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Leadership Week Live Notetaking

How to: Self Advocacy with Disabled Students Association

Alice: All right! All these faces. Kia ora everyone, thank you so much for joining us for this very important discussion. Kia ora, thank you so much for joining us today for this really important korero. A bit of admin, for those who are interested, an accurate transcript of this conversation will be available afterwards and there is also live transcribing for those who may need it. If we are speaking too quickly, or you can not hear us, please either utilize the chat function or the raise hand buttons to the side. This will also be used for questions towards the end of our session.

Ok, now that that is out of the way, let’s get going! Kia ora koutou katoa, my name is Alice Mander and I am lucky enough to be the president of the Disabled Students Association here at Te Herenga Waka. I’m also a law and Arts student, majoring in film studies and sociology. A lot of my time and energy is dedicated to disability rights, and I have been lucky enough to work alongside organisations such as AttitudePictures, All Is For All, and Imagine Better.

So for those who do not know who we are or much about us we are the representative group for students with disabilities and impairments on campus. We run events such as this, give policy advice from the perspective of disabled students, and also seek to create a welcoming and warm environment for all disabled students.

Our organisation has a rich history. That’s the inspiration for this talk today. Some of you may know us by our former name- CanDo. CanDo was established in 1992- and stands for Campus Abilities and Disabilities Organisation. It was through the advocacy and work of CanDo that a separate service for students with disabilities was created on campus, eventually becoming what we now know as Disability Services today. We recently changed our name to the Disabled Students Association for we believe it encompasses our organisations’ current kaupapa in a way that is more relevant to students today- we want to reclaim the use of the word disabled and encourage pride.

The story of CanDo and its history is extremely relevant for today’s conversation. Without the dedicated and brave advocacy of students back in 1992, Disability Services as we know it may never have come into fruition. This is yet another example of how the rights we enjoy today are often taken for granted, and they do in fact come through through direct advocacy.

Marginalized communities throughout New Zealand history- Maori communities, disabled communities, the LGBTQ community, women, etc- have only gained rights through activism and civil struggle. It is the sad reality of the neo-liberal society we live in that nothing is given without it being demanded. So, the pertinent question obviously is: **how do we actually effect the change we wish to see for the future?**

Please note that this is not a verbatim record.

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To discuss this exact topic, we have invited this incredible group of people along to chat- each of whom have contributed to community advocacy and activism in one way or another and have been role models for me personally. Today we will be discussing and learning from their experiences of getting involved in advocacy, and hopefully come away with the knowledge and confidence to believe everyone has the power to activate change.

So, without further ado, I’m privileged to introduce our panellists for today. We have Pati Umaga (who maybe wants to unmute himself so he pops up), Laura O’Connell Rapira, Dr Huhana Hickey, and Jahla Tran Lawrence. Before we launch into some questions, I would absolutely love it if you could all please introduce yourself and maybe tell us a little bit about your journey to getting to where you are today, and how you got into the various forms of advocacy work you are all in. Pati would you like to begin.

Before we launch into questions, I’d love it if all of our awesome panelists could introduce themselves and say a little bit about their journey to get where they are today. Pati?

Pati: I apologize - I’m in my van in a carpark. The warden just walked past and pointed the finger at me. Not sure what’s happening there. I’ve always had a background in community development and youth work. I’ve had a sense of social justice from those days. I suspect it began earlier. I wasn’t aware of issues around social justice, change, human rights, basically. During that time I also got involved in Maori sovereignty issues through a woman, Donna Aoteri who was leading a movement at the time. I got involved in the Springbok tour protest. I was a walker then; it wasn’t until 2005 until I had a fall and broke my neck that I’ve been in a wheelchair. It’s my 15th year anniversary of that. It’s been a journey of going back to the past to recognize the future. In terms of healing myself and getting to a point where I can affect social change from a disability perspective, I wanted to try to see if I can do the same change as my days as a youth worker. I got involved in mainstream issues. I was disappointed. The traditional method of trying to talk to government agencies around strategy and policy doesn’t always hit the mark. For me, I tried other avenues of activism. What I got into was music. I wanted to use music as a way of challenging not just traditional stereotypes towards people with disabilities but also innovative ways of activism. I know a lot of young people I dealt with found the traditional way of forums, meetings, advisory groups - quite boring. It was a lot of bureaucratic speak. The change needs to come from grassroots and music too.

