

Questions about Diversion, Exclusion and Discrimination

We want to get the most concrete answers possible via various orientational questions. All of the questions or at least a part of them might be discussed. The frame of discussion may be selected flexibly.

I. Inclusion/Diversion, Exclusion, Discrimination

How do you understand above expressions?
What purposes/tasks can help to exclude or discriminate?
What advantages does inclusive community include?

Inclusion – an integration of all community members. It manifests itself by gathering people with different interests, social status, belief, character, opinions, values, life style, origins etc. Despite of mentioned differences they all do feel well while participating to reach a common aim.

Diversity – differences are caused by many reasons – individual capability of family to integrate socially, up-bringing, religion, social values, traditions, history, education, hobbies...

Discrimination – is higher form of exclusion, a concrete person is directly or indirectly blamed, disadvantaged, „put aside“, teased. Discriminated person is fully aware of his/her rejection

What helps to exclude and discriminate:

Way of communication, exclusion from participation in setting values, hiding away the facts by community. The dialogue is not open to person's presentation; community is closed for him/her

What helps to prevent exclusion and discrimination:

Feel of acceptance, a smile, a way of communication, sympathy and last but no less important an education and personal growth and humility

Advantages – acceptance, good feel, various people capabilities support, appreciation of their effort, listening, respect of variedness, chance to use own potential

In my opinion a community where inclusion is above all is ideal. It is a key to the most effective cooperation. An inclusive community is characterised by diversity and mutual completion by its members one to another. Such a community finds the best in everyone. Everyone can find own place. His/her tasks are adequate to age, respectful to belief, opinions, ideas... Once community works well and allows all members to function with no discrimination – it is a place to create exceptional, creative and fulfilling matters.

II. Meaning

Which people/groups come to my mind when I think about this topic?

Different characters, temperaments, people with diverse life stories, with various beliefs and life-styles, strangers, Roma people, Islamists...

In our Mother center reasonably large group of people work very well and manage to get the best of everyone and complement one another perfectly.

With which people/groups do I have an everyday contact?

Mothers with children, pregnant women, colleagues, family.

In our town various national minorities live but they do not visit our MC. It is demanding to establish contact with them (mostly with Roma people) due to their totally different values, life style and views of children needs.

What people/groups do I meet in our center?

Mothers with small children, mostly pregnant women

To which people/groups is it difficult for me/us to establish contact?

Too little open-minded mothers. Group of the mothers who do not want to spend a time with their children actively. The only reason for putting their children aside is to spend a time on its own. Gypsies and socially deprived groups.

With which people/groups do we want to have more contact at the Center?

With families with disabled children; with youngsters who do not have a place to spend their free time and with women who experienced domestic violence.

III. Personal experiences

On which occasion/at which event did I experience a successful inclusion?

Successful inclusion arises out of major events (MDMC, Mile for Mother, lectures, workshops) Or simply from admission Gypsy child from Professional family to group or from admission disabled child to any collective system. When we plan in our MC we always look for cooperative solutions and try very hard to come to best possible and most effective conclusion.

I have personally experienced inclusion in the family who I joined in after marrying my husband. Despite orthodox Catholicism I and my two children were fully and heartwarmingly welcomed. I have never ever felt judged for my first two illegitimate children though I know this topic is fundamental for them.

Who or what contributed to me and others feeling invited and welcome?

Warm admission, addressing, invitation for next meeting, refreshment, smile, interest in a person. And almost certainly quality food. Do not waste a time with useless matters.

How do I behave when I want everybody to feel welcome? What do I pay particular attention to?

Smile, well-being, peace, I always start conversation as quickly as possible, approach people. I strongly avoid gossiping, judging and have a big respect for being different.

On which occasion /at what event did I experience exclusion or discrimination?

Contrary to well done job and proving my personal skills I was not accepted and my achievements not recognized. Arrogance of the people from Western Europe who made us (East Europeans) to feel inferior. Children in my school who sneered at me; my employer.

