Introduction

Hello, and welcome to the first LiveWorkPlay Just Enough Support video series. I'm Keenan Wellar, the co-leader at LiveWorkPlay, a charitable organization based in Ottawa, Canada, that helps the community welcome people with intellectual disabilities to live, work, and play as valued citizens.

We have created this video series to help illustrate why and how the Just Enough Support approach is highly effective in helping people contribute to, and benefit from, being in control of their own lives. Just Enough Support is about helping them to enjoy life as included and contributing members of their community, from neighbourhoods, to workplaces, to everyday community venues where citizens routinely gather.

Through the stories of Phil, Ali, Heather, Jalynn, and Tim in the videos that follow, you will see examples of how Just Enough Support is about a continuous journey to seek the right balance of natural supports, like friends and family, plus different types of technology, the accessing of community-based services, and using paid support to fill in gaps and build bridges that help the individual expand their social relationships and their personal autonomy.

In the first four short videos, we introduce the audience to the core concepts of Just Enough Support: person-centred thinking, assets-based solutions, community-first approaches, barrier-busting technology, authentic valued roles, and always building bridges.

The concluding video is an interview session where I will be discussing some of the science of the Just Enough Support approach and explaining the core principles in further detail. We'll talk about the negative physical and emotional consequences that arise from being excluded, and the benefits that people experience when they are supported to learn and grown, take on new social roles, and expand the scale and intensity of their relationships. We'll also make sure it is understood that exclusion isn't caused by having a disability, it's actually the thinking and actions of other people that need to change in order to create inclusive environments.

Special thanks to the Government of Ontario Housing Task Force for their assistance with a portion of the costs in the making of this video series. Please visit liveworkplay.ca for more information and click on the Contacts session if you would like send us feedback about this video project – this is all about sharing what we have learned so that we can help others and continue to improve and grow.

Video #1: Just Enough Support: A Person-Centred Approach

Laurie: Phil has a joy for life. He's a very happy person. He's very caring. He's a lot of fun. He likes to play little jokes on me. The first time I see him every time, if he's outside, he gets very excited, always waving or yelling, from a distance.

Keenan: The principles of *Just Enough Support*, one of the keys is that it's person-centred and what we do is we look at the natural relationships in their life; technology that could help them

get where they need to go, and also the paid supports that would be helpful to them at this time, and also knowing they'll grow and change. And so that the supports we set-up around them are always just for now and always just enough, so not interfering in their life, supporting their life.

Laurie: Phil has his own apartment. He lives on his own. He's been there for quite a while now. Cooks, cleans, takes care of himself.

Lynn: He's proven himself over the last few years to be very independent, more than I would have ever dreamed of. We've been very fortunate with Phil and the LiveWorkPlay team that have helped him along the way and helped us as a family along the way.

Keenan: What we found over time, when people had the benefit of this approach, as they take on more roles, do more for themselves, get more connected in their community, grow their relationships, their self-esteem increases, and miraculously, suddenly they can do something where the file says that they couldn't.

Lynn: And it's amazing. Who would have ever thought that Phil would be using social media, using a computer, using a telephone. His workers and his support system has been able to educate him in these regards and again adding to his life and the success of his well being.

Laurie: I hope that he stays on his own, stays in the city so we can keep hanging out.
Phil: I do see that. I agree.

Video #2: Just Enough Support: Building Connections

Valerie: Jalynn is always upbeat. She always uplifts my mood whenever I see her. She's my workout buddy. We've been working out for a year and a half.

Anthony: Tim likes to do his own thing. He likes to do have control over his own apartment, his own meals, his budget, all that stuff he takes care of, and I'm just along for the ride.

Keenan: I think that one of the neat things about *Just Enough Support* is, identified through research, that over supporting people can be just as harmful as under supporting people. And the reason is, it limits their life opportunities. So if people are doing everything for them, they are becoming dependent and then overtime will lose the ability to acquire those skills or opportunities for themselves. So we have to be really careful of that because it actually puts people at risk. The more they're dependent on others, especially on paid support, the less safe they are because they have less relationships in their life.

