

WITH DISABILITIES

In church, we don't always know what to do or how to best engage teenagers with disabilities in our ministry. We believe that God has a plan for every child, but we need a better understanding of disabilities and a better plan of engagement if we are going to make the greatest possible impact! Today on the podcast, we're joined by Sunny Brown who discusses four ways that your church can support families of teenagers with disabilities.

1 *SHIFT YOUR LANGUAGE.*

Language is powerful. The words we use will impact the people we are talking to or about. For example, "diverse abilities" is a term we can use, instead of "disabilities." It's not that they can't - it's that they can from where they are. All teenagers have abilities that are vast and diverse, abilities that we can, and absolutely should, celebrate!

2 *BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER.*

If we are going to serve all teenagers with the same level of excellence, we need to bring diverse voices into our planning and conversations. Parents, local nonprofits, and leaders within our church can make us aware of obstacles we may have inadvertently created for a specific teenager. It's our responsibility to ask for help!

3 *GET EDUCATED.*

We need to be intentional about making time to learn! There is a world of information at our fingertips and in our communities, but it's up to us to pursue this information! For resources and partnership opportunities, reach out to the Special Olympics and Community Colleges in your area.

4 *GIVE THEM SUPPORT.*

Our initial conversation with a parent of a teenager with diverse abilities should not be formal nor sudden! We don't know every parent's story. Nobody will know a teenager's specific needs or abilities, like their parent or caregivers.

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