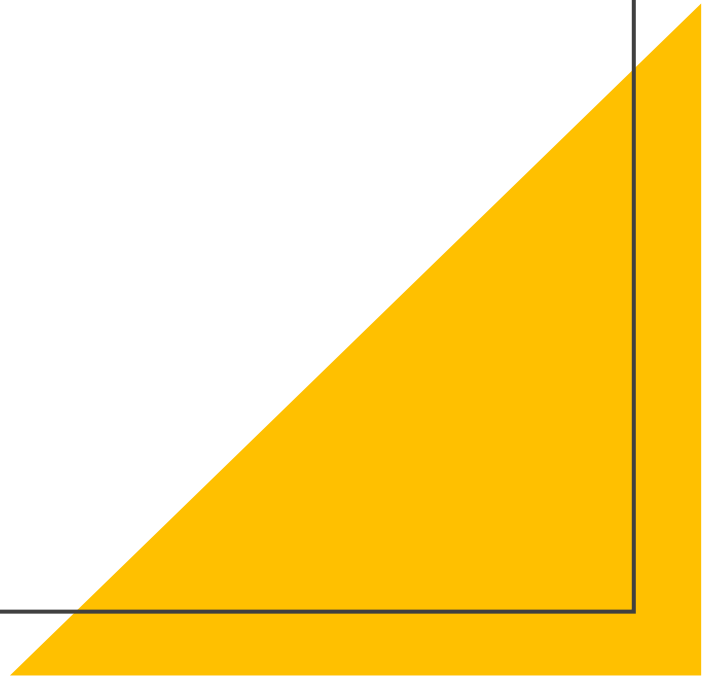
## **Attitudes that Deny or Dismiss their Experience**

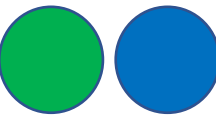
- 'People with intellectual disability can't tell what's real'
- 'People with intellectual disability make things up'





What is intellectual  
disability?





# How do we define disability?

## Medical Model says:

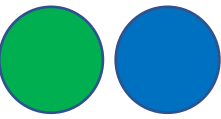
- People with disability are the problem
- People with disability need to be 'fixed' or 'cured'
- The individual with a disability has a responsibility to make things accessible for themselves

## Social Model says:

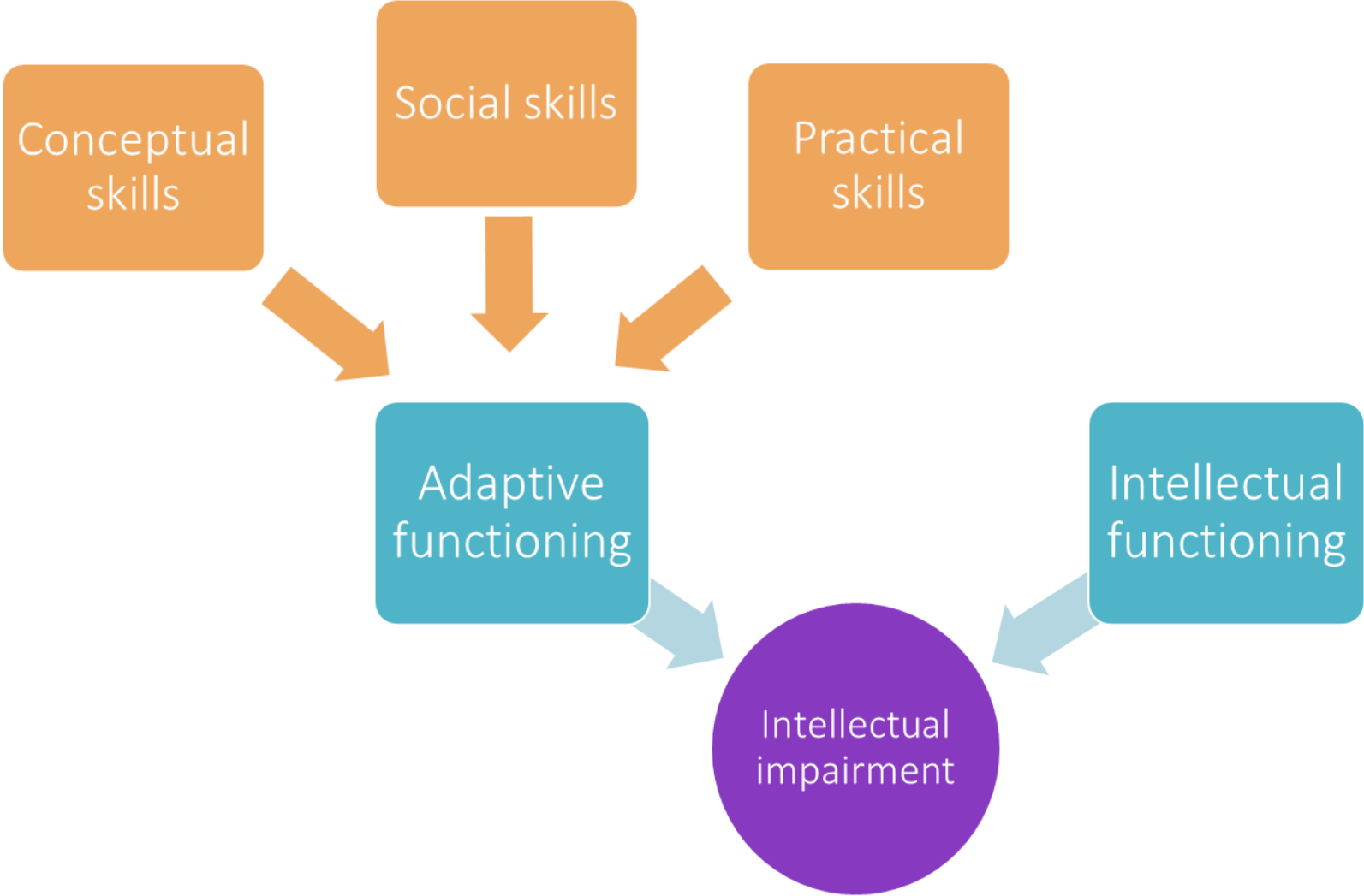
- The way people think about disability and the way our environment is set up are the problems
- Disability is normal
- We all have a responsibility to make things accessible for people with disability

