

BELONGING MATTERS DIALOGUES

Cerebral Palsy Awareness Project

Increasing Awareness in Vancouver Island and surrounding Islands

Why Home Matters (Session 1)

Hosted by:
Cerebral Palsy Association of BC
October 1, 2020

“Home is where I **belong**, I am **accepted**, and I have a **supportive network** that grows with age”

Home is a place where...

- I feel like I **belong** and I'm **accepted**
- I feel **safe** and encouraged to **grow**
- I have a **supportive network** that grows with age
- I'm with **family**
- I have my **creative writing**
- I have a **good relationship** with myself and others

“When I **belong**, I feel I am **worthy of life** and of **living**”

Why Belonging Matters:

- Belonging is part of **inclusion**
- I can **truly be myself** and be **vulnerable**
- I feel **loved** and **supported**
- To be able to “fit in” and have **social confidence** to talk to others
- I feel **happier** and it's good for my mental health and anxiety
- Helps you **believe** in each other's **futures**



Patrick A., participant of Belonging Matters Conversations

“What **builds belonging** to me is people **being in tune & respecting** my moods and needs.”

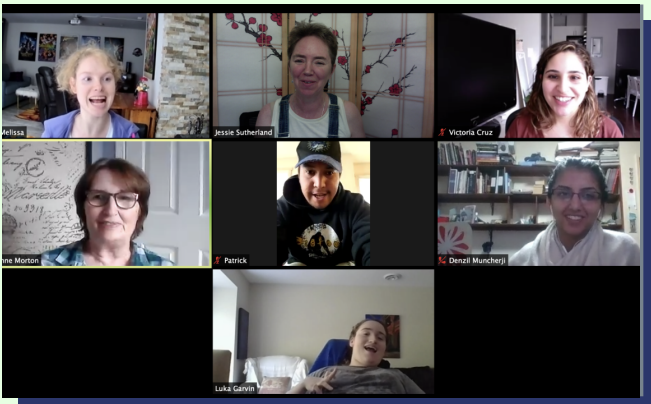
What *builds* Belonging for me...

- ✓ Feeling **loved & supported**
- ✓ **Connecting** with myself
- ✓ Going to the **synagogue and praying**
- ✓ **Meditating**
- ✓ Watching **movies**
- ✓ Being with my **grandparents**
- ✓ **Building** things with Lego
- ✓ Recognizing I am **worthy of life**
- ✓ Going to my **karate** class
- ✓ **Introspection:** Taking breaks to do the inner work on myself
- ✓ **Contributing** to the next generation and making it easier for them
- ✓ “Fake it until I **make it**”
- ✓ **Honest** communication
- ✓ Having **compassion and self respect**

“**Belonging** is **eroded** for me when people **doubt** my ability, **disrespect** my emotions or **bully** me”

What *erodes* Belonging for me...

- ✗ Being **judged**, harsh words, and stigma
- ✗ Being in a place that I feel **uncomfortable** in
- ✗ Not taking breaks to do the **inner work** on you
- ✗ Being **bullied** by those who were supposed to be supportive
- ✗ People **doubting** my ability
- ✗ When people **disrespect** me, my brilliance and emotions
- ✗ **Obsessing** over bad situations
- ✗ Not being able to **communicate** properly
- ✗ Feeling of **wrecking** a relationship with someone close to me



Benefits of Belonging When I belong, I...

- Feel **happier**
- Believe in **myself**
- Feel **included**
- Become a **better person**
- Have **compassion** and **self-respect**
- Feel **worthy** of life and of living
- Feel able to **support others** while **supporting myself**

Costs of Not Belonging When I don't belong, I...

- **Lose** sense of **purpose**
- **Lose** the feeling of **inclusion**
- Feel **shattered**, not being fully present
- **Don't** feel like **myself**
- Have difficulty with **decision-making**
- Don't feel able to **fit in** with peers

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How to Understand Stigma (Session 2)

Hosted by:
Cerebral Palsy Association of BC
October 8, 2020

“
Stigma is a slow and deliberate way of **eroding connectedness**.

The **opposite** of **stigma** is the **consciousness** for **self** and **others**
”

What stigma means to me...