Valerie: I got involved with LiveWorkPlay over a year and a half ago. So I wanted to meet up with people with intellectual disabilities, learn about their life and the challenges that they face. I like both the one-on-one and the relationship that we've built.

Anthony: So my role with Tim is to help get him connected to different people and different functions in the community that might be useful for Tim. Like getting his hair done, getting his nails done on weekends. When we go grocery shopping, we'll usually go to the same cashier and

they get to know Tim by name. Adds that extra person that in the community can see him and knows who he is.

Tim: Yes, because the person when I was getting my milk, she knew my name. She said, Hi Tim.

Keenan: I think we always want to look at paid support as something for now and are there parts of that role that could shift over time. But sometimes it's part of someone's routine and it's very important to them and it's not a role that would be suited for a natural support. And for those who always need some paid support, that's fine, but I think we've also had the experience of needing us less and needing us differently. This is all about not turning a person's life into a bureaucracy. That helps nobody. This is a human being and the real measurement is, are they enjoying life to the greatest extent possible?

Jalynn: I love living alone actually. It's so much fun because after I've spent a day at work around people, then I just want to come home.

Valerie: She always has a smile on her face and then that brings a smile on mine.

Tim: I like living on my own. I like being more independent.

Video #3: Just Enough Support: Community First

Mary Ann: Ali is our lovely daughter and she's got a great sense of humor. She's also very independent. You love your friends and you're a hard worker and you smile a lot.

Keenan: Two things about *Just Enough Support* that I often hear. People think that it is associated with a physical location and they think that it is associated with a certain type of person. And it's neither. It's for anywhere and it's for anybody. Everyone is looking to connect and so it's just finding those commonalities and helping everyone be a part of the same welcoming community.

Suzanne: Really a welcoming community is exactly what it sounds like. It's one where everyone is welcome, everyone is made to feel a part of the community and not in an exception sort of way, but really just as part of the community in an equal sort of way. We don't practice tolerance, we practice inclusion.

Keenan: One of our really most impressive partnerships is with Multifaith Housing Initiative and *The Haven* in Barrhaven. That was a non-profit housing community that they built and we had approached them because we saw that their community was really about diversity and inclusion and we said, "Have you thought about people with intellectual disabilities as part of that plan?" And they were all for it.

Suzanne: LiveWorkPlay has been absolutely fantastic in communicating with us and us with them to make this be something that we can be proud of and that we can talk about and tell people about so that other communities are encouraged to do what we're doing here.

Keenan: *Just Enough Support* is all about being community focused, and so we're looking at what are opportunities for the person in authentic environments with other people. Part of that is where are communities within the community where people can belong and meet new people and then grow their relationships and also grow their quality of life.

Ali: I have friends here.
Mary-Ann: To have friends and social network, that's big.
Ali: Independent means you live on your own. I feel happy and yes.

Video #4: Just Enough Support: Quality of Life

Heather: I'm Heather McAdam. I have a disability called Fetal Dilantin Syndrome. It's a learning disability.

Norm: Heather is amazing. We're so happy because she got a job. She's working with great people. LiveWorkPlay has been so supportive, giving her so many opportunities to grow and they celebrate small things like busing and things like that, that you would think that's just a regular thing, but it's a huge milestone.

Keenan: The real outcome we're looking for is a self-managed life for the person and really barrier reduction, so what's in the way of the vision they have for their own life, but also offering discovery. None of us knows at age twenty or twenty-five or thirty or thirty-five, what do we really want in five, ten or fifteen years from now. They are all just guesses. And so we have to leave the door open.

Heather: I have two part time jobs. I work at the Westin two days in the afternoon, and again, two days in the afternoon for the government. On Friday nights, I sometimes hang out with some friends.

Norm: Heather's been making her own appointments. If she has a question, she knows who to ask and that's a big thing, is knowing how to self-advocate, to be able to know how to pick up the phone and not be afraid to talk to people.

