Driver: Condoning of violence against women with disabilities

This includes excusing or justifying perpetrator behaviour, shifting blame to the victim, trivialising and downplaying violence, and using deficit language*.

*Deficit language is when disability is framed as a tragedy, a weakness, or an extreme and unusual way of existing. When used in the context of violence against women, deficit language imposes the idea that women with disabilities are 'better off dead,' or that violence against women with disabilities is inevitable, to be expected, or has a lesser impact.

✕ Victim blaming	✕ Perpetrator excusing	✕ Deficit language	✕ Trivialising violence
Her disability makes her vulnerable to violence.	**He was just experiencing carer stress.**	**She is severely disabled and has high needs.**	**It was just a bit of rough handling.**

✕ Deficit language	✕ Trivialising violence	✕ Victim blaming	✕ Perpetrator excusing
She has the mentality of a 3-year old.	**She doesn't know how good she has it.**	**Her disability causes her to have wild mood swings.**	**He's actually a really devoted carer.**

✕ Trivialising violence	✕ Deficit language	✕ Perpetrator excusing	✕ Victim blaming
It was for her own good.	**She has a lower quality of life.**	**He was depressed and overwhelmed from having to care for her.**	**She is too demanding about her needs.**

✕ Victim blaming	✕ Perpetrator excusing	✕ Trivialising violence	✕ Deficit language
She is a burden.	**He's such a great guy for looking after her.**	**Sometimes you have to use a bit of force on someone like that.**	**She is "afflicted with" and "suffering from" her disability.**

Men who hold such beliefs are more likely to perpetrate violence against women with disabilities, and both women and men who hold such beliefs are less likely to take action to support victims and hold perpetrators to account.
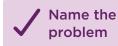
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Take Action: Challenge the condoning of violence against women with disabilities

Use anti-violence messaging:

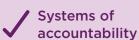| ✓ Reduce victim blaming	✓ Perpetrator accountability	✓ There is no justification	✓ Name the problem
Women with disabilities have a right to safety, respect and equality.	Lots of carers experience stress without becoming violent.	**It's not ok, ever.**	This is family violence. This is sexual assault. This is abuse.

✓ Systems of accountability	✓ Challenge minimising	✓ Reduce victim blaming	✓ Perpetrator accountability
This is unlawful.	**It's a big deal, and it's wrong.**	**It's not her fault.**	Violence is a choice. He chose to use power over her.

Frame disability using a strengths-based model:

Use factual language that doesn't reinforce stereotypes, imply weakness, alienate women or suggest disability is a reason for violence.

Women with disabilities aren't "vulnerable to violence."	She isn't "bound to a wheelchair." She is enabled by it.	She doesn't "have the mentality of a 3-year old."	She isn't "suffering from" or "struggling with" a disability.
Women with disabilities are targeted for violence.	**She uses a wheelchair.**	She's an adult woman with an intellectual disability.	**She has dementia.**

She is not "dependent" on her partner. *All* relationships involve interdependence.	She doesn't need others to do everything for her.	She doesn't have a "lower quality of life."	She does not "have difficulty remembering."
Her partner provides her with support.	If she needs help, she'll ask for it.	The presence or absence of disability is not what predicts quality of life.	She has a brain injury and understands information best when a written summary is provided.

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