

# (Dis?)Ability Online Course

## Lesson 4: Let's talk about the online world



Welcome to the fourth lesson of the online course (Dis?)Ability, in which we will explore ways to increase accessibility in activism and event organising. This time you will learn about accessibility in the online world. You may think you know a lot already, but check what other people have to say, especially when it comes to living with disabilities.

### Contents:

- [Transcription of the lesson](#)
- [Questions for reflection](#)
- [Further reading](#)
- [Credits](#)

### Transcription of the lesson

**Narrator:** Welcome to the next part of this course on accessible activism. This video is about online organising.

**Triple Cripples:** And they said, you know, because this online thing is nonsense and I was like, "What?"

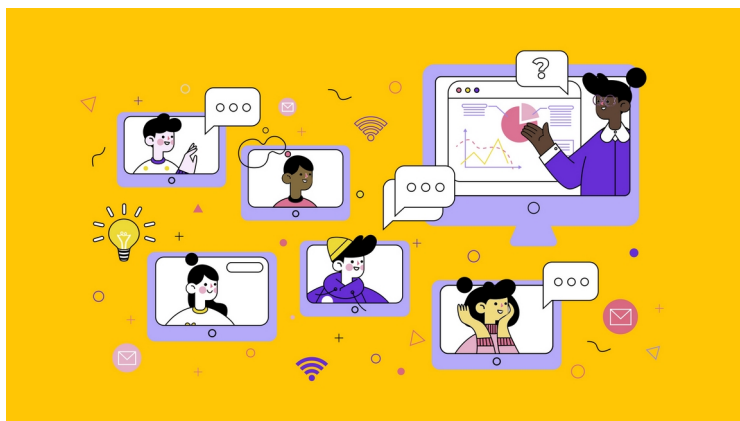
For a lot of disabled people, the internet is a lifeline and it's one of the most practical ways to make contact with the outside world, right? but also to connect with people that you otherwise wouldn't necessarily be able to have access to, due to access, due to your condition, it creates a global network of kind of solidarity and friendship and community, and it's a way for us to disseminate information and educate each other, right?

And so, and you said this as well, Christine, about the way in which activism takes place, a lot of people think activism is, "OK, well I'm going to turn up to this rally, and I'm going to shout really loud with my picket, and it's like, for me personally, A) London Transport isn't really that viable of an option when you have a wheelchair, but also, when I get to the place, what is the level of safety that I'm going to experience in those situations?"

If something happens, and you guys are running, is someone gonna push me? What is the terrain like? Will my condition even accommodate that style of activity? Right?

And so, there are all these other ways in which we raise awareness, in which we educate, in which we elevate, and in my experience, in the limited experience that I have, disabled women and femmes and especially disabled women and femmes of colour are at the forefront of transforming narratives and transforming cultures to become more inclusive, more diverse, more progressive. And so, the internet is not something that should be pooh-poohed! in any way, and it's an extremely useful tool, and that's why we are using it. And I will stop there, because that's the end.

**Saverio:** My name is Saverio, I'm white, I'm from Italy, but I live in Berlin since seven years, and I am an artist, and I participate in the sickness affinity group (SAG) which is a group of workers and activists that are mostly active in the art field and that work within perspective on sickness, disability or are affected by sickness or disability.



Me myself, I'm a disabled person, I'm deaf, not signing, and in my artistic practice, I try to incorporate accessibility experience, like to produce art which is not only made accessible afterwards but artistic experience that are mostly accessible.

Within SAG we have a different experience about accessibility because it is a support group. This means that we gather two times a month, we have bimonthly meetings, which are open, we have an orga team, that handle the preparation of this meeting, and we manage to have a meeting also across pandemic time, we did it online format, and it's a safe space where we listen to each other, share our experience and knowledge, and offer support to overcome individual struggle.

That can be anything, from sharing a good doctor for example or contacts of people that we are comfortable with, to solve smaller or bigger real life tasks. In our meeting and gathering, we have a protocol, we try to follow time scheduling, we have automatic transcription, we use subtitling, we try to communicate beforehand very clearly what the meeting will be about, and the schedule, and when we meet in real space, we document how accessible the space is, and share it with the members and the participants.

