

The Link Between Inclusion and Advocacy for a World that Aims to Give Agency and Participation

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Short Abstract

This presentation will start a conversation about what constitutes real communication within our everyday relationships and in the broader community and how we can support people to live their best lives. There is a disconnect between the skilled communication practitioners and partners in our lives and the broader population. This lack of community awareness and skill affects what we are able to do and how we may be perceived in the community. What can we do to educate the broader community, including potential employers, to have the values, understanding and at least some skills that our close supporters have? Unless we continue to promote innovation, awareness and education at a community level that changes societal expectations and opens the doors for opportunity for people with diverse communication, we won't get very far. My name is Ben. I have cerebral palsy and I am a diverse communicator. This presentation will cover the intersectionality between behavior, motivation and sense of self, and the impact of having access to technology, skilled support people and a supportive wider community. Please feel free to get involved, no ideas are off limits. We want to hear about initiatives in your community and open a book of ideas. The point of this presentation is to share, collate and discuss new ideas to promote communication inclusion in our community. What are other ways of innovating, like having education in schools, to really open up opportunities, including employment so people can achieve whatever way they want.

Long Abstract

This presentation will start a conversation about what constitutes real communication within our everyday relationships and in the broader community and how we can support people to live their best lives. There is a disconnect between the skilled communication practitioners and partners in our lives and the broader population. This lack of community awareness and skill affects what we are able to do and how we may be perceived in the community. What can we do to educate the broader community, including potential employers, to have the values, understanding and at least some skills that our close supporters have? I want to look at this through a whole of life lens, because communication needs don't stop when you get older, in fact they increase. First we focus on the family getting to know the person that they are and their aspirations, then those in our close support network like support workers. In this presentation, I am interested in generating attention in those outer social networks, towards community awareness and inclusivity. To help people who utilize AAC and alternative modes

of communication to be seen as an active member of society we not only need to assert but talk realistically and practically about some of the key options that I think could work.

Unless we continue to promote innovation, awareness and education at a community level that changes societal expectations and opens the doors for opportunity for people with diverse communication, we won't get very far. My name is Ben. I have cerebral palsy and I am a diverse communicator. In this presentation, I will share about my own lived experience as a diverse communicator and the initiatives that I have been involved in to advocate for people with diverse communication to have more opportunities and agency in their lives. I will also share about activities that others have undertaken in my community to educate the broader population about AAC and inclusion of people with communication support needs. My experience extends from within the 'not for profit' disability sector through to consultation with government agencies and universities. I think we can do more to open up real employment opportunities for people with diverse communication needs and to educate the general community to build their awareness and understanding.

This presentation will cover the intersectionality between behaviour, motivation and sense of self, and the impact of having access to technology, skilled support people and a supportive wider community. In the second part of this presentation, I would like to invite attendees to get involved and share their ideas. I want to hear about initiatives in your community that are building awareness about communication support needs and allow attendees to contribute a book of ideas for the future. The point of this part of the presentation is to share, collate and discuss new ideas to promote communication inclusion in our community. What are other ways of innovating, like having education in schools, to really open up opportunities, including employment so people can achieve whatever way they want.

I would like to take this concept further, from training clinicians and therapists to training the general public around how to live, work and co-exist with people who don't have the same speech as those with diverse communication needs. This will in turn, change societal values and aim to promote social and cultural participation for all and change the landscape of what is achievable in our society.