

Being Included in Society - What Does it Mean?

Notes from a meeting held on March 7, 2024, with 46 self-advocates from across the country.

Our, SARTAC Zoom Meetings, a national connection for self-advocates for anyone who has not been on.

Welcome back. And if this is your first time at these meetings very first time welcome glad you've found us and hope you can join us for future meetings because we love to have you.

And I just want to say that. You know, we started meeting twice a week in March of 2,020 when COVID began and in the past 2 years we switched to doing our meetings once a week.

And the topic you picked, one of many, is being included in society.

When you hear those words, being included in society, what does that, what does it mean?

So being included in society means that we should all be included. At our job and in our homes.

We're going into small groups to have the discussion.

What we're looking for is to share examples. Give us your best examples of people with disabilities being included in their towns and communities.

So Kenny, for example, you talked about work, right? So we want to talk about, what are some examples of some really cool jobs that people have where they've been included in their town or their community.

Thank you to everyone who was in my group, those were all good ideas we all brought up.

I'm a peer supporter. I help people mentor, get jobs or get, you know, mental what the problem is.

And I'm with YAK also. And I help out in peer advocacy in Massachusetts.

So I have a list here from group 1.

The first comment was even though we need help. When we go out in the community, they can see us. So we need to be in the works of our community.

We need to end workshops so we can earn more money.

We need to speak up and make sure the places are accessible. Use the ADA which helps people with different kinds of disability.

If you are a senior, to be in senior centers or libraries. To be a part of recreational opportunities.

And to be part of historical events.

Self-advocates can meet the coordinators of the events, and we can help individuals do the events. To know how to stand up for themselves.

We need to do more advocating for places to be accessible for people to use. I know that our voting places are now accessible.

And also we are using technology. To help people vote. There are accessible voting machines. And people help us to vote and mail in ballots.

We need to speak up for our right to be included. It was helpful to have accessible voting machines. at the last national conference to practice on.

And okay, the ADA needs to be worked to get our access needs like in the Bronx or grocery stores.

Instead of steps, they need to have ramps.

I went down and joined a meeting, and I got a new ramp at the River Market.

We need to get out information about our disability events to merchants and business owners.

In Seattle I go to community meetings online.

Some people with disabilities are saying Listen to them. We are advocates speaking up for ourselves, we are like Barb, Marley, and Martin Luther King.

I worry about Trump changing the ADA. I am joyously active with unions and other groups organizing for better transportation. Passengers United.

I'm trying to be involved in at my church if I hear a need or someone is needing help

I try to help you can help out in the nursery at your church.

It can be frustrating when we want to access a historical building in your town that's not required to follow the ADA.

My friend works for, for the legislator. He helps create disability services.

At SANYS I started out as a volunteer and then, went then I was a field assistant. Now I am their organizer. They are very helpful with transportation and advocacy jobs gives us confidence.

My church has an LGBTQ group. We meet every 2 weeks to plan what we do, what we'll do for Pride Week.

I used to volunteer at a hospital to give people flowers. If we live a full life, we will be healthier.

My home country of Korea does not have good accessible services. Here I am a peer supporter.

I help people solve problems. And he will get jobs.

Okay. Max, do you want to share some highlights from your group of examples of people being included?

Some of the things that came to mind about how community inclusion happens

Working on legislation to get passed like the work we did a long time ago on the Americans with Disabilities Act

Some people mentioned volunteering.

Having people with disabilities in the community lets everyone know that people with disabilities are capable of more.

An example of a person with a disability being successful in the community. Stephen Hawkins.

Joining town hall meetings to speak up. Some of the things in the community people do.

You know, having your own condo, having your own mobile home, pretty much having your own place to live, whether or not it's an apartment. To rent or your own place.

A couple of ways of speaking up. I already mentioned town hall meetings.

Other examples of people brought up being involved in your community and how it happens. Being an actor or a musician or actress.

This is kind of cool. Being an elected official, you know, being the president if possible or a governor.

I would say, you know, being a doctor or being a lawyer. Doing some work in that department.

Someone brought this up, which was good. The pandemic, when it was happening, allowed us, you know, pretty much to rely more on technology, allowed for new communities to form.

And more use of technology got us in the community in terms of speaking up.

One barrier that somebody brought up to be broken down is transportation. Reliable transportation should. Be fixed.

I know that's hard in some rural areas. Some other things people brought up meeting legislators, your local representatives whenever laws and policies are being made about our lives.

Getting to know your representatives in the community, people that represent your district or like your region and being at the table whenever Decisions are being made about. Our lives and just continuing the fight and even though it's exhausting.

Making sure we all have a voice and really showing that we belong, and we contribute.