For the future, the main challenge is, because I am a white person, to start from working for more marginalized groups, so, supporting Black and people of colour that are affected or work around sickness and disability.

**Ry:** So, I'm Ry, and I'm based in Ireland, Dublin. My group is centred around black queer folks in Ireland, with a direct focus on people who are in direct provision, which is the asylum seeking system in Ireland, which is quite hostile and very much a human rights violation.

So what has changed in terms of accessibility has been quite monumental because of Corona.



We found that we have to take our work online and being quite a new group, there was trouble with that, as we didn't have a very solid foundation and community that we had made yet, so going online was quite a challenge, because usually we prefer being in close physical spaces, that allow people to fully exhale, so one of the first problems that came up with accessibility was the fact that a lot of our community is still hiding from their parents, so being in their houses while we want to create meetings and bookclubs has been hard, even for myself, because I was not out at the time. So talking about queer topics or having discourse based discussions, maybe, you know, showing movies that might be of gay nature was quite a challenge, because we were afraid of, how do you say?

**Interviewer:** Exposing?

**Ry:** Exposing people, and also just making them feel quite aware of how far away the community might be, despite of being online, and on top of that with the rise of the right during this time we found that we were being attacked in many ways, and by many very different forms, and talked about in very derogatory ways as well and that caused a security issue, which I found is the biggest accessibility issue for us at the moment, because not only does it not allow us to have people, it also endangers the people who might be associated with us, which is the last thing that we ever want to do.

So because of that we have decided to look into alternative forms of web security, and also try and look into why it is that we have to create these alternative internet paths for us to be able to organise without huge anxiety, because as I said, this going online has sort of endangered a lot of members of our community, and we feel like we have to take direct responsibility for it, because we said that we're there for them, so that has, it's been scary I would say, as well, because it feels like, it is very much an invasion of privacy, right?

So that's been really quite a challenge, and that is one of the reasons I was here, because I was like, you need to like sort of mobilise together against the cyber world, the cyber war as I would call it, because it's really a new frontier, you know? And I think the world has never been more online than it has the past two years during the pandemic. And in terms of successes and good practices...

**Interviewer:** Yeah, maybe like the first steps you took.

**Ry:** The first steps we took was actually to take steps back and address what happened to us, and be completely honest and frank about the fact that we need to stop for the safety of ourselves and for the safety of others.

I think being clear and direct helps with us as well to know what exactly we're dealing with. At the moment we're exploring ways of sort of alleviating those burdens that we've been given by the wonderful alt-right people on the internet so it's been a challenge to understand how we are going to move underground, or how we are going to mobilise without endangering people even more.

So those were the first two steps we take and we're still on the second.

## Questions

The following questions should help you further your knowledge about the topic discussed in this lesson. Feel free to answer them individually or collectively.

### Security:

- How do you understand safety and security in relation to accessibility in your organization?

### Meetings:

- In what way sticking or not sticking to the agenda/logistics can be an obstacle for people with disabilities?
- Can you name a few specific tools to make a meeting accessible for people with sensory disabilities?

### Internet:

- How can the Internet be an empowering tool and a barrier at the same time?
- Are your social media and website accessible? Provide a sample of a facebook, instagram and/or twitter post including accessible solutions – you can work with groups to get a wider perspective – video, visual elements, statement, facebook event etc.

## Further reading recommendations:

How to make your webpage accessible: <https://www.a11yproject.com/>

Check if your website is accessible: <https://webaim.org/>

Check if you're using accessible language: <https://languagetool.org>

Check if your website has enough contrast to be well visible: <https://contrastchecker.com>

## Credits:

The Tripple Cripples <https://www.youtube.com/c/TheTripleCripples/featured>

Saverio

Ry

Polish translation: Alex

Film Edit: Radical Resilience – <https://radicalresilience.noblogs.org/>

Graphics: Carolina Arciniegas – <https://carolina.arciniegas.de/>

Additional Images: @pikisuperstar and @freepik

Music: Delila – <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgPJzCNzTAhdDdU3Ye0ZVmw>