Tips: Reach Out To A Mom

Moms of children with developmental disabilities face several daily challenges. Many struggle for the time to complete daily tasks and errands given their caregiving responsibilities for a child with a disability. Our research suggests that what moms want most is for other children and families to engage with their child. The isolation they feel can be extreme and is often compounded by many medical and emotional needs. But it doesn’t have to be this way! We can all do our part to make sure that families living with developmental disabilities are not forgotten. Follow these few tips to reach out to a mom and create a more inclusive society.

Tip #1: Take a child or adult with a developmental disability on a recreational outing with your family.
Extreme isolation is the number one concern for mothers of children with disabilities. Few typical families understand children with developmental disabilities and often avoid the subject out of not knowing how to interact or help. Children with disabilities are like all other children: they want to be included, have play groups, go on family outings and interact with children or teens their own ages. What are some activities that you can do that involve children with developmental disabilities?

Tip #2: Be a good friend: Listen and be supportive.
Often moms just need an ear to listen and a shoulder to lean on, so they will know they are not alone. A simple question like, “How is your day going?” or, “Do you need to talk?”, shows that you care about her well-being. Take a mom out for coffee, shopping or for a walk. By offering support and showing you care, you can help ease the demands of daily caregiving.

Tip #3: Give mom a break to do something for herself.
All moms need a break once in a while to take care of themselves. Offer child/adult care for 2-3 hours so that mom can go to the spa, run an errand, read a book or just have some quiet time. Alone time will help her refresh and be better able to care for her loved ones.
Tip #4: Be sensitive and patient with personal situations.
Families living with developmental disabilities usually have to go to more medical appointments and school meetings than typical families do. They may also experience more behavioral issues or physical demands than others. Take the time to understand the disability and then be patient when situations arise. By being understanding if a child is experiencing behavior difficulty or a mom needs to miss work for her family, you can relieve a lot of stress.

Tip #5: Involve a child or adult in a hobby of yours.
It is heartbreaking for a mom to learn that her son didn’t get invited to a party because of his disability, or that her daughter wasn’t included in the neighborhood picnic. You can enrich the lives of families impacted by developmental disabilities by sharing your hobbies such as cooking, gardening, board games and more. Love and compassion are the only special skills you need.

Tip #6: Ask how to be helpful and then help.
While listening to moms can be helpful, actions often speak louder than words. Find out what is most needed through conversations and then make it happen! Bring over dinner, clean the house, fold clothes, or help mom run errands that she hasn’t been able to accomplish. Small acts of kindness can make a big difference.

Tip #7: Teach life skills to the child or adult with a developmental disability.
Because children with developmental disabilities often experience isolation, they may not learn the tools that they need to succeed. Children with developmental disabilities often need help with completing their school work or learning adult skills. Offer to tutor or read to the child or adult, take them grocery shopping, or help them with cooking or laundry. You can play a big role in fostering independence so they can be fully engaged in their school and the community.

Tip #8: Connect moms with other families living with developmental disabilities.
Researching resources can be difficult when you are providing round-the-clock care. Connecting moms with others who are going through similar journeys can offer the support network and resources they need.

Tip #9: Ask your place of worship for an educational or service program on helping mothers of children with disabilities.
Faith leaders are in a prime position to teach a great number of people about the needs of our fellow community members through their messages, children/teen programs and other activities.

For more tips and resources on how to help a mom, please visit:
www.AADD.org/allaboutmoms