

INVISIBLE & FLUCTUATING DISABILITIES

WHAT OTHERS CANNOT SEE CAN STILL BE REAL

Pain, fatigue, neurological symptoms, sensory differences, cognitive changes, mental health conditions, and many chronic illnesses may not be obvious from appearance.

VISIBILITY IS NOT SEVERITY

- Looking well does not prove that symptoms are mild.
- A person may use significant energy, medication, planning, or recovery time to complete an activity that looks easy from the outside.

CAPACITY CAN CHANGE

- Ability may vary by hour or day because of symptoms, sleep, treatment, pain, stress, sensory load, infection, weather, or other factors.
- Doing something yesterday does not guarantee the same capacity today.

YOU DO NOT OWE PROOF TO EVERYONE

- Choose what health information you disclose and to whom, subject to necessary workplace/school processes.
- A brief statement can be enough: 'I have a health condition that affects my stamina. I need a break.'

PLAN FOR VARIABLE DAYS

- Create low-, medium-, and higher-capacity versions of routines.
- Keep essential tasks visible and postpone nonessential tasks when symptoms rise.
- Use mobility, sensory, cognitive, or communication supports before you are completely depleted.

RESPOND TO DISBELIEF

- 'My condition is not always visible.'
- 'My capacity varies.'
- 'I am asking for access, not permission to have symptoms.'
- You can end conversations that become invasive or demeaning.

WATCH YOUR OWN SELF-DOUBT

- Fluctuating symptoms can make people question themselves.
- Track patterns if it helps care planning, but you do not need to earn rest by documenting suffering.
- Discuss new or concerning changes with a healthcare professional.

An invisible condition does not need to become visible suffering before it deserves care or accommodation.