Alice: Your story is super interesting. A lot of people are put off by bureaucracy. I know personally it can be a drag. Great. Laura?

Laura: My journey to activism has been like this [a curly line going up and down]. I have experimented with many different ways to make change. I came to working in the NGO sector because I moved to England after high school; I loved music festivals and wanted to work on them. I wanted to learn how I could bring them to New Zealand. I figured where better than Glastenbury in the UK? I moved to England and got a job as a volunteer coordinator. Really big festivals. I had to organize waste and recycle volunteers. It’s a huge job with 60,000 people. The way the model worked was that Oxfam would be paid by Glastenbury to provide volunteers and the volunteers would get a free ticket if they worked enough hours. Volunteers came free, got to do a good cause, and Oxfom got money, and Glastenbury got volunteers. It was good. You can think creatively about making the most of everyone's talents to create change. I happened to be in England during the election. I was asking my activist friends who they wanted to vote; most of them said they wouldn't. I found that interesting. I think we need to use all of the tools in our kete; a vote is not everything, but it's one thing. When I returned to NZ in 2013 I looked into the statistics to see if young people voted in low numbers here too. It's the case. I started an organization called Rock Enroll. We had parties and gave people a ticket if they voted. We would call everyone who came to our gigs, asked them where they're voting, what they're passionate about. It was parties and political organizing. When I was running Rock Enroll, powered by volunteers and "sweat equity", I heard about Action Station; bringing people power back to democracy. The co-founders found the limit of what you could achieve in Parliament, and wanted something outside of that. I emailed the cofounders with campaign ideas until they hired me. I've been there for 6 years.

Alice: Jahla?

Jahla: I joke that I only got into this space of activism, feminism, sexual violence prevention, in the past few years - but I've always been like this, a ball of rage fighting everybody. I started understanding more of these issues as an undergrad studying criminology studying sexual violence and violence against women. I came back to New Zealand and did my honours degree in criminology, sexual violence and masculinity and prevention initiatives. I met Alice then and helped out as co-president of the feminist organization and the tertiary sexual violence campaign. I also worked as a Youth Educator for Respected Aoteroa; I go into High Schools and teach around consent and sexual violence. I just walked in from a class talking to year 10 boys about consent. It was amazing. I also began tutoring for the university around human trafficking. I did my Master's in a similar subject on men's perceptions of this culture. We tend to volunteer and have our fingers in many pies. My driving force behind this is seeing the power of young people. And really trying to push intersectionality at the forefront of everything I do to push old age traditional views of what feminism is and make change in that area. I hope that answers your question.

