



## Tip Sheets

### Seven Strategies for Building an Accepting and Inclusive Environment

#### 1. Acknowledge differences.

Young children observe differences. Point out differences in children. By pointing out differences, we are saying "We all do things differently and that's okay." You can show children how differently the build with blocks, one makes a tower, one makes a straight line. Also, Jack uses a special spoon at lunch time to help him eat his yogurt. It's a natural part of the day. No big deal.

#### 2. Model appropriate behavior.

Children learn by watching, imitation. They do what we do. Reflect on the words you use and how you treat children. Do you allow all of the children to feed themselves, even though it would be easier and quicker to feed a child with developmental issues? Do you praise all children for their artwork, even the child who still "scribbles"?

#### 3. Educate children.

Children learn by doing and by interacting with objects through all their senses, and later, through discussion. Talk about disability and how it impacts a person. Ask permission from a parent to teach the kids about a disability which impacts their child, and then brainstorm with the children about how they can make adaptations before the new child comes. Use books and toys that depict disabilities in a positive and appropriate way.

#### 4. State the rules for treating others respectfully.

An important goal of the toddler and preschooler is to learn how to treat others. State the rules clearly. Make sure they

make sense to your age group. Help children see how their behavior affects the others in your setting.

#### 5. Answer children's questions honestly, simply, and clearly.

Children will notice disabilities and ask questions. Give them the answers to their questions and be honest.

#### 6. Allow children to explore through play.

Have toys around that depict disability equipment. Help children explore different uses for objects. Teach children that equipment used by children with special needs are not "toys", so they need to be respectful, but they also need to be encouraged to learn and become comfortable with something new.

#### 7. Reassure children.

Children may wonder whether they will "catch" the disability. As far as possible, explain how disabilities may be caused. "Robert was born with a short arm." Reassure the children that they will not catch it: "You were born with two long arms."

**For more information on inclusion strategies, visit [www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org).**

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