

“The way to growth and development is to plant both feet firmly in the ground, raise your hand to the sky and then push up the sky so you have room to grow.”

~ Chinese Proverb

A Home for the Spirit and Learning from Our Dreams and Nightmares

Part 1: A Home for the Spirit — Taking Care of Ourselves and Knowing What Matters Most in Our Lives

We each have something unique we bring to the world. Knowing what matters most in our own life can help us find our leadership style, learn from our hopes and fears and protect the things that matter most to us in our life and work. Sharing our observations and ideas can help create needed social change.

If you think just about yourself and your own life, what matters most; what do you value in your life? What are your strongest personal hopes for your own future? What do you want to protect or take with you into the future?

Think of your personal safe space — the place where you can feel your strength and feel good about yourself. It may be an inner space or an outer one, a place you share with others or a place where you can be happily alone. It can even be an activity that gives you happiness, such as music, art, sports or another activity that you love. What is it about that space or activity that you want to take with you into your future? Write a journal entry or poem or draw a picture about the space or activity where you are most at home and share what you are comfortable sharing with the class.

Part 2: Dreams and Nightmares About Asking for Help

Close your eyes and imagine that you need help and you have finally gotten up the courage to go to a local office and ask for it. You walk down the street and think about the meeting ahead of you, the help you need and your fears for the future. When you arrive at the office door you stand outside for a minute and then take hold of the door, ready to push it open.

What do you hope to find when you open the door? In your best hope, what would it look like and how would you be treated?

What is your worst nightmare of what is behind the door: What will it be like inside and how will you be treated?

What can we take from this discussion and exercise about the best ways to help ourselves and other people?

Part 3: A Discussion — Thinking About History

A community organizer once said, “All we are trying to do is make a better life possible for ourselves and our children.” Today we will be learning about and discussing the history of disability programs and services. Here are some questions to think about as we work on this lesson: What are some of the mistakes that were made in the past? What are the important things to plan for and include in creating services for people with disabilities? What are the improvements that have been made? What other things need to happen?

The community organizer was reminding us that we make history as we live our lives. Can you identify events in your own personal, family or community life that are part of the history of disability rights or other social justice movements? What are they?

If you could see the future, what changes would you most like to see?

What do you hope you will NOT see in the future?