Keenan: Technology is often overlooked, so it's a fabulous way of solving problems and reducing barriers. And we used to often solve these problems with staff or even an entire housing arrangement that's built around the fact that maybe the person has trouble keeping track of keys or maybe shutting off the stove is something people will be concerned about. In 2018, there are coded locks, there's fingerprint locks, there's automatic shut-off valves for stoves, there's electricity that can be shut off remotely. There's all sorts of options and we sometimes ignore those. And this is very dangerous because we can actually label a person as unable to do certain things, including have their own apartment.

Norm: I think the life that Heather has built for herself here is something that's sustainable. Knowing that if something were to happen to me that Heather is still on the right course, she still has the support, she is fairly confident that she can continue living the way she is. That's a big step to be able to have that peace going forward.

Keenan: I just see this as a life changing opportunity for people so to see the light in those people's eyes, and then to see how their family feels when they see that person having the success and reflecting that back. It just changes people, it changes families, it changes communities when excluded people become included contributors.

Conclusion

Welcome to the interview portion of the first LiveWorkPlay Just Enough Support video series, I'm Sarah Kryszak and I am here with Keenan Wellar, co-leader at LiveWorkPlay, to build on the stories and information from the four videos that feature Phil, Jalynn, Tim, Ali, and Heather, and just to have a deeper conversation about the theory and practice of the Just Enough Support approach.

Keenan, to get us started, can you give us a brief history of the LiveWorkPlay organization, and in particular, how your practices have evolved to the type of support we are seeing in these videos – it hasn't always been like that, has it?

Thank you Sarah, and you are right, it hasn't always been this way. LiveWorkPlay started in 1995 as primarily an advocacy organization for people with intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome, and also for people with an autism spectrum diagnosis, and with the urging of family members and other supporters, we started providing direct services in the late 90s. We experimented with many different types of programs, and by the early 2000s our primary activity was operating a day program.

From watching the videos, it doesn't look like LiveWorkPlay is offering those types of programs anymore, so what changed?

Through various experiences with Community Living Ontario, and encountering future mentors like Al Condeluci, Bruce Anderson, and David Pitonyak, we started to question programmatic structures like day programs, and started investigating person-centered thinking and practices. Through this process of challenging ourselves and having really honest conversations within our own community, we determined that we needed to stop teaching people how to be successful in an agency program, and help them have a real life in the community – which meant working harder on getting to know the gifts, talents, hopes, and dreams of each person, and how to help ensure they are appreciated by others, not just our agency.

And we can see this happening in the videos, with people enjoying homes of their own, getting jobs, developing new friendships and having an active social life in the same community venues as other citizens, with or without disabilities – but does the approach being taken and the results we are seeing have to do mainly with the particular individuals featured in these stories, or can Just Enough Support be effective for just about anyone?

That's probably the most important question to ask and I want to be very clear with the answer – it is not only for anyone with an intellectual disability, this approach is essentially what every human being needs to learn and grow.

OK, that's pretty clear, so let's get into it, what exactly is Just Enough Support? Maybe we can start with where it comes from: is this something LiveWorkPlay invented?

Certainly not, in fact, this all goes back to the beginning of humankind, but in the context of supports and services for people with intellectual disabilities, and thinking about how to move away from segregated models to deliver healthier and more beneficial outcomes, one important dialogue started in 2009 with John O'Brien, Helen Sanderson, and other leaders in this field who captured some of their key ideas in a 2010 paper out of the UK titled "All Together Now" by Owen Cooper and Sally Warren. In this paper the phrase "Just Enough Support" emerges and has been further developed and popularized by Helen Sanderson and Associates.

So that paper came out long after LiveWorkPlay had already made the transition away from running programs, why in 2018 did you develop this video series and align with the Just Enough Support concept?

The principles and practical suggestions offered were not new to LiveWorkPlay, but how to frame them, explain them, and deliver them in partnership with individuals, families, and the community will always be a work in progress. Part of the drive to share what we've learned came out of a project that was referenced in the video, a partnership with the Multifaith Housing Initiative to include people with intellectual disabilities in a new non-profit housing community. We received a grant to help support this transition through the Province of Ontario Housing Task Force, and we worked with a Helen Sanderson Associates facilitator to help these individuals and their families plan for success by utilizing the Just Enough Support framework.