Huhana: Dr. Hu for short. I got my PHD so I could be my first female Doctor Who, and then they go and make her blonde haired and blue-eyed. I love Doctor Who and Star Trek, but not Star Wars - that's not sci-fi. That's me. I don't think of myself as an activist; that's very Pakeha. I just live my truth. I've had to fight from birth. To live, my adoptive uncle, my adoptive mum's alcoholism and depression, and abuse. A lot of my early life was anger, abuse, labels. My adoption papers had me listed as an imbecile and an idiot; I may be both, but you know what? You can't predict that in a baby. I was never expected to achieve. Even the nuns said I could only be a mother, as if it that was even bad; but that was all they thought I could do. I might have made a great doctor, but I was never headed that way. It wasn't until my disability started to show themselves - the first year at University I had 3 A's, 2 B's, and a hysterectomy as a solo mum with a disabled child. I realized I had a brain. Uni gave me that. I became the vice-president of the student union. I went to the Springbok tour with my older, educated cousin. He took me to see Muldoon, I looked at him and my father, and said, "he's bloody short, isn't he?" That took politics in perspective. My father said he didn’t care who I voted for, just that I voted. I thought that was great; I never voted for them. The only thing I’ve got is my ability to vote. I’ve seen that power. We’ve done it with Foreshore and Seabed, 20,000 protested. I couldn’t go. I supported the students while they went. I don’t think about my activism. I just do what I need to do. Sometimes you succeed, sometimes you fail. The key point is that if you’re going to make a stand for something, why are we so weak on standing up on issues? I’ve stood by myself with placards because a woman was stuck upstairs for 3 years because the Ministry took away her lift and refused to replace it. I’ve sat in my wheelchair being spat in my face because of what I believe. My community doesn't want to speak out because they’re made to be afraid; they’ll lose their services, their hours. But they’re not meeting our needs now! How do you think by staying silent that you’re going to win? I’ve started a new campaign, to push for a Ministry for Disability led by disabled, for disabled, and about disabled. How come none of you come to the Tribunal? We don’t charge you. It’s free. If an individual loses the case, it doesn’t matter, if they’re disabled, we won’t charge them. The arguments need to be heard. I’m Maori, Navaho, aboriginal, from the four winds. The predominant voices in our sector are Pakeha; not Maori, or migrants. It’s mostly women, Pakeha. Nothing against that. But we are a diverse community. I believe in that. We share the love in our whanau. Direct yourself and look after yourself; you’re no good to anybody if you get sick. Music is my passion. I sing soul-gospel, Jazz. I’m losing my voice, but until then I sing. I do artwork; I've done a cartoon of David Seymour. I love sculpture, cartoons, cooking, I’m a foodie. We are all that. Not just our politics. To celebrate that, we have to get loud. We are behind the rest of the Kiwis in New Zealand to be heard. If we stay silent, remember that’s another voice lost in the activism world. Thankyou.

Alice: Thankyou. I agree with everything you said; the importance of speaking out and taking space and making space. Huhana - you have a background in human rights law. I was wondering whether you could speak to the main barriers you perceive in people exercising their rights under the law. The big thing with demanding your rights is that you can’t demand what you don’t know exists. Some breaches in Aoteroa go unnoticed; wage exemption policy for disabled people for instance.

Huhana: Kiwis are polite. I envy activists overseas. Other countries activists’ chain themselves to gates. Rosa Parks refused to move from the bus. We don’t even get on the bus; it’s not accessible. We need more and more of you to stand against political parties and to get higher placement. It’s patronizing, paternalistic bullshit that we have disabled candidates so far down the list it doesn’t matter. We’ve had a lot of people stand. We had Mojo for one term, then put her so far down the list they insulted the rest of us. One of the issues coming through Parliament is the euthanasia debate; and our voice has been ignored. We’re about to vote on a law that’ll be what’s happening now to Maori disabled. In 1996, … Williams was killed by the state. He needed dialysis, the government said no. The whanau said they’d pay for it. The state refused, and he was euthanized involuntarily by denying him. That’s 1990. I was an undergrad in law school then. That opened my door to human rights. In 2010, I was contacted about Robert Namu; brain injury, needed dialysis, Northland. The state said no to dialysis. He didn’t qualify. I don’t know if he didn’t qualify because he was brain injured or Maori. Again, another man who died drowning in his fluids as he was denied. In Whangarei Hospital, we had someone with a massive brain injury and survived. They were on a ventilator and lost all movement except for their fingers. They got transferred back to Whangarei, and the doctors said they wanted to put a DNR on them. They said they wanted to live. There's always an assumption disabled people want to die. They sent them home to die. This has happened to 3 of my whanau members; they get refused treatment and die. They want to live, but because they're so disabled, the government doesn't want them to. We don't need euthansia; we euthanize disabled people anyway. I got the first Disability Action Plan in place. They want only 50% of New Zealand houses to be accessible; it needs to be 100%. We have less than 3% of our people on accessible housing. That's something you can get involved in. The housing movement. The election; you need to say whether or not you believe in something. Provide your young people with education about how to vote. Support them to make their decision and get people to the polling booth. I'm a senior leader; you're the next generation. I'm gonna die before I see a Ministry. But I won't stop pushing. You have to hold it through to the next level. We are being abused every single day under the Health and Disability Act. Teach people to write, and they won't shut up. And that's good.

