

Five Things That We Have Unlearned as Adults

What would happen if my children and I opened our eyes in the morning and found a dangerous animal in our house? My son's priority would be to suggest a good name for him while my 3-year-old daughter would like to touch him. I have not taught them what to do if a lion or a leopard comes into the house yet. They need to be careful because such animals can be dangerous.

Most of us know how we respond in today's world has been learned by us from here and there. If looked at kids below the age of four, one gets surprised at how they behave when they are with another person with a disability. At this age, the children have not been given the belief of Ableism and display a remarkable understanding.

Here I will highlight five scenarios where children better recognize disability while adults do not.

1. There is no shame attached when it comes to what they do in the toilet.

It is remarkable to find that children are very open when they feel the need of going to the toilet to poop or pee. Recently, the daughter of my friend was over at my house and playing with my son. I was observing both of them playing. My son's openness with her was amazing. He let his new friend see and play with his dinosaur collection. While they were playing, my son, suddenly got up and said, 'I have to go to the bathroom to poop'. And he went without any shame. After he was back, and they resumed their play, his friend also announces that she wanted to go to the toilet to poop. To my surprise, she without any hesitation asked me to help her complete the task.

People with any disability and those who care about them will easily understand this philosophy. Dependence on someone in the bathroom is considered taboo and such a person is seen surrendering in front of others for any work outside the house.

No healthy person can even think of getting help from someone else in the bathroom routine. Even with the idea of such a life, he would prefer death. But we have all forgotten that there was a time when we all generally needed others in the bathroom routine.

2. Asking for help seems like a daunting task.

My kids can't tie their shoelaces, can't read a book, and I've already mentioned dependence in the bathroom. If they do not want help and are being provided, they feel offended and say that they can do it themselves. On the other hand, if I look at it I feel humiliated because I am trying to help them even in the things in which they have special skills.

A person with a disability can ask for help many times but eventually, he will try to do something for himself. Their help can be detrimental. For instance, you should never push someone's wheelchair or open a door for someone unless you are told to. Children understand that unnecessary help in tasks can complicate behavior. But the adults barely understand this.

3. Find the similarities before the differences.

Here I would like to mention the conversation I had with my son while we were watching Kung Fu Panda. Suddenly he said, "Kung fu Panda" looks exactly like me. I replied that 'I do not see the likeness at all.' He said in surprise: "Really?"

After that, I didn't emphasize much because the perception of the panda cartoon character was very different in his mind. There are a lot of characters in children's favorite movies that adults may not like. Like (many Ben10 aliens) who are not at all impressive to adults but children will want to be friends with them if they see them anywhere.

All these examples are taken from the world of fiction. But real-world matters are no different. Children embrace unusual things and think of usual things adults don't like as "cool". Like my son is very influenced by Humungousaur and Kungfu Panda. Children see similarities more than differences, and I think they do so because they have not yet gained much experience to determine which things are normal.

4. Helping Aids are important and cool.

As adults, we might think that anyone in a wheelchair is bound; unconsciously suggesting that it is a tool of oppression rather than that of mobility. Children on the other hand do not think of it



this way. The other day my son expressed to me one of his wishes that he wants a wheelchair. The reason behind this wish was that children were not allowed to play in the elevator of our building but as soon as someone came in a wheelchair they were welcomed in the elevator.

Similarly, children do not think of helping aids as negative and use them according to their needs. Whether using a stool in front of the sink or playing cricket with a wiper, they find a solution to their needs.

5. The designed setting around us tells us what we can and cannot do.

Ask a child what a toy store door means to them? The world that was created for them. The door to go into it has a magical effect on them. For example, when I take my children to a playground or a museum, the effect of this magic can be seen on their faces.

The environment that is created for us and the kind of experiences we go through make us aware of our abilities. For instance, if my son wants to play with the sword in the museum, it is unacceptable to me at all, because there is often a difference of opinion between my two children and they may get frustrated by this difference. How can a sword be a suitable toy for them? So, I keep these kinds of dangerous toys out of their reach.

This is how they often become disabled from getting their favorite things and this is the way they keep learning how people with disabilities live their daily lives and also learn how to do certain things and cannot do others. At the same time, their sense of belonging to their surroundings changes.

I wish I could end my talk on the happy conclusion that children are free from prejudices or that the next generation is aware of the disability. But the sad fact is that the opposite is true. As children grow older, they learn how to promote negative attitudes and stigma.

When children grow up, they do not hesitate to point out individual differences, such as being able to tell anyone without feeling nervous, "Your teeth are yellow" and when they do so in front of their parents. There is an immediate reaction and this reaction teaches the children that their



attitude is not right and the reaction teaches the children that it is shameful to be unique from others and this concept gradually matures over time.

When the door to accept individual differences is closed with criticism, children become cruel to their peers, leading to social isolation and bullying.

The process of creating a movement against Ableism can be learned and acquired. That is why it raises the hope that we can revisit our message and eliminate prejudice from the next generation. This is what I am doing with my children every new day.