

10 WAYS TO MOVE TOWARD A GOOD FUTURE

especially for families affected by disability



BY AMY JULIA BECKER

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TO MOVE TOWARD
A **GOOD** FUTURE

1

Assume possibility.

2

Avoid pity. Receive compassion.

3

Find your people

4

Believe belovedness

5

Use the language of gifts and needs

6

Recognize the lies our culture tells

7

Prioritize social connection over skills

8

Embrace the dignity of risk

9

Work on one thing at a time

10

Move from comparison to celebration

MOVE TOWARD A GOOD FUTURE

Raising kids is hard. Raising kids with disabilities can seem even harder. But you can take meaningful, manageable steps toward a purposeful, joyful, connected future for your family.

When our daughter Penny was born and diagnosed with Down syndrome, our imagination was shaped solely by fear. But over the past 18 years, through other parents, doctors, therapists, and friends, our imagination has instead been shaped by possibility.





GRATITUDE & CONFIDENCE

We now live with gratitude for Penny's life and presence in our family. We live with confidence in the possibilities for her to enjoy a good future.

We believe that you too can experience gratitude and confidence. Here are 10 ways to move toward a good future for any family affected by disability. (And check out my [live, virtual workshop, Reimagining Family Life with Disability.](#))

1. ASSUME POSSIBILITY.

Every human being lives with the possibility of connection, relationship, and contribution. Research shows that when parents focus on helping our children overcome their “weaknesses,” we begin a negative feedback loop. **Instead, focus on your child’s strengths and passions.** You can begin to grow and learn together.



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2. AVOID PITY. RECEIVE COMPASSION.

When someone pities us, their attitude communicates: “I’m so glad I’m not you.” When someone has compassion for us, their attitude communicates a different message: “I want to be with you where you are, even when it is hard.” **Pity creates distance. Compassion connects.** Stay connected to the people with compassion.

3. FIND YOUR PEOPLE.

There are many types of people you need (and can find!) in your family's journey with disability, including peers, mentors, specialists, and friends. **Join an online or in-person group** to connect with other parents and to learn from those who have navigated the concerns you face. **Make a list** of the people in your local community who can help out, even in small ways, and ask them for help when you need it.



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4. BELIEVE BELOVEDNESS (YOUR OWN, AND YOUR CHILD'S).

In a world that values and ranks humans according to ability, it can be easy to lose sight of the inherent worth of people with disabilities. Remember that love is more important, and more lasting, than any ability or achievement.

5. USE THE LANGUAGE OF GIFTS AND NEEDS.

Everyone in your family has gifts. Everyone has needs. Use the language of gifts and needs to help your kids see themselves and each other as equally valuable and different from one another in beautiful ways.





6. RECOGNIZE THE LIES OUR CULTURE TELLS ABOUT DISABILITY.

Our culture tells us that disability is a burden, a tragedy, a joke, and an inspiration. The truth is that disability is a natural part of the human condition that most of us will experience. When you see a story about disability in our culture, consider what message it sends. **Share the messages that honor the full humanity of people with disabilities.**

7. PRIORITIZE SOCIAL CONNECTION OVER SKILLS.

It is easy to become so focused on the skills your child “needs” to learn that you forget about friendship. Most people with disabilities need friendship more than particular skills. Go to your therapist appointments and doctor visits, but also remember that social time is even more important. Make a plan to connect with one other family or peer on a weekly basis, for your sake and your child’s.



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8. EMBRACE THE DIGNITY OF RISK.

All humans are vulnerable. Kids and adults with disabilities are especially vulnerable. For parents, that means we are tempted to protect our kids and deny them what researchers call the “dignity of risk.” Allow your child to take reasonable risks.

9. WORK ON ONE THING AT A TIME.

The lists of possible areas of growth are endless. They come from teachers, therapists, doctors, and well-meaning relatives. When the list is overwhelming, choose one thing that matters to your child and work on that.





10. MOVE FROM COMPARISON TO CELEBRATION.

Throw away the developmental milestone charts. Pay attention to who your child is. When you are tempted to compare, instead choose one thing about your child that causes delight and give thanks for that aspect of who s/he is.

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REIMAGINING FAMILY LIFE WITH DISABILITY COURSE

Now is the time to **envision** and **work toward** a good future for your family.

This course is available in two formats:

1. Live, virtual workshop (four sessions)
- OR
2. Video course—go at your own pace

THIS COURSE WILL FOCUS ON:

- CHANGING THE MINDSET ABOUT DISABILITY
- BUILDING A TEAM OF SUPPORT
- TAKING STEPS FORWARD

**PLUS
A FREE
WORKBOOK
DOWNLOAD**

Instructor
AMY JULIA BECKER

MORE INFO

AMYJULIABECKER.COM/WORKSHOP





ABOUT AMY JULIA

Amy Julia Becker helps people reimagine the good life through her writing and speaking on disability, faith, and culture. She is the author of *To Be Made Well*, *White Picket Fences*, *Small Talk*, and *A Good and Perfect Gift*. She is a guest opinion writer for national publications and hosts the *Reimagining the Good Life* podcast. She is a graduate of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary (MDiv). She lives with her husband and their three children in western Connecticut.