OK, so the very phrase, Just Enough Support – for someone to not have enough support, that seems somewhat obvious, if any of us doesn't have enough support in our lives, be it financial, emotional, organizational, whatever it might be, we're going to experience a number of negative consequences. But what about being over-supported? What does that really mean and why should we be concerned about?

Another great question, and really we need to back up a bit, and understand that this is all about the experience of being included or excluded. These videos emphasize the positive outcomes people experience when they take greater control of their lives, learn and grow from experience, expand their relationships, and ultimately experience being included and valued, having taken on important social roles that all citizens identify as essential to belonging, like being a friend, a teammate, a life partner, or a co-worker for example.

So when that's not happening in people's lives, that means they are experiencing exclusion, and that's where you see harm that comes not only from being under-supported it also means being limited or boxed in with respect to what is possible in our personal and public lives, and that's frequently what happens when people are over-supported.

So I can see that if someone's life is limited to a particular program environment, they are literally being excluded from other possibilities. Is that mainly what this is about?

Exclusion most obviously occurs when people's lives are programmed in systems environments, such as group homes or day programs. They are not alone in those settings, but their privacy, autonomy, and ability to learn and grow their relationships and valued social roles are extremely limited. Their gifts and talents may not be fully recognized, and avenues to explore the potential of those gifts and talents are either very narrow, or altogether absent.

But exclusion can also occur when someone lives with their own family, or has an apartment of their own, if they are constrained by limits that others impose, or by lack of support and the

absence of opportunities and possibilities. If you have your name on the lease but paid staff from an agency are in your home telling you what to do all the time, then the fact that it is an apartment and not a group home isn't in itself providing that person with more autonomy and opportunities for growth.

Keenan, is this an issue that only impacts people with disabilities?

No, and that's a very important point. Being excluded is about being devalued and dehumanized, and we see this in many different marginalized populations, for example exclusion based on gender identity, ethnicity, age, or mental health issues. The serious consequences to health, life expectancy, and poverty are similar for any person or group that experiences exclusion. And of course we have to remember that people with intellectual disabilities can also face multiple forms of discrimination, we have worked with many individuals where issues of race or sexuality have been as significant to them as their disability label.

Words like exclusion and inclusion are really nuanced, but I understand there's also some science to this – the motivation for LiveWorkPlay to adopt a Just Enough Support approach comes from an evidence-based perspective.

Yes, definitely. We all know from our own experiences, whether we have a disability or not, that being left out or rejected in social situations is painful – it is a frequent comment from persons of any walk of life that being excluded feels like a punch in the gut. Researchers using FMRI technology – functional magnetic resonance imaging – have discovered that this is more than just a feeling – the same area of the brain lights up from the pain of social exclusion as what is observed when people experience a physical injury.

So obviously any person or organization involved in supporting others would want to avoid causing anyone this sort of pain, but beyond the pain, are there any other issues of concern?

Yes, and this is absolutely critical to understanding the importance of the Just Enough Support approach – the effects of segregating and excluding people only leads to being less autonomous and even more dependent on others. In other words, their quality of life continues to deteriorate over time. The only way to turn that around and help them to head in a positive direction is to give them more control over their life, and more opportunities to learn and grow.

Keenan, if someone has a disability and is facing a lot of barriers – perhaps they are a non-standard communicator, they use a wheelchair to get around, or maybe even both – it may be a fact that they are always going to need help from others to get their point across to strangers, to simply get around in the physical environment, and for some maybe even a lot of their personal care. Is it realistic to approach their support in this way?

I would argue that the more barriers a person is seen to be facing, the more they need the supporters in their life to be challenging themselves to help find solutions that provide the individual with greater autonomy, more opportunities to experience and to be seen in valued roles. If our main identity is "someone who gets help" that's a constant daily dose of exclusion, and those gut punches really add up to a lot of pain and hopelessness.

But we all depend on others to some degree for our safety and quality of life. So what is the distinction between that sort of help, and unhealthy dependencies?

