

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion is one of several strategies which address the devaluation of children and adults who have disabilities.

Devaluation occurs when a person or group is perceived by society as different and that difference is negatively valued. So, in western societies, people who are devalued include people who are elderly, people who have nowhere to live, poor people, and people who have disabilities.

Effects of devaluation on people include:

- Labelling
- Stereotyping
- Rejection
- Distancing people from the community through segregation and congregation
- Casting people into negative roles (e.g. forever children, sick, pitiful, object of charity)
- Exploitation
- Abuse

Inclusion begins with a fundamental belief that considers each person an important and valuable member of the community. It means being physically present as an individual in the community as well as having valued participation in the life of the community.

Inclusive practices ensure that the appropriate level of support is available to individuals rather than to groups.

What this means is that individuals are supported to:

- Participate in valued physical and social settings
- Engage in an ordinary or typical quantity of contacts, interactions and relationships with ordinary citizens
- Be involved in typical activities
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Inclusion is:

- Having a part of and belonging to the real world
- Ensuring a climate of acceptance is created. No one is rejected or locked out.
- Focusing on everyone's abilities and possibilities - not on disability and limitations

- Acknowledging that everyone has different skills, talents or gifts to offer.
- A team approach
- Characterised by gentleness, individualisation, openness and humour. It is not rigid, regimented or authoritarian
- Being open about differences in productive, positive way, not ignoring differences or dealing with them in stereotypical ways
- Something that changes all the time - it is a series of small adjustments, not just a replicated model or service
- Characterised by an attitude of problem-solving to discover what is possible, not placing blame, getting stuck, or giving up
- Solution oriented
- Creating opportunities for people to learn together.

Inclusion must be considered as an ethical issue at the political level, not as a service or technological issue. It is about right and wrong, just and unjust.

The implications for family members are:

- Be clear about what you do and do not believe about inclusion
- If you want your family member to be included, be prepared to struggle as inclusion is not an accepted social practice.
- Be clear about what kinds of supports are needed to ensure as much as possible that the person with the disability will experience successful inclusion.

Other Strategies to combat devaluation are:

- Raising one's own consciousness to the issues of devaluation and the consciousness of others
- Holding high expectations of people and becoming good role models to the general community.
- Ensuring that people have maximum opportunities to learn and develop
- Make sure that a person is surrounded by a range of role models because having someone to emulate is such a good learning device
- Giving special attention to make up for past and present hurt
- Ensuring that positive images of people with disabilities are presented to the community



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