

ELECTIVE:
Cultivating Kindness:
Practical support for hidden disabilities
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- It is easy to assume that if you can't see the disability or issue, then it is not there, and to subsequently overlook or not ask about someone's needs
- Some people are also able to mask their symptoms for short periods of time. this is a coping mechanism to blend in and not draw attention but does not mean that they are fine
- People can also experience fluctuating symptoms, so you may see them do something today that they then are not able to do again in two weeks. It does not mean that they are faking, it is just to do with the day-to-day variability that they live with
- Everyone is different, even two people with the same condition will have different challenges and different support needs so just because you have met someone with x condition before, it does not mean you know what every person with that condition needs
- Many people find it hard to ask for help, or are not sure what help you might be willing to provide. One way to overcome this is to proactively ask if someone would like help, and to provide examples of the sorts of things that you can do. Also respecting when someone says no.
- If someone discloses a disability or support need to you, this is not news for you to share with everyone. Ask if that person is comfortable with you talking to x about it in order to better assist them. And when someone does disclose support needs, do not dismiss this and tell them that they don't really need that, this makes it even harder to ask in the future
- Don't assume that you know what is best for someone, ask them as they are the expert on their own body.
- A sunflower lanyard or pin is increasingly being used in the broader community to indicate that someone has an invisible disability

Kindly provided by Sarah Hookey, a disability advocate and St Hilary's congregation member

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