Fundamentally, it is about having control of what help you are receiving, who is providing it, and having the ability to change or remove support that you don't like or feel that you no longer need. Unhealthy dependencies can become a part of the life of any human being, but they are more common to people with disabilities, and especially those with intellectual disabilities, and this poses dangers beyond the pain of being excluded. In fact, segregating and excluding people is a type of self-fulfilling prophecy whereby people who are already lacking in autonomy and opportunities for growth will indeed become less capable over time as a result of being excluded.

What does current research say about these harms?

The NeuroLeadership Institute summarizes the major harms of exclusion as reduced intellectual performance, less positive social interaction, loss of meaning and purpose, increased self-defeating actions, impaired self-regulation, and overall decrease in physical and mental well-being.

Those are some very serious consequences. How does our current system of supports for people with intellectual disabilities contribute to these harms?

Well, it's been the tradition of this sector to stream people with intellectual disabilities into group homes and day programs, essentially because they are deemed to lack the capacity for more included environments, and/or because other options aren't available – usually it's some combination of the two, but whatever the reasons, it means people with intellectual disabilities will lose the capacity they already had before they went into the systemic environment, and will likely acquire new problems that make it increasingly impossible for them to escape the limits of those segregated environments. It's a classic vicious circle with terrible consequences.
So in terms of providing a type of guideline for adopting a Just Enough Support approach, I understand that LiveWorkPlay has distilled this into six core principles. Can you walk us through those and maybe associate them with the lives of the people in the videos?

My pleasure. The first is the broadest, but really nothing works without it, and that's Person-Centered Thinking. This doesn't just mean asking a person questions and using the answers to make a plan, this means a belief in our hearts and minds that our purpose is to get to know a person to the best of our ability and to support them be in the driver's seat to map out their own life journey.

I think we can probably learn the most about this from Phil's example, because when he was first introduced to LiveWorkPlay, it was with a very long list of assumptions, which really were presented as facts, about what he could not do, and very little information about what he could do, or what he wanted to do in life. From having his own apartment, to working, to growing his social network to include many different people, a lot of that was supposedly impossible. It all started with getting to know Phil and putting him at the center of the process, instead of letting file folders tell us who he is.

He seems to be enjoying his life with great friends, and his mother seems to be very happy with how things are going, so that's great! What is the second principle?

The second is Assets-Based Solutions. This doesn't mean ignoring the barriers a person is facing, or pretending that their disability does not exist. What it means is solving problems by focusing on what can be done – how can the person's gifts and talents contribute to reducing or eliminating barriers. Where support is needed, how can that help be designed to increase the competence of the individual, rather than develop a dependency that will make them less capable.

This really comes through in the video when Heather's father Norm is talking about where things are at in their lives, and his own peace of mind about the future. It didn't come by seeking out more and more systemic supports, it really came from investing in Heather, who has exceeded a lot of expectations, including her own, about what she can do in life, from her job to her daily living – as Norm mentions, there was a time when they were concerned that picking up a phone to get help is something she couldn't learn, and now they can laugh about that – but there was a time the concern was very real, and the change didn't happen overnight, it came from paid staff and natural relationships like family members working together with Heather to offer opportunities for growth, with just that right balance of support.

The third principle is one that can be confusing, let's see if you can clear that up Keenan.

I will try! That would be the principle of Community-First Approaches. Whether it is a problem to be solved or a desire to be fulfilled, what existing community environments, resources, or people might be the answer? For example, instead of "special needs" programming, how might the person be supported to take part in recreation, sports, or the arts alongside other citizens in regular community venues like a YMCA or a community theatre?

How this plays out wrong is an agency like LiveWorkPlay, or maybe a family advocacy group, or a soccer league, or a city council, there's any number of examples where a well-meaning group of people might see an excluded population and their response is to create something new for them, when really, where they should be starting with is an inventory of what is already out there, and how people with intellectual disabilities could be included in the places and activities that are already being enjoyed by other citizens. So, instead of a special needs bowling league, how about just changing the bowling league so that whatever barriers are excluding people with intellectual disabilities, they can join leagues and teams that already exist.