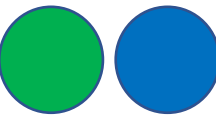






# DSM V MEDICAL DEFINITION





## Conceptual

- Language
- Reading
- Writing
- Money
- Sequencing
- Time
- Reasoning
- Knowledge
- Memory
- Planning
- Problem solving
- Literal thinking
- Humour and sarcasm
- Abstract thinking
- Generalising learning from one situation to another

## Social

- Empathy
- Reading social situations and cues
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Ability to make and retain friendships
- Suggestibility
- Compliance
- Masking

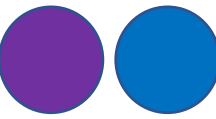
## Practical

- Personal care
- Travel skills
- Safety
- Use of money
- Schedules and routines
- Use of phone
- Occupational skills

# Identifying Intellectual Disability

Key indicators that you **may** observe:

- Difficulty responding to questions or explaining things
- Difficulty making themselves understood
- Difficulty in following instructions
- A gap between words and actions
- May seem distracted or get off topic
- Difficulty following social norms or unconventional expressions
- Absence of 'common sense' in problem solving
- Presents as younger or older than their actual age



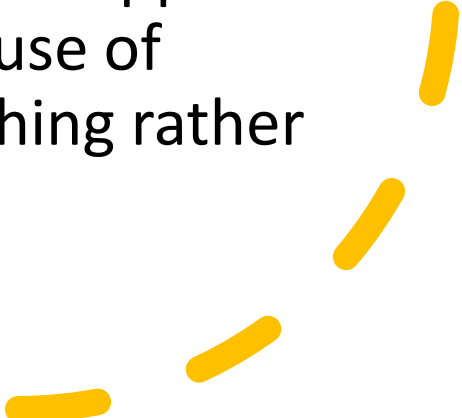
# Other ways to tell

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- they receive a disability pension or Centrelink's Disability Support Pension (DSP)
- they have attended special school or a special class at school
- they attend a work training program
- they attend some kind of respite or activity group during the day
- they are involved with multiple service systems
- they live in supported accommodation
- they have support staff/hours



# Asking about disability


- If you think that someone has an intellectual disability, it is best to ask the person
  - Ask questions to check a person's understanding such as "Does that make sense?" or "Can you explain that to me in your own words?"
  - Explain why you are asking – how does it benefit them for you to know about their disability?
  - We can sometimes feel uncomfortable to ask directly about a person's disability or support needs - this hesitation can be because of ableism (seeing disability as a bad thing rather than a normal part of life)
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# Communication

'We will shut down if people talk to us like a child, or if you talk to us like a professor.'

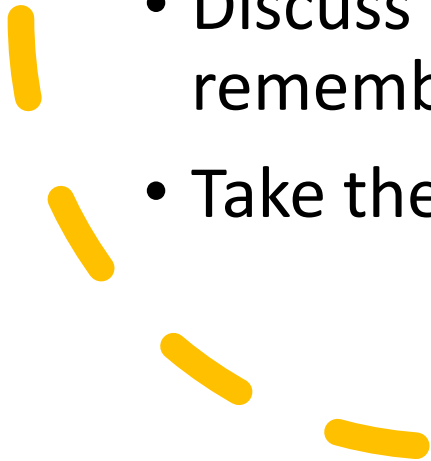
Client with intellectual disability as part of the Listen Up! Project (2021)





# Communication tips

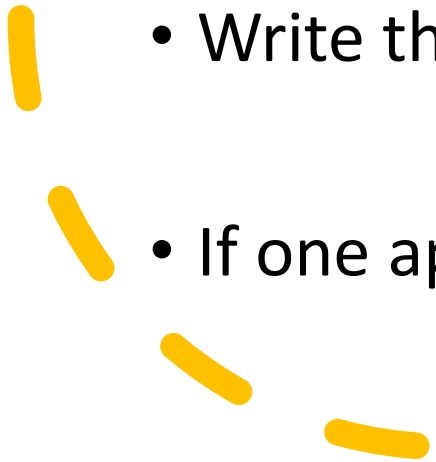
- Build rapport and trust with the person
- Slow your speech and avoid overcomplicated words and phrases
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations
- Be honest if you don't understand something – clarify!
- Discuss what the person can do if they don't understand you or don't remember something
- Take the blame for any miscommunication – own it!





