

Disability Advocacy: A Letter From Your Editor

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Photo by [Marcus Aurelius](#)

Disability Advocacy Day is approaching, and it's in person! This year, the focus is on networking with the many agencies that can help people with disabilities make their voices heard. We hope to see you at the Utah State Capitol in Salt Lake City on Monday, January 23 from 3 to 6 pm. You can find directions on how to participate [on our website](#).

In the spirit of advocacy, I wanted to share some thoughts with all the advocates out there, wondering how to share their stories here, on our blog.

Q: What things do you want me to write or talk about?

A: We want to know about your experience, especially if it speaks to a larger disability issue. In this space, our guest bloggers have tackled topics like [overcoming the negative thoughts](#) that came from realizing the world views disability as "less than;" the importance of [internet accessibility](#); and [debunking the theory](#) that ADHD is "absent father syndrome." While these topics are as varied as the authors, they do have one thing in common: they affect a lot more people than just the writer.

Q: I am not your typical Utahn with a disability. Do you still want my story?

A: There is no typical Utahn and no typical disability or disability family. We love stories from all shapes, sizes, abilities, colors, creeds and orientations.

Q: I've been through some things. Do I have to tell your readers all about it?

A: Nope. Whatever you share with our blog readers is your choice, and you are in control of your story. That said, I do crave an honest and thoughtful approach. I have noticed that our guest contributors often start using distant, general terms when they touch on events that have a lot of significance to them. Sometimes the event was sad, sometimes it might have been moving or positive, but revealing those emotions puts them in a vulnerable place where other people might not understand. It takes courage to write about things the way they really are to you, and to reflect the way you really feel about them. I can't guarantee that everyone who reads your words will agree with you. But every beautiful, singing bit of prose I've ever seen is out there because somebody tried to put their thoughts and feelings into words.

Q: So the IDRPP blog is a good place for me to vent?

A: We want your honest experience, of course. But we don't want name-calling, or belittling of individuals or groups, or a rant. It may take some time and distance before you are able to discuss events in an objective way, and that's absolutely okay. Some of my favorite posts and presentations, both here and in other spaces, are frank discussions about the challenges people face, whether it is physical barriers or bad policy or misunderstanding or flat-out injustice. Then, just as matter-of-factly, the author offers whatever solutions they have found, even if they are imperfect or incomplete. I want to know what works for you.

Q: How do I get started?

Contact [JoLynne Lyon](#). Be prepared with a topic, some ideas about how to tell your story, and samples of your work as a writer or vlogger. Be ready to share how disability issues affect you and others. We'd love to hear from you!

Q: You asked me to write something, and I sent you some of my best work. Then you asked me to make some changes. Does that mean you didn't like it?

A: If I've asked you to write for us, it means I love your storytelling and have complete confidence in you as a communicator. I have been so impressed with the guest posts we have been privileged to run in this space. But sometimes I need to correct grammar or punctuation, or ask an author to clarify something. Maybe they have written about their disability assuming all their readers will understand the terms they used. Or they hint to a larger

part of the story that could use some more detail. The back-and-forth between writer and editor is common, and it results in stronger writing. I've experienced it a lot from my years on the other side of the editor's desk, and I've come to value an editor's contribution to make a better story.

Q: Will I be paid for my work?

A: Absolutely! At the Institute, we have a set rate for guest blogs. There is some paperwork involved, and we can't avoid that. But we are anxious to compensate you for your work and your expertise. If you have any trouble with the paperwork, please let us know. We want to help. We also ask that you verify that the payments you receive from us won't jeopardize any SSI payments you may be receiving. Here's a bit of clarification, though: We are eager to pay you for your guest blog, or a video you have produced for us. IDRPP does not pay for interviews where our team produces the video or writes the story. If you are an employee of an agency, we are happy to share our blog space with you to amplify a worthy message, but we do not pay for work that was done as part of your job for your agency.