

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.
”

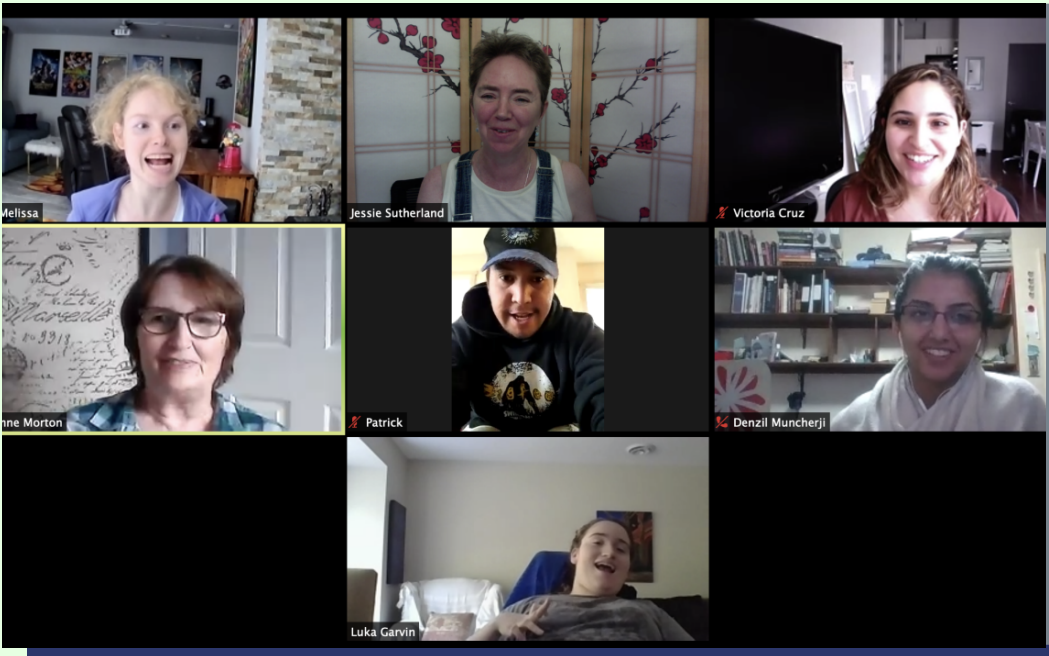
What *builds* Belonging for me...

- ✓ 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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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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