This can also be about supports that a person needs, instead of looking to agency staff to provide it, are there services in the community, accessed by all citizens, that could meet this need?

Why is it important to sort of decentralize the way a person's needs are met?

It goes back to the issue of dependency as well as people's autonomy and their roles in the community. For example, in the video we see that Tim has a relationship with a salon for some of his personal care. Well, that's what the salon calls a "customer" and that's who Tim is to the salon, he's not a personal care checklist on the wall, he's a valued customer. And sometimes the solution hasn't been found yet, for example, in the video Tim allows us to see that he gets help from Anthony, one of our amazing support staff, with shaving. He's tried a lot of other solutions that haven't worked out, so right now, that's a role that we are filling. But just like we've found community-based solutions for everything from laundry to meals to nail care, we are always working with the person and their network to find ways that we can get out of the way of them enjoying greater autonomy in their own space as well as out in the world.

Now let's tackle one of your personal favourites, principle four!

Right, that would be barrier-busting technology. It's a routine experience that we'll be having a person-centered planning conversation with an individual and their family, and the point we'll be made that "they can't use a stove" or "they always lose keys" or "they can't keep an appointment" or "they get lost on the bus" just a few examples. Those can be really powerful statements,

because whether they are 100% accurate or fair or not, they certainly present obstacles to having your own apartment, or getting a job, or even going out for dinner.

There are new technologies, or even new ways of thinking about old technologies, that can really change the conversation – you can have a lock without keys. There are stoves that turn themselves off or that have elements that aren't hot to the touch. There are smart phone apps that give reminders, or provide directions, or bring you an Uber.

These are truly life-changing technologies, and we often underestimate the ability of people with intellectual disabilities to master them, we saw some references to this in the videos, and everyone featured there uses some of these technologies in their daily lives. It's hard to find the words to explain the difference this has made for people who value their privacy and autonomy – someone like Jalynn who doesn't want people tromping through her personal space, or someone with an independent personality like Ali who wants to be in charge but needs to reach out from time to time to solve a problem, or the way Phil is using Skype and social media to stay in touch with friends and family.

I can tell you are very excited about how technology has helped people take greater control over their own lives, but ultimately, removing barriers creates opportunities for our next principle.

Exactly, which is Authentic Valued Roles. There are many books, videos, and studies about social role valorization, so I won't go into great detail, but I want to emphasize that people with intellectual disabilities are no less desiring of what is real than anyone else. They know and experience a real friendship or a real job just like anyone else – the difference is that because of segregated environments like day programs, it's possible to develop the perception that "that's where those people are happy."

Is that the self-fulfilling prophecy you mentioned earlier?

Yes, exactly, if they aren't being supported to learn and grow outside of a systems environment, their desire and ability to escape it for authentic roles is going to deteriorate. People with intellectual disabilities are no less desiring of authentic social roles than anyone else, and I can also add that with some 30 years of experience, it's extremely rare that someone prefers a segregated environment, even if they experience failure trying out a new role in the community. And that's key. It is true that if someone leaves a day program for a paid job, they could fail at that job – well, who hasn't failed at a job? If we try to protect people from failing, then we'll have to deny them any authentic role because friendships are not guarantees, employment can come and go, and real life is full of change, and you can't learn how to manage change if you never experience it.

Last but not least, the final principle applies mainly to agencies offering supports and services?

To some extent yes, but really, it applies to family members too, or anyone at all that is involved in supporting others to learn and grow, and that principle is Always Building Bridges. Just Enough Support isn't about eliminating paid support from people's lives. At LiveWorkPlay providing direct service to individuals who honour us as their choice of service provider is very important and a big part of why we exist as an organization, but a key to our work is always thinking of how there's an answer beyond that agency relationship. It could be a natural support, such as a friend, or a community-first solution, and we apply a lot of time an energy to being a bridge to those solutions.

There's two sides on either end of a bridge, if the individual you are supporting is at one end waiting to cross, who or what is at the other end?

