

# Relationships that Nurture

Monthly tips provided by St. David's Center in partnership with Mom Enough

---

## The Value of Inclusion

Audio can be heard here: [Value of Inclusion](#)

As a parent, you may have concerns about the other children in your child's class and what that means for your child's development. Your child may have questions about why another child looks or acts differently. Having children with special needs learn side-by-side typically-developing children is beneficial for all children involved.

### I. Benefits for Typically-Developing Children

Inclusion teaches typically-developing children how to:

- Develop respect for others with diverse characteristics and unique abilities
- Accept and be comfortable with differences in others
- Understand and tolerate behaviors that differ from their own
- Think critically, looking for the "why" of other's behaviors
- Develop empathy, patience and caring attitudes when interacting with peers that have differences
- Learn how to be a friend, especially with people who are different from themselves
- Respect those who have challenges outside of their own experience
- Play together with others, compromise and teach others to play or interact
- Be accepting of their own mistakes and differences, thereby building their own self-esteem

### II. Benefits for a Child with Special Needs

Inclusion teaches children with special needs how to:

- Improve or increase communication, social interaction and play skills
- Model peers by following rules and routines
- Practice social and emotional skills
- Develop mutually reciprocal friendships
- Feel a sense of belonging and build self-esteem

### III. What a Parent of a Typically-Developing Child Can Do

- Be open and non-judgmental
- Connect with the child with special needs' parents and don't be afraid to ask questions to learn about their child
- Teach your child that it's okay to be different. Encourage your child to think about how they are different (e.g., things they are good at, things they have a hard time doing, likes/interests, things that make them scared)
- Have your child think about a time when they felt left out or different; have them think about a time when a friend included them and how it made them feel
- Discuss with your child the things they have in common with the other child
- Help your child ask questions. If your child tells you that another child had a difficult time in class ask them, "Why do you think he or she behaves that way?" Help them be a critical thinker.
- Find and read books with your child; awareness helps children be more acceptable. Some good books on autism include *The Autism Acceptance Book - Being a Friend to Someone with Autism* by Ellen Sabin and *My Friend Isabelle* by Eliza Woloson.

#### IV. What a Typically-Developing Child Can Do

Encourage your child to:

- Greet the peer: smile or offer a high five
- Find out what the peer likes or is interested in
- Ask the peer to play with him or her or sit by him or her during an activity
- Take turns or share a toy with the peer
- Praise the peer's accomplishments or offer a compliment
- Ask questions about activities the peer is doing; make comments about the activity
- Model appropriate responses and actions for the peer
- Explain activities to the peer using simple words and clear phrases