



DISABILITY - TESTIMONIAL

Video : Interview with Isabelle, IT specialist

Topic
Disability

Module
Understanding

Territory
France

Subject
Testimonial

Text transcription of the video

My name is Isabelle, I'm 35 years old, I have a Master's degree in Computer Science, and I work in IT as an application integrator. I'm in a relationship, and I have several children with my partner. I am deaf.

Lip reading alone is not enough for me; I still need the sound I can hear with my hearing devices. Just sound alone, I can hear it, but I don't understand it. And just lip reading is also not enough, because some words look exactly the same on the lips. That's why I need both sound and lip reading to tell them apart.

Is it difficult as a mom to communicate with your children ?

Yes, especially when they have their little accents, it's not easy to decipher.

With my children, at first I mainly communicated using sign language. But as they learned to speak, they gradually used it less, because it's faster for them to talk to me orally.

Still, sometimes when I have too much difficulty understanding them, little natural signs come back into play to help me follow the conversation.

At school, for things like parent meetings at the beginning of the year, I usually let their dad go. But I do take part a lot in school trips with my children. When it comes to one-on-one meetings with teachers, I do attend, because the teachers always adapt to my deafness and repeat things if I need it.



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And in your professional life, how does it go ?

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When I went to job interviews, the very first question people asked me was whether I was officially recognized as disabled—probably because of quota requirements.

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Testimonial

That didn't feel very good, because I felt like I was being reduced to "an ear" rather than being seen as a person with skills who could actually contribute something to the company.

For my final internship, I worked in a company, then I was hired afterwards, and I've been working in the same place ever since. In my job, I don't have direct contact with clients or the public.

I always work with the same counterpart, so we adapt to each other quite easily.

The main difficulty I have is with meetings—I just can't avoid them.

After Covid, everything was done remotely, and it was a lot of audio meetings, with no one going into meeting rooms anymore.

I found that period really hard, because I wasn't given the tools I needed to do my work, and I felt like I had lost my value. That's why I try to limit the number of meetings, because they're really exhausting for me, they demand a huge amount of energy.



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Regarding these difficulties, what advice would you give to your colleagues, your manager, occupational health, or anyone supporting you ?

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I think Human Ressources could really improve on how they welcome someone with an official disability recognition (RQTH in France). People shouldn't immediately feel labeled with "Oh, that one's disabled, they'll count toward my quotas."
My advice is: don't hesitate to ask the person questions, but do it tactfully.

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Testimonial

What I don't like is when people ask me in public, in front of everyone, and I have to justify myself and explain in front of a whole group. I find that harder, because then everyone starts asking questions at once, and I don't know who to focus on, I get lost.

I much prefer one-on-one exchanges—they are much smoother and easier.

Okay. And if you had a magic wand, what would you change first ?

That everyone would know how to use sign language.

Thank you very much, Isabelle.

My pleasure.

Goodbye.