# Living and Functioning with Spina Bifida

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# Agenda

Introduction

Mental Health & Executive Functioning

Building confidence

**Engaging with Others** 

Q&A



# Overcoming Obstacles

- How do I deal with attention and executive functioning (EF) problems?
  - EF includes:
    - Impulsivity
    - Inhibition
    - Switching between tasks
    - Organizing
    - Planning
    - Working Memory
    - Time Management
- Living with chronic illnesses and physical disabilities can make us vulnerable to mental health concerns
  - Anxiety
  - Depression

# The Power of YET

NOT EVERYONE YOU MEET WILL UNDERSTAND YOU AND THAT IS OKAY!

# Building Resilience: Mind over Matter

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING STRATEGIES  It has been shown that the better your ability to cope with EF difficulties, the better you are able to handle social situations

- Resilience and higher quality of life are attributed to:
  - Positive outlook toward SB
  - Future expectations
  - Family satisfaction and support
  - Coping and Hope

## Building Blocks to Enhancing Relationships

#### **Social Acceptance**

- Being open to being different
- Closeness-all you need is one good friend

#### **Social Problem Solving**

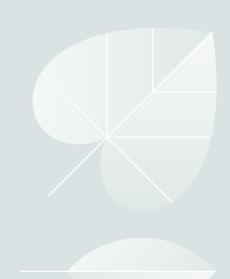
- Communicating necessary information to peers (i.e., social language)
- Understanding the rules of social engagement
- Offer to help someone if needed

#### **General Social Skills**

- Make eye contact with others to create a sense of connection
- Confidence in speaking: Take a deep breath, speak slowly and clearly (you do not have to say a lot)
- Effective body language and personal space
- Greet people openly

#### **Social Self-Efficacy (Sticking Up For Yourself)**

Be confident-Address stereotypes



### How To Be A Good Friend

Most of us have to work at building and maintaining friendships.

- Communicate if you are going to change or cancel plans
- Communicate your needs and sensitivities
- Be aware of other people's needs, and if you don't know, ask!
- Limit oversharing of personal problems or being repetitive
- Smile, BE POSITIVE!, have gratitude, say thank you

- Try not to take everything personally and if you get frustrated, ask for space
- Try to crack a joke. Don't take yourself or the situation too seriously
- Become more open to saying "Yes"
- Stay calm, pause, and reflect before reacting
- Introduce yourself and participate in small talk
- Ask someone to go to lunch

### Qualities in Friends

#### A good friend will:

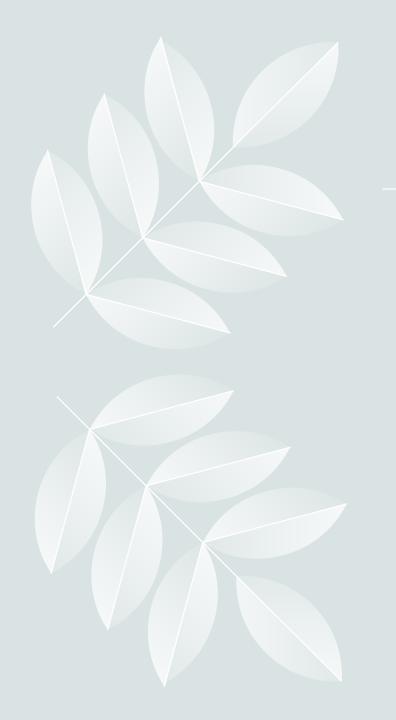
- Forget about your limitations
- Be Kind
- Make you laugh
- Truly want to know more about you
- Listen to your troubles
- Give you unconditional acceptance and validation
- Talk through things when they are upset



# Engaging Socially

#### Where to make friends:

- Join a club or community group (Walk-N-Roll for Spina Bifida, Boy and Girl Scouts, church youth groups, YMCA activities, and SBA Chapter events)
- Attend events
- Volunteer
- Join a life-skills or social skills group in the community
- Sign up to learn a new skills or craft
- Reach out to past friends you have lost touch with
- Participate in after-work activities



# Q&A

Thank you!

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