



Accommodations Matter

Cultural Competence



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I was speaking with another caregiving parent a few days ago. Since the day her son was born and diagnosed with a disability, friends who have kids his age stopped inviting them out to socialize.

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This is not news to me nor to many other parents who have kids with special needs. It is also not news to many colleagues around us who are [neurodiverse](#) or deal with disabilities, whether intellectual or physical, including a disability that is invisible to others. Exclusion seems to be the easy way out.

Dealing with discomfort

Being excluded is awful but I get it — to a point. Perhaps the excluders are uncomfortable: They don't know if the location of the gathering has built accommodations that enable access for people with physical disabilities. What if a door needs to be opened and that guest can't open it? What about using the restroom? Or, if someone deals with an intellectual disability, will someone need to explain what is going on, food choices, etc. What about sound for the hearing impaired?

How do I feel about my kid being included? Maybe I am OK to take my kid out to experience

something different. Although there is a lot he cannot do, he can still feel and smile. Neither his wheelchair nor his developmental delay is a restraining order for him to be left out.

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I know many who don't know how to deal with someone with a disability. So, they err by assuming certain scenarios and opting for the easy way out: not inviting them. They put someone with a disability aside instead of putting out the effort to simply ask.

All it takes is a question

And, yet, there's a simple solution: Ask.

All that's needed is to ask them or their caretaker what is needed to make the gathering work. Often times, they know exactly how to approach it so they can join in.

Most or all of us would rather be asked the wrong question than not be asked at all.

You can even go an extra mile as a colleague of mine did who is now a friend. Although it was the first time we met, she asked how she can accommodate the meeting place so my kid is comfortable and included. She made the experience memorable.

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Changes might not be needed or they could be simple. Sometimes they are rather big, but think of the difference that makes to that person and their caregiver. For example, someone on the autism spectrum could be afflicted with [sensory overload](#) from loud sounds or strong light. And yet, I have friends who changed their son's birthday party location, so his best friend who has autism can join in and not be overwhelmed with sensory overload. Think of what a good example that extra mile demonstrates to your kids, to anyone.

Why I am writing this?

Good question! Well, this could be a personal experience, but the scenario and accommodations extend to work/ experiences life too. If not now, you will have colleagues who deal with intellectual and/or physical disabilities or are neurodiverse.

Before your next meeting, simply ask if anyone needs an accommodation so they can attend authentically and effortlessly, whether virtual or in person. Ask if the location of your next team after-work get-together is OK. Those very simple questions matter.

I am not saying we will all be able to do this or to make desired adjustments. But the least each of us can do is be humane and try to bring impactful inclusion to your and others' lives. And always remember: It often takes just one person to make a change.

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Yosr Hamza is a known champion of DEI, women empowerment, and creating opportunities for others who come from under-represented backgrounds (especially for those who are most marginalized and cast aside) to thrive throughout their career journey through mentorship, sponsorship, and authentic storytelling. She co-leads Gartner Legal and Compliance DEI Council and serves on Gartner's Middle East CSR Board Committee, the Board of Mosaic at Gartner, and Women at Gartner Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). She serves on the leadership of [Small Law Department Network](#), [New to In-House Network](#), and [International Legal Affairs Network](#).