Getting needs assessments right

[00:00:04] **Atif:** This is greetings from me, Atif. I hope you're enjoying so much the new start of this course and that, um, really the, the new technology that you learned about so far,have been so exciting , and that you really can explore more of that with confidence, what roles they play in the support work that you're going on to deliver next.

So the question I'm going to just raise with you now is about needs assessments and why it's so meaningful and important to get that right. And perhaps to have them think about what happens when it's done badly and what are the ramifications for that? So I'll start just by saying what might feel obvious, which is it's important just to do it right, because it's the right thing to do and to care about the impact

that doing it well has on supporting somebody. Of course, you will know that and that's your aspirations and your own values long before we got to meet you. But I want to just give some thought to some things. So one of the challenges that we've got is making sure that people can get comfortable with assistive technologies that they're teaching and understand what assistive technologies have their strengths and where their limitations are.

That's really why the first part of the course so much was it was about familiarisation with the assistive technology. Now it's really recognising what are the strategies that, that assistive technology plays. When we do a needs assessment to get it right, we really got to put ourselves in the place of the learner and trying to recognise

with those limitations, it's difficult to pretend to be somebody, but it's important to understand with empathy and excitement, what are the things that makes it really hard for this person to learn this technology? How do we know that this technology has made a life changing difference? And are we sure that the technology that we're recommending is going to help build the kind of confidence and the self-esteem changes

that we want to see, will they help people overcome different barriers and if not, what can be done to make it right? So the needs assessment, isn't just recommending technology, but it's also writing to say, look, this is a technology that can work to support somebody. For example, it might be text to speech software, and we can say this software is very useful because it allowedthe learner to scan a document and have it read back to them.

But I advised that the learner uses it in this particular way. And you may decide that because you know that there's some difficulties or some barriers that the learner is facing, and you may decide that there's a strategy that works really well with this technology for this particular learner in front of you today.

But it doesn't work so much with somebody else and you need to understand that really isn't just about the technology, but more importantly. What is the strategy that you're trying to use? Getting that right is really important because fundamentally when you do these assessments, these are going to be new to people

and for a lot of people, you're going to be the first voice or the first person who's making recommendations. You may be the first person that ever even talks about different assistive technologies. So you have a lot of power in your hands and to do it without care or to do it without thinking about whether this technology is really useful or that the strategy might be not developed

well, to do that in a rush, has a consequence. And of course that's not what anybody wants to be doing. So the main thing is to just be thinking about what is, who is the individual in the room, not just the disability or the barrier they're facing, but what are their aspirations . What do they want out of their lives?

What did they want such technologies to do? And what strategies do we have to ensure to make sure that those technologies can be flexible and bend to adjust for the individual in the room rather than just the name of the disability or the disabled person. Okay. I hope that helps. Um, it's more of a, if it helps do some thinking about this recording as well, To think,

okay. If I had, if it was for my youngest son or daughter or for someone I loved perhaps a sibling, what would I want for them? And what would I want the assessor to really think about beyond just the name of the disability that they have?