On which occasion did I/we (unintentionally) exclude or discriminate against others in our Center?

Mainly when we do not pay enough attention to first comers and do not spend enough time with them. Otherwise I do not think we do intentionally exclude or contribute to discrimination at all. Or when mother feels non-acceptance of her child because it is different from the others or do not share our opinions or rules in MC. It might also happen to male visitors in our Center as a majority of visitors are women but we do keep it on our minds and are fully aware of this potential discomfort.

IV. Differences, Fears, Prejudices

How do I perceive various people / strangers and how do I react to them?

How do (my) children perceive various people / strangers and how do

How do I explain to (my) children the various external, cultural, religious, social differences?

Are they an issue in our family / in our Center?

How can we raise our children to be prejudice aware?

Which fears or prejudices do I detect

Which unconscious prejudices can influence me?

How do I deal with my fears and prejudices?

What helps me reduce my fears and prejudices?

We do speak a lot with our children and provide all possible answers to their questions. It is very advantageous if children and their parents meet strangers and disabled people regularly. Knowing such people in person helps to cultivate mutual relationships. Parents have a chance to point out that being different is natural. Meetings and discussions with people with various backgrounds from different countries helped myself mostly in that sense. So foreign visits for our children at home.

I react to foreigners with too much respect I reckon. This is probably because we experience a very few of them. Though children are much more open and do keep questioning the otherness. We do not maintain any discussions related to this topic as we do not have any such visitors.

I always try to react naturally but I do feel reserved and insecure due to language barrier.

Our village is quite „cruel“ in this sense and might be a good practice for anyone relevant. Locals do like sorting out according pigeon-holes, do enjoy gossiping and judgement based on impression. I am convinced that it is essential to explain kids that knowing someone in person comes before expressing any views about him/her.

V. Diversity, Identity and inclusion

How do we perceive the diversity in our community?

How can we preserve and protect the various identities in a community?

Is there a minimum of basic agreement / understanding? Which one?
How much diversity does our community need and can deal with?

We do not do any segregation and are open to all potential visitors. Although there are no ethnical groups. Generally in Slovakia the only ethnical group are Roma people who do become major problem. However they do not live in our region so I am unable to discuss it in detail. We do try to maintain our identity and image by preventing gossiping and useless judgements and strongly respect everyone's opinions. Especially when people do too much comparings.

VI. Social and political parameters

How do I experience inclusion, exclusion and discrimination in my city/in my country?
Am I content with the legal parameters?
What would I like to change?
Are the needs of the children and the adults in this regard equally treated?
What do I expect from institutions and administrations?
What should my child be able to experience?

I consider inclusion for being the most vital part of up-bringing in family and so do self-education.

We do accept diversity in our MC very well, we have respect for each other and we have managed to find „the golden mean“. We do appreciate each other unique qualities, pay mutual respect and do not undermine anyone's natural authority. I am convinced that our community would currently manage even more diversity due to our solid and stabilised foundation.

We intensively and succesfully cooperate with non-profit organization Malicek which gathers people of small stature.

VII. Concrete Measures

How can I / our Center contribute to inclusion and prevent exclusion and discrimination?
Which strategies, processes, methods and formats do Mothers' Centers already practice?

We have never intentionally tried to set up any methods, neither have discussed this problem. We completed the course about work with families having disabled children. We also take an full advantage of being a member of Slovak Union of Mother Centers which regularly organizes various courses, workshops and educational meetings. We do our best in openness and understand the others. We appreciate diversity and never judge and take care of MC values.

Every visitor feels safe in our MC community – they all can discuss, make a contribution, attend any course or class regardless their age, social skills, education or experiences. However we always clearly present MC unavoidable rules and limits.

We carefully plan various meetings, courses and classes where others have a chance to present their traditions, values and habits which are relevant to their culture.

Due to very specific needs and requirements of disabled children and their parents we specifically established a time for them in MC opening hours. They can extensively enjoy time on their own when they may share their problems and exchange latest news in this specific field.

