

medina county board of developmental disabilities

# - Supporting People with Developmental Differences in our Community -



## Playtime!

*Realizing a thriving community is diverse and includes all different types of people is important. Looking at ways to include people with developmental differences and making them feel a “part of” instead of “apart” from things is important to supporting and developing inclusion.*

*All young children, with and without disabilities, need the chance to learn from each other through playtime. Knowing a wide range of peers with different abilities is important to each child’s growth. Here are some tips for including everyone in the fun.*

### **Take the First Step Yourself**

Kids learn by example. When you see a child with a disability, make an effort to say “Hi”, and find a way to engage with the child. Very often it is the first approach that is daunting for adults, and definitely for kids. Initiate interaction as a parent and your kids may follow suit.

### **Change Expectations**

People tend to think when we say “Hi” or make eye contact with a child, it will be reciprocated. This is not always the case with kids with disabilities. It doesn’t mean they are not interested in you, it may mean they just do not know how to show it. Adjust your expectations. Each child is an individual with a unique personality; it might take a little bit of time to get to know them.

### **Less Talking, More Doing**

Children love to move when they play, the same is true for children with disabilities. For some children with disabilities, games that involve a lot of rules and less moving may be frustrating. Also, many kids with disabilities follow instructions better when they are given visually rather than verbally. Finding the right activity may take time, but it will be worth it.

### **Ignore the Meltdowns**

As with most kids, when a child with a disability is overwhelmed, tired or upset, they may have a meltdown. Actually, ignoring the meltdown and staying calm may settle down the situation fairly quickly.

### **No Pity Please**

Parents of kids with disabilities need empathy, kindness, and space to parent their kids, not pity. Most just want the same things any parent would want for their kid: love, laughs, friends and a safe environment to achieve their maximum potential. If you genuinely want to include a child with a disability in playtime, just ask the parents. They will be happy to help you find ways to include their child.

*Finally, remember to enjoy your efforts! Don’t let accessibility and inclusion stress you out. If you are reading and considering these tips, you are already doing more than most. Stay positive, smile and have a great time!*

