Issues of Identity & Disability Pride, the Importance of Self-Advocacy

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Empowering the youth to live an independent life

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If you have an hour to chop a stack of wood, spend the first half hour sharpening your axe.
Identity and Pride

• What does Identity mean to you

• Do you feel ashamed of your identity? If yes, which one and why? If no, why not?
Our Tools for Self-Advocacy

The ADA

Disability Rights Movements Frameworks

Culturally Responsive Framework

Disability Identity Framework
The Main Tool - ADA

Why is it important to know?

What does the ADA say about Disability?

What power is in the ADA?

Why is it important to know?
What is a Disability –ADA?

- A Disability is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease which may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function.
Know your Rights in the ADA

• Knowing your rights is a very important part of advocating for yourself. If you meet resistance in asking for support, knowing your rights makes the journey short and smooth at times.
What does the ADA do?

The ADA prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, Employment, Transportation, Public accommodations, Communications, and Access to State and local government programs and services.
What is Self-advocacy?

Self-advocacy is the ability to understand your needs and to be able to get those needs met by assertively communicating to others not only what your needs are but **what you need** to get your needs met.

The three steps to build self-advocacy

Understanding yourself and owning your disability.

Knowing your strengths, weaknesses, and needs.

Learning how to ask for what you need
Parent’s Role in Self-Advocacy?

- Call a Spade a Spade not a big spoon
- Build their skills
- Support independence
- Encourage belonging and inclusion
- Practice ownership
TCs & Other Professionals’ Roles in Self-Advocacy

Tell them the truth/fact
- Talk to the child with the parents about their disability

Educate
- Educate other co-workers about inclusion especially those outside the classroom etc.

Be Culturally Responsive
- Connect to the family to know more than their disabilities.

Include
- Include the child in the meetings early in their visit with you to build confidence in the child
How does the ableist mind do it?

We deprive them to live an independent life

We consciously & unconsciously deprive them from their identity and their disability pride

Avoiding /preventing them from open discussion around disability which deprives them of their strengths & weaknesses
What is the Child’s Role in this journey?

1. Understanding their disability
2. Owning their disability as part of their Identity
3. Developing Disability Pride
Benefits of Self-Advocacy

• Learn how to speak and act for themselves
• Decide what is best for them and taking charge of getting it
• Making their own decisions about their life
• Standing up for their rights as a person
• Teaching others about their rights and responsibilities
Why do we use "DISABILITY" and not a different diction?

Check out this scenario: I have a sickle cell (disability) but, I don’t think of myself as disabled. I do not belong to any DISABILITY GROUP.
What is Disability Pride?

Sense of Ownership & Accomplishment

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpkwSQQbFEG
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Questions for parents

How does your child:

Describe their disability?

Express their needs and advocate for themselves when they visit the hospital, the community, school etc?

Explain to a teacher what their needs are to have reasonable accommodation in their IEP or 504 plans etc?
Some Digestives for Professionals

Why is it difficult to mention the word disability to your students?

What would make it easier for you to talk about disability openly?

What kind of supports do you need from other colleagues?

How do you need to empower the youth?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omQKcQca_pl
Why we do what we do

• Why do we need to own our identity?

• Why do we need to project disability positively?

• Why do we do self-advocacy and systems advocacy?
There is pride in knowing one’s identity
Thank you!

Questions, Comments, and Suggestions?
Resources

- Vermont Center for Independent Living
  1-800-639-1522
- Vermont Human Rights Commission
  1-800-416-2010
- Vermont Legal Aide
  1-800-889-2047
- U.S. Department of Justice –
  https://www.ada.gov/ada_title_II.htm
- ADA.gov
  https://www.ada.gov/archive/t2hlt95.htm
- New England ADA Center