Alice: A lot of students on a smaller scale do not know what is on offer for them at University; services (disability services), or what rights they have. Jahla, you've done a lot of work here. I was wondering if you had some advice regarding navigating the power imbalances in these long standing organizations and ensuring students get services they have a right to.

Jahla: Thanks for your question. The power imbalance is important. There's an individualization of responsibility where you just do your own thing and ask them for it. It's naive to expect undergrads to be comfortable walking up to management and demanding something they don't understand. It's elitist, colonial, ridiculous. Students need to understand they may need support to level an unfair playing field. DSA provides a community; power in numbers. Students can feel so isolated. I'm a tutor and I get 10 students with the same issue, each of them saying nobody else understands. Empower students with communities and advocates with a variety of lived experience and knowledge. Be able to form that community and confront whoever needs to be confronted. It's huge. It enables so much change when people feel they're not alone. That's partly physical isolation due to accessibility issues, but also lack of awareness around certain things. A University is not an equal, unbiased institution; it's built to privilege a certain type of person who is realistically 9% of the population.

Huhana: You're going to have to be prepared to fight. You will face barriers. It won't be easy. Succeeding is being prepared to stand up. I went in at AUT as a lawyer for ADL with a client with dyspraxia who wanted to do culinary .We got them to agree to do it with a support person. Came out with a 90% above and won awards. Went back the next year, they were declined again, agreed to another plan, 90% again. They said no again the next year; then the lawyer threatened them with a human rights case. The minute a cop stops you for being brown, don't swear, don't give them lip. Give your name, your address, and ask them if you're under arrest. If yes, ask them why. Then demand to be taken to the station and get a lawyer. That's it. I remember in Aotea Square the police came to arrest everybody, so I yelled out the Bill of Rights act. They exercised that and they didn't get charged. Know your rights. At AUT as a lecturer I got knocked back and didn't get support, even when students did. Don't expect things to come to you on a platter. Know what you need to learn, know the legislation. Understand your rights. There's nothing to be scared of in exercising your rights.

Jahla: Also - find your advocate. Find your person. Not everybody has the ability to access the same services. There are people who will stand up and do that. Resistance looks different in so many ways. Not everybody is comfortable yelling in the streets. Find that person who will while you do what's right for you in that space. If you want to help, but don't know what to do, make yourself a champion of these issues. Don't push yourself, but make yourself available.

Alice: Community Law, Know Your Rights, and VUWSA has an advocacy person. A lot of young people want to effect change but are not quite sure how to go about it. There is a misconception that advocacy is mainly about grass roots activism - protests, for instance. Pati, you have affected a lot of change through your music. I was wondering whether you could speak to that and how you sought to draw on your strengths and passions to be the change you wish to see?

Pati: As a Pacific Islander, we have a different way of approaching protest. Historically we had a movement in the 1920s called the Mau movement; a protest led by our people to wrestle away from the administration of the New Zealand government. We had a peaceful protest. That's the way of our people. Peace, humility, dignity. Our leader got shot by the soldiers. As he lay dying he stressed the value of peaceful protest for our people. We've been brought up to trust the people in power, the experts. In a lot of ways, that led us to be - not silent, not exploited - but there are different ways of doing that. My grandfather wrote a musical piece out of what happened, the Song of the Mau. We had things happen to us around colonization, religion playing a huge part in coercing our people into submission, and not questioning the powers that be. With each generation that's always passed on - to never question. When I see family members now, they're frustrated with the system. They don't want to question it. They're powerless. So they do it themselves. Why I chose music for our young people is that it has the ability to change perceptions. I hope I'm answering the question. What I do know is that music has played a big part as a form of narrative and storytelling. Its validity in terms of being part of a movement that suggests activism, protest, social justice, is inherent. I try to pass that onto young people in the arts; they're so connected to music. A lot of our artists are coming out as Pacific artists. But I don't see disabled Pacific artists. What happens when we get our people here? I had a music video called Shiba; I had a load of disalbed people in it. In others' perceptions, people don't believe we can move, dance, have creativity within us. That challenges the system.

