

It's About Trust

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, www.disabilityisnatural.com

When my son was five and included in a general ed kindergarten classroom, the teacher and I were somewhat at odds. At my urging, we met with the principal to try to resolve our differences. During one of my many efforts to maintain a positive relationship with her (for the ultimate benefit of my son), I told her that this was all about my son's education, not about the two of us, and added, "You must know that I think highly of you: I trust you enough to turn my son over to you every day."

Just saying the words that day brought home how important trust really is. Every school day that year, I relinquished physical control of my precious five-year-old son, and turned him over to this teacher (and others). When you really think about it, doesn't that entail an enormous degree of trust?

Nineteen-year-old Trey moved into a group home about six months ago. His mom, Christine, took this step reluctantly, and drives three hours each way to visit her son several times each month. She routinely expresses her worries and fears. On several visits, she became aware that things weren't as they were supposed to be. Christine and Trey met with the staff to resolve the issues, and she's hoping and praying that her trust in the staff is not misplaced.

Every day, as regards the care of their children, millions of parents put their trust in others. Countless children and adults with disabilities put their trust in teachers, service providers, therapists,

and others. These people are paid to provide care, education, or services of one sort or another. Do they truly understand the importance of trust? Do they understand how much people are counting on them? Do they understand people's lives are in their hands? Do they understand the responsibilities involved?

Can they imagine what it's like to be the mother or father, wondering if your child is safe with the teacher at school? Wondering if your child is crying, bored, happy, *feels* safe and cared about, and so much more? Hoping the people who are with your child will surround him with love and kindness? Hoping a word or a gesture doesn't injure the child's heart or mind?

Can they imagine what it's like to be a child with hopes and dreams, a child who is trusting in the grown-ups around him to support those hopes and dreams? Can they imagine what it's like to be an adult who is trying to get on with his life, an adult who wants to be in control of his life, and who is trusting in those around him to support these efforts?

I hope every professional, teacher, therapist, service provider, and anyone else who works with children and adults with disabilities will take the issue of trust very seriously. I hope they will try to put themselves of the shoes of the children and adults with disabilities they serve, and their family members. I hope everything they say and do is equal to the trust which has been placed in them.