

Explaining Disability with Dignity

Awareness should never come at the expense of dignity.

Inclusion should build understanding without turning one child into the lesson.
Children deserve privacy, ownership, and dignity when support needs are discussed.

Before explaining, pause and ask

- ☐ Does this need to be shared publicly?
- ☐ Has the child agreed?
- ☐ Can this be explained generally instead?
- ☐ Is this protecting dignity and privacy?
- ☐ Am I building understanding - or creating attention?
- ☐ Could this make the child feel watched or exposed?

Scenario

- ☐ A teacher explains one student's support needs to the class.
- ☐ The student stays quiet.
- ☐ But peers begin watching them differently afterward.
- ☐ The goal was awareness - but the impact was visibility.

Reflection Prompt

Language That Protects Dignity

More exposing -> More protective

More exposing

- ☐ "James has autism, so everyone needs to be patient"
- ☐ "She struggles socially."
- ☐ "He gets overwhelmed because of his disability."

More protective

- ☐ "In our class, people learn in different ways."
- ☐ "Sometimes joining in takes time."
- ☐ "Some spaces can feel like a lot."

More exposing

- ☐ "Can someone help her?"
- ☐ "She uses a wheelchair, so everyone needs to help her."
- ☐ "She's very inspiring."

More protective

- ☐ "Let's make sure everyone can join in."
- ☐ "Different people move through spaces differently."
- ☐ "Everyone deserves respect and belonging."

Children deserve ownership over their own story.

Understanding should protect the child - not expose them.