

Throughout history, people with physical and mental disabilities have been abandoned at birth, banished from society, used as court jesters, drowned and burned during the Inquisition, gassed in Nazi Germany, and still continue to be segregated, institutionalized, tortured in the name of behaviour management, abused, raped, euthanized, and murdered.

Now, for the first time, people with disabilities are taking their rightful place as fully contributing citizens.

The danger is that we will respond with remediation and benevolence rather than equity and respect.  
And so, we offer you

## *A Credo for Support*

Do *Not* see my disability as the problem.  
Recognize that my disability is an attribute.

Do *Not* see my disability as a deficit.  
It is you who see me as deviant and helpless.

Do *Not* try to fix me because I am not broken.  
Support me. I can make my contribution to the community in my way.

Do *Not* see me as your client. I am your fellow citizen.  
See me as your neighbour. Remember, none of us can be self-sufficient.

Do *Not* try to modify my behaviour.  
Be still & listen. What you define as inappropriate  
may be my attempt to communicate with you in the only way I can.

Do *Not* try to change me, you have no right.  
Help me learn what I want to know.

Do *Not* hide your uncertainty behind "professional" distance.  
Be a person who listens and does not take my  
struggle away from me by trying to make it all better.

Do *Not* use theories and strategies on me.  
Be with me. And when we struggle  
with each other, let that give rise to self-reflection.

Do *Not* try to control me. I have a right to my power as a person.  
What you see as non-compliance or manipulation may  
actually be the only way I can exert some control over my life.

Do *Not* teach me to be obedient, submissive, and polite.  
I need to feel entitled to say No if I am to protect myself.

Do *Not* be charitable towards me.  
The last thing the world needs is another Jerry Lewis.  
Be my ally against those who exploit me for their own gratification.

Do *Not* try to be my friend. I deserve more than that.  
Get to know me. We may become friends.

Do *Not* help me, even if it does make you feel good.  
Ask me if I need your help. Let me show you how you can best assist me.

Do *Not* admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant adoration.  
Respect me, for respect presumes equity.

Do *Not* tell, correct, and lead.  
Listen, Support, and Follow.

Do *Not* work on me.  
Work with me.

Dedicated to the memory of Tracy Latimer