

Awareness raising for persons with disabilities

Engelsk:

Let me start out by saying that "English is Absolutely Not my Best". I'm not a big fan of talking in English. Actually, this is the first time I'm talking for an audience – in English. I feel like I'm taking you with me through an episode of the popular danish christmas serie "The Julekalender" where all of it is in a very weird and comical mix of Danish & English. To be honest, when I was asked to come here... I really hesitated and was like "noooo..." But then the theme was about breaking down barriers of misunderstanding, breaking down prejudices about people with a handicap – which is a really important struggle for me. So, well, here I am!

My name is Christina. And this is my servicedog Mocca. I'm 43 years old. I'm born with Osteogenesis Imperfecta Brittle Bone Disease, which means that I can – quite easily – break my bones. I've had around 400 broken bones in my life until now. When I was born, the disease wasn't that well known here in Denmark. The doctors actually believed I had "water in my head" and that there was something wrong with my head. One of the doctors even said, to my parents, that it might be best that I died, because I would never have a decent life. I'd like to meet that doctor today. Show him who I am, what kind of life I've had – tell him that I'm not sorry and that I wouldn't be without my handicap – except, perhaps – I'd like to get rid of some of the pains!

Luckily my mum and dad welcomed me with open arms. They didn't listen to the doctor and they believed I could have a good life. I went to a kindergarden for handicapped, where they quickly figured out that everything was good with my head, and that I was better suited to go to a "normal" school. Later I went to upper secondary school – and now I'm working for the union STH – Servicehundene til Handicappede – as a bookkeeper and administrative assistant.

I'm not sorry and I do not complain about the fact that I'm handicapped. It is my life, it's who I am! What upsets me - or can upsets me is the way that some people – knowingly or unknowingly – meet me. People that talk loud because they think I can't hear, or people that talk very very clear because they think I have a hard time understanding. Some people get surprised, get kind of like "WOW" over simply things I do, that I find to be the most natural thing in the world. Some people are too afraid to approach me. I know that they don't do or say these things because they are mean. Most often it's about ignorance or just the fact that they do not know how to handle the situation! A sort of fear for the unfamiliar. That's why I think it's important to stand up, to show who I am. Show that just because you might lack an arm, or legs, walk funny or are in a wheelchair, doesn't mean that you're not a human being with emotions and needs. Need for acceptance, respect and first and foremost love.

I got this opportunity – this courage – when I joined a TV program a couple of years back. The program was called "De Uperfekte" – a concept taken from the English show called "The Undateables". It was about dating and handicap. Like everyone else my hope was to find a boyfriend, but that's a tricky thing, especially when you're in a wheelchair. Guys are simply too scared of this little machine. Or maybe it's about me instead? Unfortunately the

program didn't change my love life, but it changed a lot of other things. My self-confidence grew, my selfworth grew and I got the courage to stand up and tell about myself – my life. Show people that being handicapped does not mean having a bad or trivial life – and again – show that no matter what we're all just people.

Accept, respect and love. Why I mention love is because I once wrote with a guy, who asked if handicapped had feelings and need for love. I thought: yes! Here's a guy with some humour. Just my sort of thing. I answered: No we do not. We live in a steel cage without any form for feelings – kind of like a ufo. When we communicated we unfold our antennas and send signals to each other. Shortly afterwards he replied, apologizing if his question hurt me, but he actually meant what he wrote. OMG – I refuse to believe that there – in our time – exist people that believe that just because you look different, you're not a human being. It simply can't be right. I don't want to believe it – but, hey, there he was.

SO – that's why I give talks, that's why I participate in different campaigns that want to show that no matter what we're all just people. That's why I want to break down barriers of misunderstanding, of prejudice.

