

==== A Time for Thanks ====

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow, www.disabilityisnatural.com

As the Thanksgiving holiday nears, it's time to reflect on the many things for which we're thankful, and the importance of expressing our thanks. Words of appreciation like, "I'm thankful for you and what you do," can make someone's day and inspire more great deeds! I'm thankful for:

- All who use People First Language and promote positive images of people with disabilities.
- People who don't use disability-words-turned-insults (like idiot, moron, imbecile, lame, retarded, etc.) and who don't use disability words as metaphors (like "he turned a deaf ear," "she was blind to...", and so forth).
- Parents who have high expectations and dream big dreams for *all* their children and then do whatever it takes to support those dreams.
- People with disabilities who teach us what's really important.
- Parents and professionals who value the expertise of adults with developmental disabilities.
- Parents and Early Intervention staff who ensure very young children with disabilities remain "babies in their natural environments" instead of the youngest "clients in the system."
- Parents who keep their three- and four-year-olds at home or in other typical settings instead of in segregated, special education settings.
- Educators who make inclusion work.
- Parents who know that inclusion—is the path to their children's success.
- Therapists who provide consultation, instead of hands-on therapies, so children and adults with disabilities get the help they need without the "not-okay" message that they're "broken" and need to be "fixed."
- Physicians, nurses, and others who help parents remain proud of and hopeful for their children with disabilities, instead of plunging parents into the depths of despair with dire prognoses.
- Parents who reject the negative opinions of doctors, therapists, educators, or others who predict the value, abilities, or potential of a child, based on a medical diagnosis.
- Parents who protect their children from attitudes, language, and services that destroy self-esteem and crush self-determination.
- People who embrace the "disability is natural" paradigm, and recognize a person's abilities, interests, and dreams are more important than the diagnosis.
- People with disabilities and families who know that accepting services is a *choice*, not a mandate, so they use the system as The Last Resort, not The First Choice.
- Providers who collaborate with non-disability entities in the community to meet the needs of people they serve in ordinary, inclusive settings.
- People with disabilities and families who find support, inclusion, and reciprocity from the natural supports in their communities.
- People who recognize the value of assistive technology and do what it takes to ensure people with disabilities have what they need.
- All who reject the segregation of people with disabilities in special ed classrooms, congregate living arrangements, day programs, sheltered/enclave work, and other "special" activities.
- People who know that inclusion is borne not from laws, programs, and services, but from our attitudes and actions.

And I'm thankful for everyone who reads this message, shares it with others, lives it, breathes it, and commits to doing whatever it takes to create a more welcoming, inclusive society where all belong. Happy Thanksgiving!