CONFERENCE

Breaking the Silence

Sexuality, intimate relationships and disability

30 October 2017
08:30am - 12:30pm
InterContinental Malta, St Julian's

Special guest speaker: Prof. Thomas William Shakespeare

crpd.org.mt
Intimate relationships of Persons with Disability in the Maltese Context

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Overview

- This presentation draws primarily on my dissertation at Master’s degree level submitted in 2015.
- This study interviewed eight persons with disability who were in an intimate relationship at that time.
Sexuality and Disability

◊ Sexuality is part of human nature.
◊ Misconception of disability and sexuality as polar opposites in societies around the world.
◊ Barriers experienced by persons with disability have socio-cultural roots.
Perceptions of Disability in Malta

General misconceptions of disability include:

- Disability as ‘an individual tragedy’
- Disability in terms of lack of abilities
- Disability as ‘contagious’.
Perceptions of Disability in Malta

Misconceptions of sexuality of persons with disability include:-

- Persons with disability as ‘asexual’
- Persons with disability lack ability to become good parents.
Impact on Behaviour and Communication

- Negative reaction of non-disabled persons in online dating.

- Expression of surprise by non-disabled persons upon learning of persons with disability around them being involved in an intimate relationship.
Impact on Behaviour and Communication

- Disparaging or otherwise insensitive remarks.
- Discouragement by the intimate partner’s family and friends.
- Lack of accommodation of needs of persons with disability.
Problematic Access to Physical Spaces

- Inherent issues with design of buildings.
- Poor maintenance of kerbs.
- Issues relating to public transport.
Issues Concerning Accessibility to Information

- Limitation of access to relevant information in a wide variety of formats.
- Inadequacies concerning sexual education in secondary schools.
Empowering Intimate Relationships

- Good communication
- Mutual support for individual goals
- On occasions, compromise or even sacrifice of goals.
Empowering Intimate Relationships

- Non-judgmental intimate partners.
- Decision-making process involves free will rather than external contingencies.