And that's why I got really happy when I got a request in 2015 from the Danish Disability Council, asking me if I'd like to join their campaign "Det er Ikke Et Handicap" (It's not a handicap) We were going to make a talkshow – The Handicapped Talkshow. The concept was pretty much the same as in a typical talkshow – but turned upside down. A handicapped studio – my specially designed handicap-car! Handicap audience. Handicap questions. The only ones who weren't handicapped were the guests. We drove to Bornholm, a danish island where there every year is an political gathering called "Folkemødet". Politicians, celebrities and all kinds of people meet for a weekend, discussing, debating, giving speeches... Here we parked with my car, here we invited different people in for a chat. In just a minute I'll show you a short episode. The funny thing was that we ended out by sort of concluding that everybody has some kind of handicap. Big, small, invisible – but anyhow: can we at all say that anybody's normal? What is normal?

Unfortunately there wasn't any of the Danish TV-stations that wanted to screen our talkshow, so you can only find it on youtube.

However, there was a single famous TV-comedian, Jan Gintberg, who watched it and afterwards asked if I wanted to participate in one of his shows. I said yes and we had a little chat about handicap and handicapped people. IT was sø funny and it was showed on Danish tv.

I believe that the best way towards breaking down barriers and prejudices are through the medias. We just need to convince them that we - who have a handicap is not dangerous, or whatever it is, they're afraid of. We never see a TV-host who's handicapped in the News, Aftenshowet, Go'Morgen eller Go'Aften Danmark? Why? What do they fear?

And now – here's an episode of The Handicapped Talkshow.

Thank You

Dansk

Lad mig starte med at sige at *“English Is Absolutely Not My Best”*. Jeg bryder mig virkelig ikke om at tale engelsk og faktisk er det her første gang jeg taler for en større forsamling - på engelsk. Jeg føler, jeg kommer til at tage jer med i et afsnit af en populær dansk julekalender *“The Julekalender”*, hvor det hele foregår på dansk/english.

Egentlig følte jeg mig for genert til at deltage, men på den anden side, så er emnet om at nedbryde fordomme og barriere over for handicappede og handicap, så vigtigt for mig - så nu sidder jeg her.

Jeg hedder Christina. Jeg er 43 år. Er født med Osteogenesis Imperfecta Brittle Bone Disease, hvilket betyder at jeg kan brække knoglerne meget nemt. Da jeg blev født, var Brittle Bones Disease ikke så kendt i Danmark. Lægerne troede jeg havde vand i hovedet og nok ikke var helt rigtig i hovedet. Faktisk mente en af lægerne, at det nok var bedst at jeg døde hurtigt, for jeg ville aldrig få et værdigt liv. Den læge gad jeg gerne møde i dag... Vise ham hvem jeg er, hvilket liv jeg har haft og har - fortælle ham at jeg ikke er ked af det og ikke ville være foruden - måske lige bortset fra nogle af smerterne.

Heldigvis tog min mor og far imod mig. Lyttede ikke til lægen og troede på, jeg ville få et godt liv. Jeg kom i børnehaven med andre handicappede. De fandt hurtigt ud af, at mit hovede var ok, så jeg kunne sagtens komme i *“almindelig”* skole. Senere kom jeg på gymnasiet - og nu arbejder jeg for foreningen STH Servicehunde til Handicappede som bogholder og administrativ assistent.

Jeg er absolut ikke ked af at være handicappet, det er jo mit liv, men jeg kan blive ked af de fordomme jeg bliver mødt med indimellem eller måden folk behandler mig på. Folk der taler højt fordi jeg måske ikke kan høre. Eller de taler t y d e l i g t fordi de tror, jeg ikke kan forstå. Nogle bliver overrasket med *“wow-effekt”*. over simple ting, jeg gør, som jeg ikke finder unaturlige. Eller dem der ikke tør henvende sig til mig. Jeg ved at folk ikke gør eller siger de her ting, fordi de er onde, men oftest er det pga uvidenhed eller berøringsangst. Derfor - synes jeg, det er vigtigt at stå frem og vise, hvem jeg er. Vise at uanset hvordan du ser ud, mangler en arm, ikke har ben, går sjovt, sidder i kørestol, ikke kan tale, se eller høre, så er vi alle mennesker med følelser og behov. Behov for accept, respekt og ikke mindst kærlighed.