Alice: Music gets to the core of what it means to be human, in a way. Laura, a lot of the issues we see in the world today feel huge; climate issues, poverty. There's a hesitation in that. I'm one person, too small to affect change. Can you tell us more about Action Station and give us advice on practical steps?

Laura: It can be difficult to create change in systems as an individual. Jahla's point earlier about communities - we won't create a fair, flourishing, beautiful future for disabled, Pasifika, Maori etc with hetero able-bodied Pakeha exclusively. Our movement needs to be as diverse as the future we want to build. Good campaigns are 80% research and 20% tactics. You need a few key things; your vision, your goal. If you achieve everything, how will the world be different? The more we articulate our vision the more likely we can bring it into being. Giving every single child the opportunity to unlock opportunities, to preserve the beauty of the earth - don't say "sign a petition to stop climate change", but "we are Generation Zero, we want to build a protected cycle lane through K road for travel that isn't carbon intensive". That's a more believable goal. It's important to think about who the people are with the power to change what you desire to change. That's the target of your energy and time. We had a young person, Lucy, who struggled with mental health. She went to a privileged school and had a private counselor, and she lied to her friends about where she was going. She finally revealed it, and they all realized they were all going to therapy. They didn't have anything in their school to share their own tools from their own experience. She started a petition calling for better mental health education in all schools. We worked with her to produce social media stories. We got that petition to 10,000 signatures. She delivered that to her local MP, David Seymour. He was the Associate Minister of Education. She got the opportunity to present her case to Select Committee. At that point, she rallied young people to talk about their hopes and dreams. That's going to inform the curriculum now. That started from a conversation with a friend to reaching out to Action Station, to reaching out to the person with the power to make that change.

Alice: Good advice. I'll keep that in mind as we come up with some things as a club. Not all young people are deeply into politics; does anyone have any insight on the main barriers to getting into political issues as young people?

Laura: I've done a lot of research on this. When we talk about young people not voting, we acknowledge that the least likely of those are people in rural areas, migrants of color, people with disabilities. They have been let down. Why would they feel inspired to vote? That's one of the realities. Young marginalized people are ignored, and we expect them to get over all that and fix it. At the same time, if they don't, it will not get fixed. There's something potent in having that conversation. You start with vision, dream, aspiration. When you talk to people not politically engaged, they will often have fully articulated visions of how the country or community could be different. I talk to them about what other things they'd like to change in society. I ask them why it's not like that yet. I ask them how to change that. Eventually they arise at their own conclusion - social movements, communities, rallying behind someone. And I'm like - should we do that? End a structured conversation with a call to action.

Pati: If I could go next. I have to go soon to my next appointment. I agree; in terms of our disabled Pasifika youth, for me it's about the fact that we want to bring them together to have this korero about what politics means for us in our cultural context. Provide them with a safe environment to be able to have that conversation. We as disabled want to lead our own change. How can we change that role so they can participate in the political environment too? Music does that, but it's about how you bring up the conversation of the importance of being politically involved and being able to use art as a platform to have that pathway. There's no pathway to take over leadership from people who have been in for many years and become comfortable. We need a gathering where we, as Pasifika, can say what the cultural context can mean for us in our own island. Intersectionality is crucial. We're not just Pasifika. We are Samoa, Tongan - we have 8 or 9 different nations under there.

Alice: Thanks so much for joining today Pati. We appreciate your mahi. It does not go unnoticed.

