

# Social Capital and Employment



*Janet Williams, MSW, PhD*

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# Current reality in disability services

- We often look at problems and dysfunction
- We congregate people into services
- Often experts feel they know best
- Professionals serve, customers receive
- Services are provided to those who comply
- Outcomes are problem based
- Consumer is exempt from responsibility
- Consumers must earn their rights

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# The result...

- Consumers are treated like commodities
- All actions and behaviors are measured
- A we/they perspective unfolds
- Promotes a “sick role”
- Suggests that the expert knows best
- Promotes and reinforces stereotypes

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# Important societal measures

- Unemployment
  - for the general public is 5.0%
  - For people with disabilities is 76%
- Home ownership is the great American dream
  - 71% of Americans own a home
  - 6.2% of people with disabilities own a home
- Public transportation is under assault
  - Poor people get hit the hardest

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# What is the current employment picture?

Highlights from the 2014 data:

- --For all age groups, the employment-population ratio was much lower for persons with a disability than for those with no disability.
- Unemployment rates were higher for persons with a disability than for those with no disability among all educational attainment groups.
- In 2014, 33 percent of workers with a disability were employed part time, compared with 18 percent for those with no disability.
- Employed persons with a disability were more likely to be self-employed than those with no disability.

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# Inclusion means

- Being at the table
- Being a part of the discourse
- Being respected for who you are, not held accountable for what others expect you to be
- Acknowledges that people may be different and pushes us to respect diversity

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# Social Capital

- Is the connectedness among and between people
- The more relationships people have in their lives the better their lives become...healthier, happier and live longer
- What is the average number of friendships for people without disabilities?

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# Being employed also increases social capital

- First, the job is where people build trusting relationships based on mutual assistance.

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# Being employed...

- Second, workplaces act as recruiting grounds for individuals and community organizations that are building social capital outside the office or factory walls.

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# Being employed...

- Third, employers contribute as organizations – by sponsoring volunteer teams, by donating money to worthy causes, and by instituting “work-life” programs to make it easier for employees to meet family and community obligations

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# How does social capital work?

- Define the goal
  - What do you love to do?
  - What do you do well?
  - Where do you want to work?

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# How does social capital work?

- Who do you know?
  - Who is in your circle?
  - Who do the people in your circle know?

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# How does social capital work?

- Find the venue
  - Is it a motorcycle shop?
  - The grocery store?
  - The police station?
  - The coffee shop?

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# How does social capital work?

- Show up and show up again and again.
  - Look for the gatekeeper
  - Connect with the gatekeeper

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# How does social capital work?

- Staff role
  - Coach and support
  - Helps identify the gatekeeper (is not the gatekeeper)
  - Problem solve connections
- Fading

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# What about Bob?



- Lived in a nursing home for 13 years
- Moved to his own apartment on the head injury waiver using communityworks
- Now uses the physical disability waiver in the same home through communityworks
- Manages his own staff, calendar and payroll after learning those skills

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# Challenges to Agencies

- Transforming funding for problems into funding for relationships
- Stress relationships
- Listen closely to self advocates
- Natural consequences and the associated fears

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# Challenges to Families

- Yet another “new” approach
- Natural consequences and the associated fears

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# Challenges to self advocates

- Trying things for the first time ever
- Another new idea
- Natural consequences and the associated fears

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# Get a CLUE...

- **C**reate positive environments with control and choice
- **L**isten to the consumer and develop goals based on what you hear, not on what assessments reveal.
- **U**nderstand what is happening from the person's perspective
- **E**xpect that every day brings struggles, surprises and successes.

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Describe the difference between  
the medical model and person chosen outcomes

- Person chosen outcomes
  - I want to go to work
  - I want to dress myself
  - I want to go to college
  - I want to drive
  - I want a girlfriend/ boyfriend
  - I want to get rid of all of these people
  - I want to get off Medicaid

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# Finding a place in the community



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One of the most  
profoundly human  
things you can do is  
talk to someone  
instead of about them.

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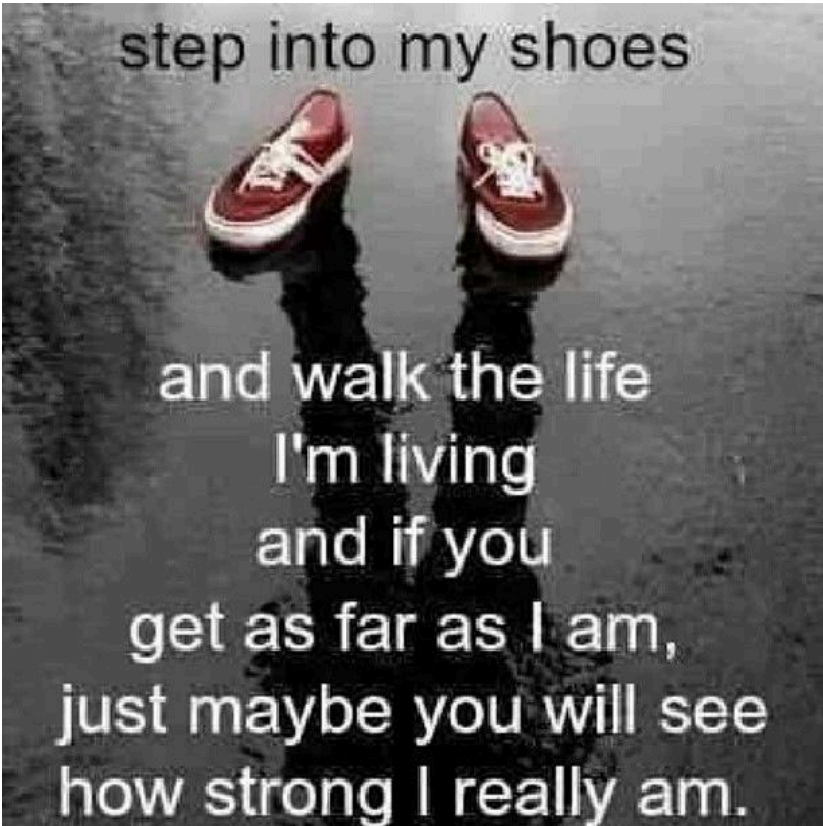
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step into my shoes

and walk the life  
I'm living  
and if you  
get as far as I am,  
just maybe you will see  
how strong I really am.

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# How does social capital work?

- Define the goal
- Find the venue
- Show up and show up again and again.
  - Look for the gatekeeper
  - Connect with the gatekeeper
- Staff role
- Fading
- Resources

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