- The **opposite** of **inclusion** and **ethical** treatment of someone
- A **shot** to my self-esteem
- Feeling **pushed aside**
- Not being **taken seriously**
- **Mistaking** who you are and the **judgments**
- Saying you're **imperfect**. It reflects on how you think of yourself

I experience stigma

- When...
- Someone helps me but I feel all the **unsaid** frustration
 - There is **no** understanding of my strengths
 - Kids **made fun** of me because I walk differently
 - Someone **assumes** I am not smart because I struggle with writing
 - I felt **shame** through the education system

- When I'm...
- **Beaten** or **bullied**
 - Not taken **seriously**
 - **Talked down** to like a 5 year old
 - Being looked at like I am **dumb**
 - Forcibly **institutionalized**
 - **Not** being let outside



Melissa Lyon, participant of Belonging Matters Conversations

Stigma makes me feel...

- **Helpless, angry, depressed, sad, anxious**
- Physically and mentally **hurt**
- **Traumatized** which leads to PTSD
- Like **not wanting** to come to school

Like I'm...

- **Less than**
- Being **judged** and can't be myself
- Never **taken seriously**

Stigma Leads to:

- Constantly **second guessing** myself
- Feeling a **darkness** inside me

Not Wanting to...

- **Complete** courses because **shame** lingers due to the school system letting me down
- Take **care** of myself or the people around me
- **Stand up** for myself
- **Ask** for things I need
- Seem **too demanding** or **ungrateful**

“
Ableism is the embodiment of **opposites**.

It is **able bodied people** trying to resolve that they too will be **disabled at some point**, like when they age
”

The Root Cause of Stigma

Stigma is Caused by...

- Systemic **ableism**
- **Disgust and fear** about what our bodies represent
- The fear of **imperfection**
- Lack of **awareness** and information about how to interact with people with disabilities
- **Myths** rooted in dualities (hypersexual/asexual; pathetic / malevolent)
- Able bodied people **projecting** an **image** of us
- **Western mindset** that values independence
- Disabled people **not being united**



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How to Deal with Stigma (Session 2)

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Our Tips and Strategies for Able-Bodied People

For Everyone:

- **Learn** about the disability community
- Help **reduce and remove stigma**
- **Listen** actively without letting your own thoughts get in the way
- **Get to know me**
- We are emotionally tired, **educate yourself**
- Don't **over help** me
- Don't **pity** me, tokenize me or turn me into an **inspiration**
- Remember **everyone** is disabled at some point
- Be **aware** you are projecting, and take care of your **shadow self** (your projections, repressed emotions and thoughts)

How to Take Care of Your Shadow Self...

- Suspend your **projection** and **explore** your shadow
- **Listen** to yourself
- Identify **projection**
- Listen to your **body** and your **thoughts**
- Take care of your core thoughts and **heal** them
- Deal with your fear of being **imperfect & your inner insecurities**
- Take care of you **anxiety** instead of **projecting** onto others

“
Learn to be more **inclusive**,
one size doesn't fit all.
Assume our **competence**!
”

For Teachers:

- Learn how to **build inclusion**
- Be more **aware, patient, compassionate**
- **Ask** the student what is best for them, **don't assume**
- Don't make decisions **without** me, other people **cannot be my voice**
- **Believe** in your students
- **Challenge** students even if you think they can't handle it
- **Encourage** kids to **speak up** for themselves
- Be aware that having an **EA** can make us feel different and be hard on our self esteem
- Each person has **different needs**, get to know us and get **creative** with solutions
- Always **assume competence**
- One size **does not** fit all
- **Walk** in our shoes

For Bystanders:

- Don't stand there, **do something!**
- **Interfere**, stop the situation
- **Advocate**
- **Ask** the person “why did you say that, why did you pick on that person to get your anger out?”

“
Be who you are and say what you
feel because those who mind don't
matter, and those who matter
don't mind
- Doctor Seuss
”

“
The more you can **connect to yourself**
and know who you are, the less
stigma will impact you
”

Tips and Strategies for People with CP

How to deal with stigma directed at me...

Remember:

- It's more about **them**, not you
- The **only** opinion you need is your own, trust yourself
- You are **enough and worthy of life**
- Everyone has personal struggles
- You are going through a hard time and **better** things will happen
- Someone **loves you & understands** you completely
- There are people who **support** you
- Everybody has a **role** to play in this world
- **Reach out** for those who can support you
- It's okay to have help, **EAs are on our team**
- Don't let them take control, **fight back**, say no!

Engage in Self Talk

- My **life, opinion**, and **voice** matters
- I am making a **difference** to this world even if I don't feel it yet

Shift Focus

- Give yourself **love and acceptance**
- Have a **positive attitude & a growth mindset**
- Follow your **dreams, passions & hobbies**
- Do something you **like** (listen to music, pick up a hobby)
- Look for **bright side** instead of the dark side
- Find ways to **contribute & care** for others

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