# Communication tips

- Try not to use sentences with more than two options or choices
- Use patience and work slowly at the person's pace
- Take regular breaks and ensure the person knows they can do this
- Use signposts when changing topics
- Write things down or use visual aids
- If one approach isn't working, reset and try something different





# Questioning


- avoid double-barrelled questions (asking two questions about different subjects in one sentence)
- don't say 'How do you feel about coming in today and going in the taxi?' Instead, ask "How do you feel about coming in today?", and then separately ask about the taxi
- avoid the use of negative questions.
- 'Didn't you hear what the train guard said?' Instead, ask 'Did you hear what the train guard said?' or 'What did the train guard say?' or 'Did you hear the train guard say anything?'

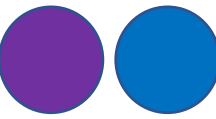
# Questioning

- use a combination of open and closed questions. Begin with an open question, then ask closed questions to confirm details or clarify meaning.
- An example of an open question is ‘Would you like to tell me about your family?’ while a closed question is ‘Do you have any siblings?’
- use the naïve questioner, which positions a worker’s client as the expert.
- Examples of the approach, includes using questions such as, ‘When you said x, what does that mean?’ or ‘I don’t know much about x, can you tell me about it?’



# Masking (Pretending to understand)

- This can look like compliance
    - agreeing to hide the fact they didn't understand what you said
    - finding it difficult to say no to people they think are in a position of authority
    - worried about 'getting into trouble'
  - Rote learning of statements
  - Learned behaviour to get care or help
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What does this  
represent to  
you?



# Abstract VS Concrete Thinking

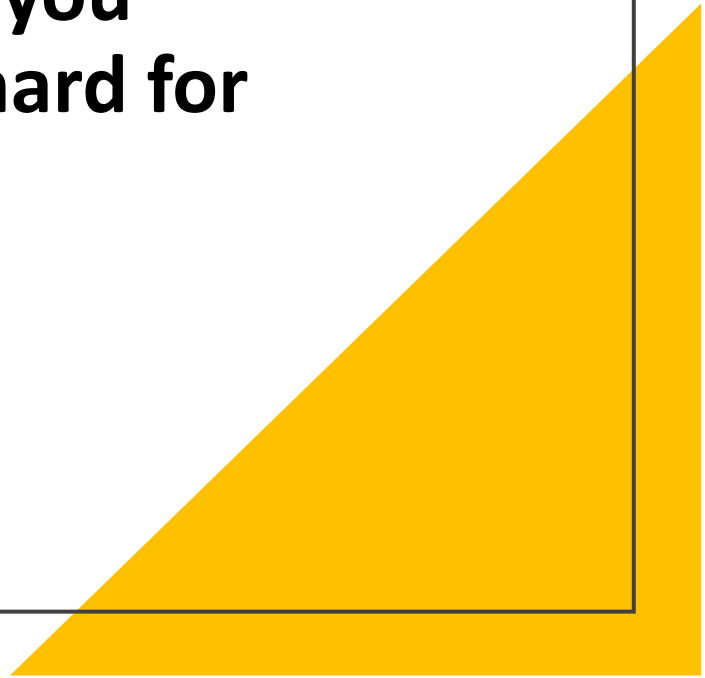
Many people with intellectual disability are concrete thinkers. Concrete thinkers Processes information literally, based on the here and now

The following examples of abstract thinking commonly cause difficulty:

- time and money
- use of metaphors, colloquialisms & figures of speech – e.g. crossing boundaries, someone being 'bad news'
- emotions and feelings
- humour and jokes
- generalising (applying learning one thing to another)


# Activity

**What are some everyday phases or concepts you use that would be hard for a concrete thinker?**





# Accessibility

- What are some ways your service is accessible?
  - What are some things your organisation could do to improve the accessibility of your service?
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# WWILD Resources

## Sexual Assault and Ways to Report It Video Series

- 6 animated informative videos about what is sexual assault, how to report to QPS and access 93A's and the other options for reporting.
- Available on WWILD.ORG.AU & YouTube

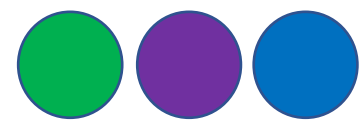


## And So You Think You're the Expert Podcast & Videos

- 7 episodes that discuss disability, violence and accessibility hosted by the experts – women with intellectual disability. Each episode features an interview with workers in the field - including Stephen Blanchfield from QPS.
- Available on WWILD.ORG.AU & where podcasts are found







# Questions?

Thankyou!

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