

Being an individual is valid and human!

“Experience is the teacher of all things” - Julius Caesar. We know that we usually gain experience just after we need it, and that it is a powerful learning tool. Often, the folks we support are experience-poor. They need opportunities to experience different options in order to establish a preference. These options may, and likely will, include some dignity of risk. That ability to make those choices makes us unique, and individual. Oh, the joy of being individuals! Some of us are early birds, and some of us are night owls. Some people are "glass half-full" while others are "glass half-empty" by nature. Sometimes in our world of supporting individuals with differing abilities, it is easy to compartmentalize and forget that we are all people **FIRST**. Hopefully, this will serve as a reminder as we walk through life with those we love and care about.

“ Disability is not a reason for depriving any person from making the same choices other people have the right to make. STEVEN J. TAYLOR ”

Disability is Natural!

One of the five apples below is green, and a green apple is more like red apples than it is different. One in five Americans is a person with a disability, and people with disabilities are more like people without disabilities than they are different. Like gender, ethnicity, and other traits, **disability is a natural part of being human.** And it's time for the light of inclusion to shine on ALL!



Compiled by Lynn Brewer, Residential Coordinator
 Visit <https://www.disabilityisnatural.com/> to learn more.

A comparison of YOU and I

The following examples could reflect how the individuals we support might feel when talking with a non-disabled peer or DSP.

Use these comparisons to help generate positive changes. Not all scenarios apply to all people, but they represent the real lives of too many adults with developmental disabilities.



You: You're frustrated, sad, scared, or angry.
I: I'm told I have inappropriate behavior.

You: You speak up and defend yourself.
I: I'm described as noncompliant.

You: You live where you choose, with the people you love.
I: I'm "placed" wherever there's an "open slot," with people I don't know.

You: You get help from co-workers in your new job.
I: I'm told I need a job coach.

You: You're surrounded by family and friends.
I: I'm surrounded by people who are paid to be in my life.

You: You live by your hopes and dreams.
I: I'm supposed to live by the goals others write for me.

You: You're presumed to be competent.
I: I'm presumed to be incompetent.

You: You fall in love and have intimate relationships.
I: I'm presumed to be asexual; no one seems to care if I'm lonely and have to real relationships.

You: You're known by your abilities and interests.
I: I'm known by my diagnoses and problems.