



Living with disabilities

African Storybook

Sibusiso Khumalo





Vincent is a reporter for RX Radio Station. He is at the RX Radio Studio to record his show.

Today, Vincent's program is with children living with serious health conditions.

He is interviewing them about their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.



“Hello listeners, this is Vincent at the RX Radio Studio. Today, my guests are Mulalo, Ashley, and Lina,” says Vincent.

The guests introduce themselves.

Vincent continues, “The Covid-19 pandemic was especially challenging for people living with disabilities. Please can you tell our listeners about that.”



Mulalo begins, “I have a chronic illness named spinal muscular atrophy. It affects my muscles – my legs, arms, and breathing.

If Corona virus and my illness had clicked together, they could have killed me! I have poor lungs and with that virus I would be doomed!”



Lina says, "I was also very scared. I have a condition called asthma, which affects my lungs.

If I coughed or had heavy breathing, I wasn't sure if it was asthma or Corona virus. It would have affected my chest very badly."



Ashley adds her comment, "I have a condition called bipolar disorder. It affects my mental health and I need to take medication for it.

Sometimes I feel extremely sad, or extremely angry. Sometimes my moods change very fast. It can be difficult to manage my feelings."



“Thank you for sharing those experiences with us. Was there anything positive for you during the pandemic?” asks Vincent.

“I was able to spend more time with my family. We played board games together, and I really enjoyed that,” said Lina.



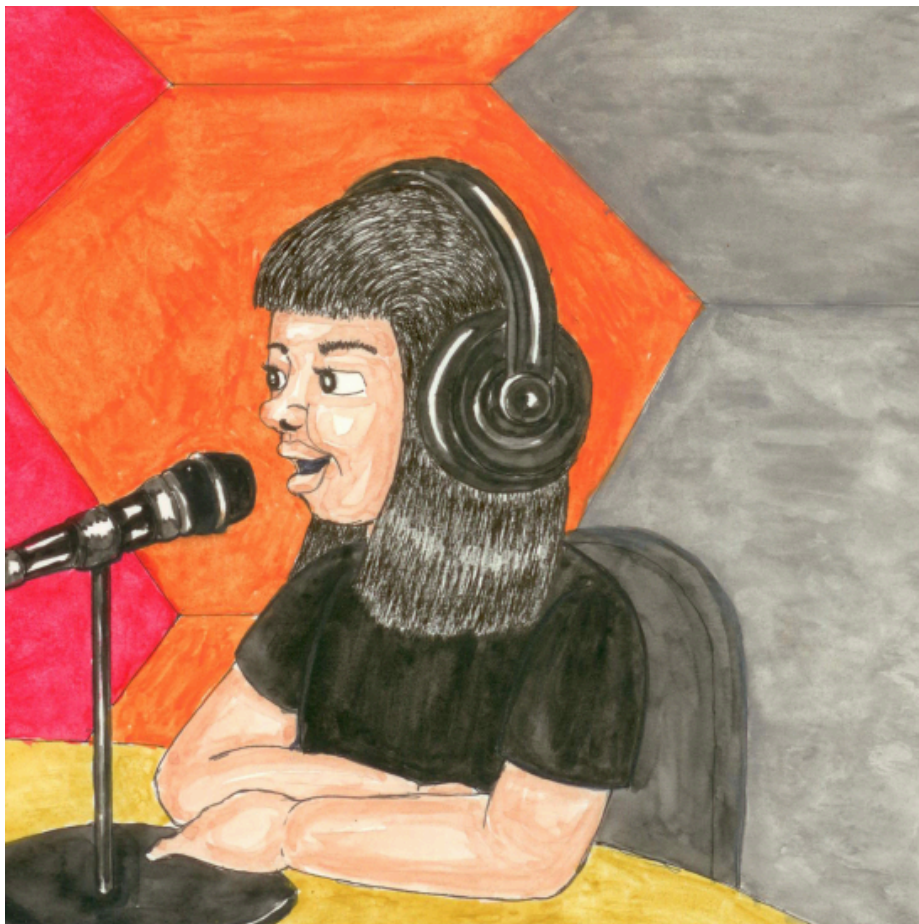
"I also spent quality time with my family. Fortunately, I was able to medicate myself at home," replies Mulalo.

"I decided to use the time as an opportunity for the better. I bonded with my family. I also turned to God and prayed," says Ashley.



Vincent checks the clock on the studio wall. "Unfortunately, we're already running out of time!" he says.

"For other children that have also been diagnosed with a mental or physical illness, what words of encouragement can you share with them?" asks Vincent.



Ashley answers first, "There's a stigma out there when you have a mental disease or disorder.

You're perceived as either crazy or you're looking for attention, and I want that to change. It's ok not to be ok."



Lina agrees and says, "My advice to others is to be gentle with yourself. Be patient with yourself. You are doing the best you can."

Mulalo adds, "And don't give up! There are challenges but you can still achieve your dreams."

—Questions

1. Write the meaning of these words: condition, chronic, stigma.
2. Find words in the story that mean the same as: very, suggestion, chance.
3. What does it mean “to be diagnosed with a mental or physical illness”?
4. How can you support someone who lives with a physical disability?
5. What difficulties do you think families face if they have a member who lives with a disability?
6. What feelings do you find difficult to manage? Why?
7. Mulalo says, “Fortunately, I was able to medicate myself at home.” Is it always safe to self-medicate? Explain.

This storybook is based on reports for RX Radio. RX Radio is a children's internet radio station, by and for children.

RX Radio operates from the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town.

RX Radio helps children to tell stories about issues important to them.

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Ulwazi Lwethu is a Zenex Foundation funded and initiated project to develop a series of graded and leisure African language readers and teacher support materials. This project is targeted at teaching and supporting learners in the Foundation Phase to improve their home language reading and understanding. The readers have been originated in nine African languages in collaboration with Molteno Institute for Language and Literacies, Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural Development, Room to Read South Africa, and Saide. All resources are developed as Open Education Resources (OER).



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*The Ulwazi Lwethu readers and storybooks have
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