Huhana: You nailed it, Pati. We forget in the disability community; we've become divergent. We had an approach to leading. We did the State of the Nation report. Our voice was strong, powerful. We've got nothing since. We've gone very impairment based. The autistic group gets funding for a period because they're the government's favourite. Then the blind… They've broken us up, and we've lost the human rights approach. Liberals get abused for being "snowflakes". A snowflake on its own gets melted quickly. In a whole bunch, they're an avalanche. We cannot move individually. It's only recently people are hearing what I'm saying. It's finally being heard that we want a Disability Ministry. I'm a brain injury survivor, I'm hearing impaired, they think I'm a bit autistic, I don't know. I cross so many groups. Why focus on our diagnoses instead of focusing on human rights? We don't have to be rabid activists. Some people are background people. I write poetry. We're not homogenous. I'm Maori with MS. The neurologists discriminate against me because they believe Maori don't get MS. Nobody should minimize or put down their own identity. I don't identify as pakeha; I'm pale-skinned. My dad is Sami; indigenous of the Scandinavian region. We can't keep attacking each other. We're brother and sister in this journey together. We've got to stop using the privilege some have - being on the benefit and working, being on ACC. I mentor younger people. My voice needs to go in the background. As I get older my disability gets harder and what I have left is years of experience and skills. I need to mentor you so you can take it forward. I love supervision; they take older ideas and take it in a newer direction. Challenge our writing, academic work. Don't be afraid to say you've had enough. I have plastic on my body that goes into landfill; I can't change much of that personally but I can advocate for environmentally friendly products that fulfil our medical needs. All I can do now is begin the role of mentoring. That's what I'm here for.

Jahla: I find the question of young people in politics very interesting. I'm young-ish, queer, brown, refugee migrant background. When I was a younger person I didn't see anybody that looked like me in politics. It was white men in suits in cities. I had some knowledge that it affects me but there was no fathomable idea that me in all of this had a potential to make change. Politicians have a responsibility to make their politics accessible. Those in those spaces need to challenge politicians about what they're doing for these communities. My little sisters have this massive crush on Golriz Gahraman because she looks like they do; that's amazing. Politics is for everyone. Anyone can run if they have the right support and knowledge. That idea seems crazy. You don't just run for politics. But you can, and do, and should.

Alice: So true. We've seen that not just with national politics but with local bodies, like Tabitha Paul, former VUWSA president is now in Wellington City Council. If you have any questions, now would be a good time to pop them in the chat function if you can. There's an interesting quote i like by Bell Hooks, a black feminist writer:

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“Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of ‘talking back’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject- the liberated voice”

The mere presence of those of us in minority groups is an act of resistance. I was wondering if anybody wanted to speak to the idea of being a good advocate and owning yourself and how the mere act of pride in your own identity is in itself resistance and how talking back is a form of resistance.

Jahla: I love this quote. We use this when working with survivors of harm. In a society designed to silence certain people and to make them small, simply existing and thriving is the biggest act of resistance. It’s not the responsibility of those being harmed to be in that space. The oppressed don’t have to explain to the oppressor the oppression. That’s ridiculous! I have a chronic illness. Sometimes resistance is getting out of bed. Making sure I eat enough. It’s so important to be talking about diverse types of resistance because there’s these pressures of being a “bad activist” if you’re not doing XYZ. That’s harmful. It’s mainstreaming one way you should be. It’s patriarchal, and white to emphasize science, data, action. Music, emotion, storytelling, small rituals are equally if not more powerful. Go nuts. Resistance is everything. Live your lives and be successful.

Huhana: Personal is political, political is personal. That’s very true for disabled. Especially the visibility disabled. Being in a wheelchair is a statement. Golriz has come out as having MS; I knew about it for a long time before that. It was for her to say it. But she isn’t part of our community yet. She needs to be supported to understand her own journey. She’s a newbie to all this. We can go “yay, we have a voice in Parliament”. But she doesn’t know the nuisances. When you’ve been a veteran you sit back and look and go “you think we haven’t been trying?”, but the enthusiasm is so great. The system doesn’t want to let us succeed. It divides. As a Maori, the Foreshore and Seabed is a great example. We were collective and agreed; over 20,000 people attended. My son went to the Brian Tamaki protest and came back and said mum, I was afraid. My son’s never been one that goes to protests. He does it on social media, and challenging people. We don’t want to lose those voices. The Access Station, doing a matariki holiday each year - Maori have asked for it for years. We need to get into the tiny bits to make change happen. And the Disability Act in the Ministry, I’ve been asked to get hold of you, Laura, to do an Action Station petition to call for that to happen. I’m designing the generic letter now. Those are all ways of being active. Know your history. The whole reason I have an issue with euthanasia is that we’ve seen a “compasssionate law” under Hitler, and they murdered over 250,000 people at the maternity hospitals. We need to know our history for why the older ones keep harping on the same issues and so we can take it forward in the same style and same way.

