

Title: I wanna be like you

It happens to us all, you know, the song gets stuck in your head and just won't go away. It's not been just a couple of hours, not even a couple of days, no, this has been with me for weeks. Going round and round, Sometimes, I want to get up and dance with the lyrics, other times I just sit and mull over the meaning-why is this running through my head?

I wanna be like you
I wanna talk like you
Walk like you too
You'll see it's true
Someone like me
Can learn to be
Like someone like me
Can learn to be
Like someone like you
Can learn to be
Like someone like me
The Jungle Book

I think, through my weeks of mulling, I have finally figured it out, I want to be like you! I, a person who is considered normal and non-disabled, wants to be like you, the person considered disabled!-No really-you, the person with the disability, who wants to work, wants a family, wants to go to the park, enjoy, navigate, utilize the facilities and enjoy your family and friends. You, person with disabilities, wants to go to the store and buy what you need, or don't need. You want to go to movies, out to eat, shopping, down town, malls, bowling, to the mountains, the greenway, and fishing or for drives. You want vacations, you want your own homes. You want to be known for who you are as an individual-for your dreams, goals and successes. You want to be someone like me, I want to be someone like you!

As I continue to mull over the question of why, if we are the same, we are viewed as being so different and I hit upon the theory of stereotypes. Think about it, when we allow society to influence our images of who a group of people are, we don't see who they are as individuals. Stereotypes or categorizations provide us opportunities to base opinions before we gather real information or facts-all men with dark hoods on their heads are dangerous. All people on welfare are lazy, all people from Middle Eastern countries are terrorists, and all disabled people are living off the system. They are also hard of hearing and you have to speak loud to them! Fact is, these beliefs are not true and there is no research or proof to base the stereotypes on.

Whether, we as individuals want to change or not, our societal norms and environment is changing and will continue to. Change will not stop. History has shown us this. We have slowly accepted differences in opinions and lifestyles throughout the years. The changes of views and acceptances of differences have resulted from greater understanding and education-as well as, often being the right thing to do. We need to continue with this-understanding, education and being the right thing to do-but we need to speed it up.

Education is such a powerful tool and one that each of us, especially parents of children can utilize. When your child asks "what's wrong with them", let them know that "there is nothing wrong with them, he/she is a person just like the rest of us". Have the conversation about likes and differences early and be open to learning yourself. Having

spent a lifetime with people with disabilities, I can assure you that most people, want to share their experiences and wisdom. Just like non-disabled people, people with disabilities can be exceptional teachers and leaders! I work with a lady with a disability that I consider a role model for myself. Her leadership skills are amazing!

Every individual has differences and every individual has similarities. What should be similar that can help lead to equality is good manners. Good manners apply to everyone, we hold doors for people, we say please and thank you, we offer assistance. It shouldn't matter if that person has one arm or two, a hearing aid, cane or no limitation, good manners imply that everyone assists everyone and treats all people with respect.

I wanna be like you, the challenge is achieving equality, eliminate the stereotype through education, understanding and practicing the fact that it's the right thing to do. The equal treatment of people should be happening now-not something we can look forward to happening. The person with a disability should not have to say "I wanna be like you, they should be saying "I am like you"!

Carol Busbee

Mayor's Council for People with Disabilities

Mission

The MCPD's mission is to serve as a network, catalyst, and referral organization that will enhance equality and self-advocacy for people regardless of their disability.

For more information, view the [Mayor's Council for People with Disabilities Website](http://www.cheyennesmcpd.org) at www.cheyennesmcpd.org