Becoming Leaders for Tomorrow (BLT)

Parents of Youth & Young Adults with Differabilities

Family Links
Murray, UT
March 20, 2010
Parents of Youth & Young Adults with Differabilities

As parents, sometimes it is difficult to let our teenagers with special needs or differabilities (disabilities) try new things. We fear them getting hurt, being disappointed, and struggling without our loving support. Sometimes, we need to listen to what they want and be strong enough to let them try, even if they learn hard lessons. In this session by the BLT Project, youth and young adults with differabilities will share their ideas, dreams, and helpful hints with parents.
Growing Independence for Young Adults

The high-school years help prepare youth to be more independent young adults. Like their peers after high school, some young adults with disabilities (disabilities) go to college or other training programs; some look for jobs; and some stay at home and keep working toward more independent lives. Each young adult is different and there are no simple answers for how to become more independent. This session by the BLT Project will briefly explore tips from young adults with disabilities about education, employment, and independent living.
Social Networking for Youth and Young Adults (and Their Families)

Parent and young adult feedback and focus groups have noted the need for more social opportunities for youth and young adults with differabilities, disabilities, or special needs (visible and invisible). The BLT Project will provide resources and a fun environment (with video and board games) as an opportunity for you to meet other youth, young adults, and parents to network, share helpful ideas, and learn about more opportunities for social activities, meetings, mentoring, transition training, and other activities. Bring your ideas, questions, siblings, and parents. This is your session, so we encourage you to help us make it great.
What tips do you have for parents of youth with disabilities?
We’ll hear from young adults and then from parents.
Please hold your questions until after the slides...
Tip 1 for Parents

- Let your kids explore and don’t keep them in a bubble
Tip 2 for Parents

- Encourage independence, a little at a time (encourage them to grow and learn)
Tip 3 for Parents

- Help your teenager find a role model that can help them:
  - See someone else with the same disability
  - Learn about life things like putting on makeup
  - Learn how to deal with their disability
  - (it will also give the parents more ideas)
Tip 4 for Parents

- Help your child find new friends, they need friends and social activities
Tip 5 for Parents

- Be supportive and understanding
  - School is tough for all kids
  - It is embarrassing being different from the other students
Tip 6 for Parents

- Help your child work with the school to get accommodations
  - Schools have come a long way in working with people with disabilities and providing ADA accommodations
  - Help your child learn self-advocacy by advocate for them until they are ready to try
Tip 7 for (Adoptive) Parents

- Find out as much as you can about your adopted child’s medical history
  - Talk to the school about your child’s medical history
  - Ask the school for accommodations
  - Participate in your child’s IEP and 504 meetings
Tip 8 for Parents

- Get involved in your school and community
  - Participate in your child’s IEP and 504 meetings and ask about options for a Diploma
  - Limited adult services due to legislative budget
  - Limited transportation options due to UTA budget
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Family Links: Session 2 Panel

What tips do you have for youth that are learning to be more independent as they finish high school?
Tip 1 for Youth and Young Adults

- Talk to your parents
  - Let them know what is going on
  - Get their input and advice
  - And then you decide what to do and live your life
Tip 2 for Youth and Young Adults

- Try to find a mentor
  - To learn more about your disability
  - To see how other people deal with their challenges
  - To help you learn things that your family doesn’t teach you
Tip 3 for Youth and Young Adults

- Don’t give up
  - If you fall, brush yourself off and keep going
  - It is a lost cause if you give up
Tip 4 for Youth and Young Adults

- Life is hard
  - Everyone has hard things to deal with
  - Try to keep your perspective about life’s challenges
Tip 5 for Youth and Young Adults

- Make friends
  - Find friends with the same disability and see how they do things
  - Find friends with different disabilities and see how they do things and what their challenges are
  - Have a balance of different kinds of friends
Tip 6 for Youth and Young Adults

- Break out of your comfort zone
  - It is hard to try something new
  - Get out of your house and talk to people
  - It gets easier when you practice more
Tip 7 for Youth and Young Adults

- Don’t judge others
  - People may tease you or look at you differently because they don’t understand
  - Not everyone is judging you, so don’t judge them (don’t think that they don’t like you)
Tip 8 for Youth and Young Adults

- Everyone is equal
  - Everyone has their disabilities that they have to live through
  - Even people without “disabilities” have their own challenges that they have to deal with
Tip 9 for Youth and Young Adults

- Social skills are important
  - Make friends
  - Be a good friend
  - Do social things with others