Jeg fik muligheden og modet til det her, da jeg for nogle år siden deltog i et program, der hed *De Uperfekte* - et program taget fra England *The Undateables*. Det handlede om dating og handicappede. Som alle andre håbede jeg at finde en kæreste, men det er ikke helt nemt, særligt ikke når man sidder i kørestol. Fyrene er simpelt hen bange for kørestolen ... eller er det måske mig? Med det her program tænkte jeg, så kunne det jo være.

Jeg fandt dog hurtigt ud af, at det var heller ikke her, jeg fandt en kæreste, men jeg fik så meget andet ud af at deltage. Bedre selvtillid og selvværd og modet til at stå frem, fortælle om mig og mit liv. Vise at selvom man har et handicap, så er det ikke umuligt at have et godt liv - og igen - vise at uanset hvad så er vi mennesker.

Accept, respekt og kærlighed. Hvorfor jeg specielt nævner kærlighed er fordi, jeg skrev med en fyr, der spurgte om os handicappede havde følelser og behov for kærlighed. Yes tænkte

jeg, her er en fyr med god humor. Lige noget for mig. Jeg svarede at nej, det har vi ikke. Vi bor i et stål stel uden nogen form for følelser - like an ufo. Når vi kommunikerer slå vi antennerne ud og sender signaler til hinanden. Lidt efter fik jeg svar tilbage, at jeg måtte undskylde hvis han havde såret mig, men han mente det faktisk. OMG - jeg nægter at tro på at der i denne tid vi lever i nu findes mennesker, der tror at bare fordi man ser lidt anderledes ud, så er man ikke et menneske. Det kan simpelt hen ikke være rigtigt. Jeg vil ikke tror på det, men han var der jo.

Så derfor holder jeg foredrag, derfor deltager jeg i de kampagner jeg kan få lov til, der vil vise at uanset hvad er vi alle mennesker. Nedbryde barrierer og fordomme.

Og derfor blev jeg rigtig glad, da jeg fik en henvendelse fra The Danish Disability Council, der spurgte om jeg ville være med i deres kampagne Det Er Ikke Et Handicap. Vi skulle lave et talkshow - Det handicappede Talkshow. Konceptet skulle være som i de gængse talkshows, men vendt hundrede grader på hovedet. Et handicappet studie - min invalide bil. En handicappet vært - mig. Handicappede publikum. Handicappede spørgsmål. De eneste der ikke skulle være handicappede skulle være gæsterne. Vi kørte til Bornholm - en dansk ø, hvor der hvert år holdes noget der hedder Folkemødet. Politikere, kendte og mange andre mødes i nogle dage - holder taler, diskuterer, debatterer og her parkerede vi og inviterede forskellige personer ind i min bil. Om lidt vil jeg vise jer et enkelt afsnit. Det sjove var at vi faktisk endte ud i, at vi vel egentlig alle har en eller anden form for handicap. Stort, lille, synligt, usynligt - men i hvert fald - kan man sige nogle er normale?

Desværre var der ingen danske tv stationer, der ville vise vores Talkshow, så det ligger kun på You Tube.

Dog var der en enkelt kendt dansk komiker Jan Gintberg der så det og han spurgte, om jeg ikke havde lyst til at deltage i en af hans udsendelser. Det gjorde jeg og vi fik en lille snak om handicappede og handicap.

Jeg tror, at vejen frem til at få nedbrudt barrierer og fordomme er gennem medierne. Vi skal så bare lige have dem overbevist om, at vi ikke er farlige eller hvad det er, de er bange for. Vi ser aldrig en vært der er handicappet i Nyhederne, Aftenshowet, Go'Morgen eller Go'Aften Danmark? Hvorfor? Hvad frygter de?

Her kommer afsnit nr . af Det Handicappede Talkshow