

Words matter: Disability

The words we use can open doors to understanding, respect, dignity and support for people to lead the lives they want. Words can also create barriers, stigma or stereotypes that are demeaning and rob people of their individuality.

Here are some positive Cook Islands words or phrases to use to describe disabilities or people with a disability.

Disability (general)	
Pakipaki tai'	People with a disability, or people not as capable as others and/or who struggle to live an independent lifestyle.
Pirikoki	Physical and mental health are not fully functioning.
Blind or vision impaired	
Mata Po	Blind.
Po te mata	Vision impaired.
Popoiri te mata	Having problems with sight.
Deaf or hearing impaired	
Mu'u te taringa	Deaf or having problems with hearing.
Wheelchair user	
Pirikoki	Person who uses a wheelchair for assistance.
Age related issues	
Apikepikē kopapa	Challenges faced by elderly people.
Person who uses mental health or addiction services	
Tangata maki manako	Mental health or addiction service user or users.

Avoid negative words

Here are some examples of negative Cook Islands words or phrases which should not be used to describe disabilities or people with a disability.

Paki Makimaki	'Sick people'. General term which refers to people with a sickness or disability or someone who is not 'normal'.
Neneva Kite kore	Crazy or dumb - a popular casual term to refer to anyone with a mental illness, mental impairment or someone who is intellectually disabled.
Makutu	'Curse'. Term which implies that a person's condition is caused by a curse put on a person because they have breached a tapu.
Katu neneva	Crazy head or someone who has a problem with their head or mind. An informal phrase for someone who has a mental health issue and is easily upset.
Vakare	Informal term to refer people who are deaf or hearing impaired.



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