

Sexist and ableist peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women with disabilities



Sexist peer relations

... refers to relationships between two or more men that are characterized by cultures that reinforce stereotypical and aggressive forms of masculinity, and/or the idea that men and women are fundamentally different and therefore conflict is unavoidable. Examples of this include:

- “Boys will be boys” attitude, “Locker room talk” and “Bro Codes” between men
- Fetishisation and objectification of women, especially women with disabilities, including in pornography
- Allowing men, including men with disabilities, to “get away with” saying sexist comments because it is perceived that it is natural for men to say these things or because a man with a disability is perceived as ‘harmless.’

Ableist peer relations

... refers to relationships between non-disabled people that are characterized by reinforcing stereotypical, disrespectful and aggressive relationships towards people with disabilities. Examples of this include:

- Carers or disability workers ‘bonding’ with each other by speaking poorly or disrespectfully of their ‘difficult’ clients
- Carers, disability workers or family members staying silent or ‘looking the other way’ when they see ‘rough handling’ of a person with a disability
- Professionals (such as health care providers) choosing to only speak to the able-bodied carer or family member rather than speaking directly to the person with the disability
- Carers speaking to and socialising primarily with each other while ignoring their clients
- Malicious ‘pranks,’ tricks, muck-up day activities, ‘jokes,’ or party cultures that target or humiliate people with disability.

These behaviours are often viewed as “harmless fun” or “just jokes” to those who use them, but they drive violence against women with disabilities in a number of important ways including:

- When men are encouraged to prioritise their relationships with other men over their relationships with women, they may be more likely to excuse other men’s violence and disrespectful behaviour towards women and be less likely to take a stand against it.
- When carers or able-bodied family members are encouraged to prioritise their relationships with each other over their relationship with the woman with disability, they may be more likely to excuse able-bodied people’s violence and disrespect towards women with disabilities and less likely to take a stand against it.