

ONE THING

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

It can all feel overwhelming. If you're a parent, teacher, service provider, or play another role in the life of a child or adult with a disability—and especially if you're a person with a disability—it seems there's too much on our plates!

Inclusion, education, assistive technology, behavior, employment, supports, modifications, mobility, communication, and living accommodations are some of the issues we probably face every day. With so much to deal with, we may try to simply maintain the status quo—doing more is just too much. We may try to do it all, and experience little or no success. Finally, some of our best, most well-intentioned efforts may not have much impact on a person's life.

Sometimes, however, doing *one thing* can change the course of a person's destiny—and one thing can lead to another. Let's consider a few examples.

- Having higher expectations for the person can result in the person meeting those expectations.
- Changing how you think about, talk to, react to, and/or behave with another can generate changes in the other's behavior, and lead to an improved relationship and other great results.
- Listening—*really listening*—to the person, with your ears, your eyes, and your heart, and respecting what the person communicates, can generate life-changing outcomes.
- If a person has to be pushed in a wheelchair or he uses a walker, but he cannot self-transfer or move how and when he wants, he needs the independent mobility of a power chair. This one action can lead to greater inclusion, a job, interdependence, and more. Similar outcomes are probable when we ensure a person with speech difficulties has a communication device. Everyone needs freedom of speech and freedom to move!

- Allowing a child with a disability to use a computer for writing, instead of trying to force handwriting skills, can enable her to succeed in a general ed classroom. Ditto, allowing the child to use the computer or other devices for math, reading, etc. (And the same is true for adults.)
- Making environmental changes, like rearranging a classroom, a bedroom, or other place; modifying “rules;” simplifying tasks; providing adapted materials and/or assistive technology; and other adjustments can result in greater interdependence, inclusion, and success.
- Helping an adult with a disability learn how to get her own job—instead of making her dependent on employment specialists—can foster greater self-confidence and self-reliance.
- Providing opportunities for a child or adult with a disability to be more responsible can lead to—you got it—the person *becoming* more responsible. A child can help with chores, an adult can volunteer to help others, and people of any age can be expected to make more of their own decisions and live with (and learn from) the consequences.
- Encouraging a person with a disability to participate in an ordinary, inclusive dance class, drama club, sports activity, etc., can lead to friendships, which can lead to a network of natural supports, which can lead to a job and/or inclusion in other areas of life, which can lead to a person living the life of his dreams.

The short list above can get you started—keep thinking and brainstorm with others. *Do that one thing.* Then do the next one thing, and the next, and so on. One thing—just one thing done with tender, loving care—can be the seed that sprouts a garden of life-changing possibilities!