How parents/carers can help the person they care for feel less isolated and more connected

Parents/carers can help the dyspraxic people they care for feel included and part of society in many ways. This includes advocating for them, involving them in events and activities, and helping them recognise their strengths and talents.

Advocacy - sharing information about dyspraxia and how it affects the person you care for helps others understand their needs, recognise their strengths and make appropriate adjustments to include them.

- *Explain to people why he might find an activity or task a bit more of a challenge, to ask them to have more patience if he is taking more time to voice his opinion.*
- *I make sure they know he is very capable and they must give him processing time to respond in a conversation properly and not just pass over him.*
- *Over the years we have taken her to different after school groups and just tell the person who runs it she has dyspraxia.*

Supporting involvement in groups and activities

- Seek out people and groups that match the interests of the person you care for
- Ask around to see whether they welcome people who are neurodivergent
- Make time to support their involvement if necessary. Groups attended by adults and young people together can work well, for example some martial arts or hobby clubs
- Depending on the needs of the individual, consider activities that are ‘mainstream’ and those for people who are neurodivergent
- Think about activities that are a little different – like archery, hiking and climbing – to avoid unfair social comparisons.
- Volunteering is a good way to connect with others.

Parents/carers shared the following experiences.

- *I use his interests to create situations where he will meet people and hopefully make friends.*
- *Get them involved in activities so that they can meet people like them.*
- *During the school holiday it has been important to make time to meet with his school friends (most who are also SEN) to continue their friendships outside of school.*

- *She plays online games such a Roblox where she can converse with others safely & messenger kids where she can talk to her school friends. We always keep an ear out to ensure the conversations are running smoothly without being too over protective of her.*
- *Girl Guides were superb accepting my daughter for who she was.*
- *Go with them to events. Take them out on day trips/holiday try to encourage them to go out themselves. Tell them about groups they could go to.*
- *Arrange participation in activities he enjoys— outdoor hiking, music therapy, volunteering to help in a recycle center, etc.*
- *Bringing her to groups where she can be herself and doesn't have to mask. Arrange very organised play dates.*
- *Encouraging participation in activities such as sports or going to the theatre. Voluntary work can help too.*
- *We've worked to find clubs and sports he feels successful at to help him feel more included (Scouts, climbing and drums have worked well for him).*
- *Finding clubs where the staff have an understanding and willingness to be inclusive.*
- *I never force him to do something he would struggle with when he is in a group, so for example I don't take him to the park with his friends when they go with their scooters but I will instead invite them around to play with him or go to a show. I feel that it's important for him to do things he feels confident doing when he is with his friends.*
- *Encourage participation in sports and exercise classes plus hosting sleepover parties for a small group of trusted friends has helped to build peer to peer relationships/ conversation skills and confidence generally.*
- *Take him to gymnastics and swimming lessons. Take him to church. Encourage him to kayak.*
- *His dad and I work hard to ensure that everything he wants to do is made accessible, and we encourage him to try new things at least a few times so that he can make a judgement about what's worth making an effort for in the future.*
- *He is in a bike club (yes! He rides bikes and I am extremely proud of this!), participates in community service, and teaches coding at local coding school.*
- *Encourage their interests: art and clothes and make up.*
- *I encourage her to participate in activities like theatre where she can meet kids her age in an environment that is not focused on physical activities and performance.*

Preparation, planning and self-awareness

In many cases, arranging for someone to attend a group or activity isn't enough. You can also help the person you care for become self-aware and develop the skills they'll need to take part and connect positively with others.

- *I encourage my son to self-advocate and also to have quiet time to recover after social events. This means that he is more able to function and socialise effectively.*
- *We are very open about it, discuss it, I try to understand what I can and help develop strategies. We accept some strategies work some don't so try others. I try to make as many opportunities for friendships.*
- *Help prepare for tasks and events. Encourage friends to the house and social trips with siblings. Push through comfort zone into stretch zone by offering enticements - tickets to a concert that will involve getting the train to London etc.*
- *Trying to be open and honest and explain to him why he finds some things more difficult than his peers and continue to offer encouragement but not forcing him to do something he is uncomfortable with.*
- *Arrange play dates with those she is closest to at school. Listen to her worries and work through them with her. Respect her feelings and offer support. Reiterate positive thinking to try and build her confidence up.*
- *I try to talk to my child openly and honestly and to explain alternative perspectives. I emphasise that differences are strengths and we all have mixed strengths and weaknesses.*
- *Help to manage her anxiety around others and support her well-being, helping her understand her differences and how they make her special.*
- *By helping them find friends and groups who embrace their strengths and abilities, by teaching them about their individual abilities (and areas of struggle) and helping them to self-advocate as necessary.*
- *Providing strategies to support them ie visual timetables and organisers and speaking a lot in a manner to support self-esteem - positive coaching etc.*
- *We talk a lot about being different and how things may be more challenging but talk about finding ways to do things differently and that people's brains all work differently. Practice self-kindness & keeping communication open.*
- *Constantly letting her know that there is nothing "wrong" with her, that she's just different as is everyone, that no two people are the same.*
- *By making him see that his brain works in a different way to others and that that is ok. Telling him that he will find things hard and his body is working harder than others. That he has other superpowers that his peers do not e.g. thinking outside of the box.*
- *We discuss when he feels anxious and try to find strategies that work for him.*
- *I am aware of the things that can be more difficult for him and support him verbally and practically to find coping strategies. I remind him when he is struggling of all the things that he does so well, his kindness and empathy, his determination to succeed despite the obstacles.*

- *Reading stories about 'famous' individuals who have overcome adversity, made friends with other children who have similar condition, positive language, not holding them back from activities that they may find hard challenging.*
- *We talk a lot about how she feels and strategies she can adopt.*
- *To live by the philosophy to give everything a try if you want to e.g. Go Ape, monkey bars, gymnastics, swimming, going for the lead role in a play. Yes, there are often bumps and bruises, tears and some failures but these pale into I significance compared to the WINS.*

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of items in DF factsheets, however users are urged to check independently on matters of specific interest.

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