



NCAPPS

National Center on Advancing
Person-Centered Practices and Systems

Culture & Person-Centered Care Practices – “Listening Before Acting”

SPEAKER(S):

Andy Arias

Hi, my name is Andy Arias. I'm a disability rights advocate and a policy expert. I'm based out of Los Angeles. And what person-centered planning means to me, specifically in the way thinking and implementation happens is bringing the person with a disability to the forefront of their planning.

I myself have multiple identities. I'm LGBTQ, Latinx and somebody with a significant disability but person-centered planning to me is incorporating me in all of that planning, right? Or the individual, from the start to the end before plans get implemented or pushed forward. The person with the disability needs to be involved in every aspect. They need to be asked instead of told. They need to be given options to move forward.

Taking into consideration someone's culture is also very important. I'm Latinx and when I was growing up in the foster care system, I was very rarely looped into any kind of planning for myself until I demanded to be engaged. So this can't happen. We need to look at someone's background and culture. The way someone grows up is a huge factor in how they look at their disability and how they look at their abilities and how they can move forward.

It's a daily practice. You can't just have a webinar and say, “this is what we're doing.” You can't just have a discussion with one family and say, “we're moving the needle.” What you have to do is make sure that your material, your information, is digestible by that culture or by that family. Many cultures are faith driven and are predominantly looked at through a faith lens and through their lens of culture; whether that be Hispanic, Latinx, Asian, African American.

So, you've got to consider and ask the question, where can we change that framework? Right? Do I have somebody on staff that can help me have those conversations about culture and faith and where those two things intersect?

So now the question comes, are there ways that we can facilitate, support, and celebrate someone's culture and experience? And the answer is yes, but the answer here is ask, right? Ask what you're doing. If you're not from the African American community, if you're not from the Hispanic community, if you're not from a specific community or LGBTQIA community; and you just have some sort of celebration expecting you're doing everything right. That's almost as bad as not doing anything at all.

If you're going to open the door and have these moments of conversation and experience and



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honor; really engage the individual first, first from the get-go and say like, "is this OK?"

"Can we have an LGBTQ, African American, Latinx intersectionality day and what would that look like for you?" "How would you like to be celebrated?" If at all, right? There might be a key factor, right?

You might want to do an inclusive experience. But an individual might say, like, "I don't feel like being marginalized." And so you got to take it on a group basis, or a key component is a person-by-person basis. And realize that not every person looks at their culture and experience the exact same way. And when you're doing person-centered planning, you got to think about that, right?

Not everyone wants to be celebrated. Here's my advice to service providers: we all know you have to check boxes and we all know intersectionality and diversity and inclusion are big ticket items for this point of view and this time that we are in.

But I think that the work needs to catch up to the experience of an individual and your work, right? If you look at someone and you know that they're coming from a LGBTQ, disability, Latinx perspective as an example; think about how you can use your resources to help them navigate that experience.

You do not have all the answers, nor are we looking to you to have all those answers. It's better if you look at outside sources to say, like, "how can we support you more?" "How can we support you further?" Are there support groups? Are there ways to engage other entities to help you incorporate their intersectional identities, right? You aren't going to have the funding and the strategies and the support for every item on an individual's bucket [list].

And I think that, as long as you are trying to move the needle in a direction of inclusiveness and not over pushing it or able splinting it or giving people a menu that covers a thousand items; then we recognize - I, as an individual with a disability - recognize your effort and it's appreciated. We're not looking for you to solve all the problems. We're looking for you to create avenues for solutions.