Alice: Thank you for that. Jahla, I agree; self-care is often a form of resistance. You have to be up, working everyday according to capitalism. But staying in because you need to is an act of resistance in itself. Unless there’s - oh, there’s a question.

One major concern/confusion I have is why is there such a lack of Māori support within mental health and addiction. I only had one Māori service available to me and they failed me and were terribly run as a service compared to the other services. Where do I start looking into this whole issue?

Huhana: It's a hard one. You only have mainstream services. There are some hard-to-find Maori services. But the MoH has only funded 1% of health funding into Maori services. It's failed and proven to be incompetent. Under lockdown the coalition provided millions towards mental health support but have yet to see it come out. Those in the services get burnt out, exhausted, and caught up in the mainstream.They're trying to develop a plan to run their own services. If that's the case, that's one of the largest ways to affect change. It's not there now. Don't give up. I know you're exhausted. Some days I'm so tired I cry on my wife's shoulders saying I can't take it anymore. Go somewhere with nature; it doesn't have to be expensive. Or the temple, because I'm a Buddhist, have some vegetarian kai. Get that ability to get the peace of mind to get back into the battle. Hookup with the networks and agitate from the inside.I go straight to the Minister. This is one key of being well-connected. I knew a mother whose daughter had a charge nurse cough on her; the daughter was immunocompromised. The mother was told to leave after she asked why; I rang Carmel and she reminded me it was DSS' responsibility here. I called Jenny, we had an hour and a half conversation, I got ahold of Adre, the deputy disability commissioner, they called back to the hospital, and needless to say, the daughter got the surgery and the mother wasn't kicked out. In the end, I've found out that there are good and bad in every single party. People you agree and disagree with, except Act and the brand new conspiracy theory party. Don't join them - they're on the fringe. Slowly move your way in and get the people you need to know and become known to them, through your studies or through joining a political party. Do it through vlogs or blogs. Do what you're comfortable with doing. Connect to the right networks, the right people, who will lead you into the path of change. Go with a friend. If you want to approach a politician, remember: you employ them. They're bound to us.

Laura: One quick thing related to self-care. There's a tool called the Spectrum of Allies; you can segment people into five groups: those that strongly agree, those that agree a bit, those neutral, those that disagree a little, and those that vehemently disagree. We can waste a lot of time on the last group. We're better off using our finite resources on getting more of the passive people to be more active, and getting neutral people to be passive allies. Social media has excavated or revealed polarization. Tap out where you can. I've used the power of the internet to coordinate the movement I'm part of today. Turn off devices and don't get sucked in to arguing with people you don't agree with on the internet. That's my last thing to share. I hope that's useful.

Alice: Great. I think falling into the trap of arguing with people on Facebook can be tempting, but it never goes down well. This is a good time to wrap up to let our panelists get back to their very busy days. I thought I was being ambitious by inviting you all, but I was shocked and amazed everyone was keen. Thank you so much. I'm sure we can all agree the insight you've given us today is inspiring, even though us as disabled folk don't like that word. Thank you, and thanks to everyone who came - we appreciate your support. A final

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During the Zoom call, we recommend keeping this live document open on your second screen or using half of your main screen.

thankyou to Blake and Charlie, and to disability Services, and the Disabled Students Association Exec. Follow us on Facebook for more events.

Please note that this is not a verbatim record.