Right, good question because this often has more to do with people other than the person with a disability – whether it is a workplace or a community theatre, they might need help with their own thinking and practices about how to be welcoming and inclusive – we can't just expect them to know what they don't know, and we can't set up individuals we support for failure by throwing them into an unwelcoming environment. It's exactly as Suzanne from Multifaith Housing says in the video, we aren't looking for people to be tolerated, it's about being included, which means that they see the person for their assets and contributions, not just their needs and challenges, and they understand that exclusion is a problem created by those who are doing the excluding – not the person who is being excluded.

Is this role for service agencies well understood?

I think at the very least it is becoming a mainstream dialogue, even if it is not yet a widespread practice, but to be clear, there are dozens of organizations throughout Ontario and thousands more across the world who are constantly seeking out opportunities to build bridges, to get to know other people and their environments, their practices, their expectations - it's now in our organizational DNA to do that. I think in general, any organization that is truly delivering person-centered supports, and is committed to the types of principles outlined here, Just Enough Support is going to be their mindset, even if they call it something else. We make it part of our job to keep having conversations with the individual, their family, their networks, and our own networks to identify opportunities to build a bridge to a better quality of life.

Is this about big partnerships like the one you have with Suzanne, or with employers, for example?

It is about those types of partnerships for sure, but really, quality of life is all about relationships, and how you go about supporting that can be really subtle but powerful, like in the video when Anthony is talking about getting to know people at the stores where Tim shops, and Tim interjects about how they know him by name at the coffee shop – if we really step back and think about it, that simple act of being seen, of being known, of being appreciated and valued as we go about our daily lives – that's the experience of inclusion and belonging that is the foundation of our quality of life and a healthy society.

The tone of the videos is very positive, but this is challenging work, isn't it?

Definitely. A concern we had in the making of these videos is that by stressing the positive, it might seem like we are suggesting that supporting person-centered outcomes and community inclusion is easy to do. To be clear, it has not been easy for any of the people in the video or their families, and day in and day out it is very challenging for our organization in confronting many disappointments about how the people we support are welcomed or not welcomed in the community.

To be clear, a variety of harms can result from negative community interactions, and we are by no means suggesting that this is an easy path – what I would say however, is that learning how to provide support for an authentic life in the community – to the best of our ability – is really the only viable path to getting better at our work. Attempting to eliminate risk by boxing people into

programs for their lifespan is a form of institutionalization that guarantees people will decline and become more vulnerable over time, and the same types of risks they will face in the community are also present in systemic environments. The huge difference is that the community offers unlimited opportunities and possibilities for growth, and to deny that is to deny what it is to be human. If you are not intentionally including, you are probably accidentally excluding. Let me repeat that, because this is really the key to making changes as a person, group, organization or business and becoming more inclusive: if you are not intentionally including, you are probably accidentally excluding.

Before we wrap up, are there any concluding thoughts you'd like to share?

Yes, I would like to finish by reiterating that the Just Enough Support approach is beneficial to all persons – anyone who does not have enough support in their lives is vulnerable to many harms, including the mental and physical consequences of social exclusion. Similarly, overly supported individuals suffer from a lack of autonomy, which means that they develop unhealthy dependencies that prevent them from learning and growing.

We know that exclusion makes people less capable, and inclusion is where opportunities take flight. Given a choice between the two, we hope that anyone who is watching will join us in our efforts to champion the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of community life. People are always more than their labels, and communities that learn to value all of their citizens are always the best places to live, learn, grow, and love.

Well thank you very much Keenan. This discussion was very insightful.

NAME KEYS:

- Keenan Wellar, Co-leader & Director of Communications, LiveWorkPlay

- Suzanne Le, Executive Director, Multifaith Housing Initiative

- Phil Landreville and Laurie Hogan
  As a non-traditional communicator, Phil chose his close friend, Laurie, to help him share his story.

Heather McAdam and Norm Willet

Ali Wilcox and MaryAnn Wilcox

Tim Siebrasse and Anthony Stratton, LiveWorkPlay Community Connector

Jalynn Plaus and Valerie Doyon