

Change is in the Air: A Different Perspective Out With the Old & In With the New!

The vast majority of families receive their child's diagnosis followed by expert advice that often paints a negative life trajectory for the child and the family. Information and external links found on this page offer a different perspective – a new way of thinking about disability.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT DISABILITY?

Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the rights of individuals to...

- live independently;
- enjoy [self-determination](#);
- make choices;
- contribute to society;
- pursue meaningful careers; and
- enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society

- Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act)

INDEPENDENCE VS. INTERDEPENDENCE: WHAT ARE YOU WORKING FOR?

Independence is *not* measured by the number of tasks we can do without assistance, but by the quality of life we can lead with ASSISTANCE.

- American's with Disabilities Act of 1990

VIDEOS

Credo for Support – this powerful 4 minute [video](#) offers a series of suggestions for people who care about and support someone with a disability.

Disability, Normalcy, and the Tyranny of Rehabilitation ([Excerpts](#)) – Norman Kunc contends that rehabilitation and remediation programs often tyrannize people with disabilities by attempting to eradicate their disability. He suggests that we need to focus on improving a person's "physical well-being" rather than trying to "fix the client."

I'm Tyler – This [video](#) offers a peek into a real kid's life where people just like you have realized what a kid CAN do is much more important than what he can't do.

Isn't it a Pity: The Problem with Special Needs – In this video, The speaker tackles a difficult issue, society's models of disability and how they affect children, and looks at it from several angles, using evidence culled from years working with children with disabilities.

Special Books by Special people – SBSK seeks to normalize the diversity of the human condition under the pillars of honesty, respect, mindfulness, positivity and collaboration through [multi-media](#).

LIFE LESSONS

The quotes below are a collection of “life lessons” from parents who have children with disabilities. They were asked, “If you knew then what you know now, what would you do differently?” Here's what they had to say.

- ★ “I would take the “experts” advice with a grain of salt, hold on the dreams I have for my child, and do whatever it takes to ensure my child and family enjoyed a normal, happy life. As it turned out I learned to do these things pretty quickly, but it took a 180° in my perspectives and my actions to make it happen!”
- ★ “I would spend less time creating a perfect program and more time helping my daughter create a great life. I have learned that a good program does not ensure a good life. Creating a [vision](#) for my daughter's future and acting on that vision was life changing!
- ★ “I would reach for the stars – [presume competence](#). I wouldn't let a person's low expectations or lack of creativity, commitment and experience get in the way of my child's dreams. I would think outside the box. Just because we've always done it this way, doesn't mean we should continue to do it that way.”
- ★ “I would have an expectation of independence for my child with a disability. I had the expectation for my child without a disability; why not have the same expectation for both children? A person's support needs should not limit his/her participation in life. No one does everything on their own. We all do only what we are capable of. The rest of the time we know to ask for help, and that in itself is independence.”
- ★ “I would allow my child to succeed and fail with grace. I would allow her to take risks. Part of the maturing process for a person, regardless of age or ability, is to learn by exploration. Trial and error helps determine what is best for them. We cannot deny a person the chance to make mistakes or take risks because of our own discomfort or concern for their “safety.” The feeling of independence, accomplishment and pride may never be experienced and individual likes and dislikes never recognized if we don't let them try. There is [dignity in risk](#).”


- ★ “I would focus on my child’s strengths. I would nurture and encourage them. It is through my son’s strengths that we were best able to support his needs.”
- ★ “I would explore a variety of resources and programs in my community – [natural supports](#). Options should not be limited to special programs for children with disabilities. While a special program is at times beneficial, regular programs offer a wider range of opportunities and are more accessible.”
- ★ “I would’ve never used the term “special needs” when referring to my child or any other person who has a disability. I’ve learned that the term “[special needs](#)” is an ineffective euphemism that promotes pity and segregation.”
- ★ “I would have known that by using functioning labels such as “low functioning” and “high

WEBSITES

The [Disability Is Natural](#) website encourages new ways of thinking about developmental disabilities, in the belief that our attitudes drive our actions, and changes in our attitudes and actions can help create a society where all children and adults with developmental disabilities have opportunities to live the lives of their dreams, included in all areas of life.

[Ollibean](#) is a community of parents, families and advocates in the disability community working together for a more socially just, accessible and inclusive world.

[Think Inclusive](#) promotes full and authentic inclusion of people with disabilities in their school and communities through education and advocacy.



We don’t get to decide who deserves **dignity**,
AUTONOMY and **self-determination** based on
“level of disability” or arbitrary “functioning label.”

There is **NO** magical line that exists where one is justified in
treating a person with a disability as unworthy of these things.