

## **Three Top Tips on Inclusion, written by Faye Cawsey (Recreation Integration Victoria) - 2016**

**1. Inclusion begins with sincerity.** If you are agreeing to interact, plan, adapt, include or engage because you feel it is expected and socially/culturally correct, that will become obvious very quickly. Everyone, regardless of the nature of their disability – including those with a developmental disability – pick up vibes immediately and many have a lifetime of experience gauging sincerity and genuine motivation versus a ‘show’. An authentic welcoming attitude is at the very core of inclusion. You may have those intrinsic qualities already. If not, be open to change, find your comfort zone, and learn! Rather than “standing still”, one forward step is motivation to take another and another!

**2. Be honest.** If you didn’t understand what that person who has a speech impediment just said, let them know. If you are nervous, say so! If you don’t know how to help simply ask. Fudging, fumbling, and downright lying is not only insulting, it can be dangerous. It is rare for a person not to want to be included, most want to feel welcome and to have their voice heard. They also understand that they sometimes need assistance and may need to give guidance on how that best happens for them. Given respect, patience and an honest attempt at engagement you’ll find that people (with or without a disability!) will be very accommodating to help others in the community find their comfort zones and share ways to foster inclusion.

**3. Never stereotype.** Just because you’ve met or know someone who has Downs Syndrome doesn’t mean the next person with Downs Syndrome will be remotely similar. Individuality is the name of the game. You would never assume that all brunettes share similar interests or all folks from a particular country respond to the same situation identically or all folks the same age need support in the same way. Take the time and show the interest needed to support and engage individually.

I know you asked for 3, but I am cheating and have one more top tip: **Humour and a smile go a looooong way.**