

The World Without Walls

What do walls mean to you? To us sound people, walls mostly block our vision. However, to the people who are blind, walls mean nothing as all they can see throughout their entire lives is only endless murkiness. Nothing, not even the thickest wall in the world can stop them from seeing farther and more. To the blind, their world is without walls.

To be completely honest, I couldn't imagine myself putting on a blindfold for a lifetime. I cannot help but wonder – how could it be possible for the blind to cook, to walk, to be able to do daily chores like you and me? Out of curiosity, when I saw the poster of the AdventureShip where I would have the chance to take up physical challenges with blind participants, I signed up for it on the spot. On hindsight, that decision created a memorable page in my life.

That was a day with cool breeze and grey clouds. I was assigned a partner named Yanny who was a 14-year-old girl suffering from complete blindness. When the Captain started giving out orders ranging from standing in a single file to hanging out water bottles along the walls of the ship, I thought I had to escort my partner to the queue. To my surprise, she managed to queue up and was even able to balance herself amid the heeling and listing of the ship. When it came to putting on the lifejackets, my partner needed only my verbal guidance. Even though sometimes she needed assistance that required eye-hand coordination, like buttoning up the jacket or tightening the belts around her waist, after I held her hands and demonstrated it once, she finished the remaining parts on her own.

After that, the most exciting yet horrifying part of the whole programme came: diving into the sea and swimming with my partner from the stern to the bow of the ship. Without hesitation, Yanny held my hand and walked towards the side of the ship. 'Splash splash...' I shivered when I dove into the sea, and after both of us had gathered, we started to swim, with my partner grabbing the buoy in front of me, and me pushing and swimming behind her. While I was busy with keeping track of the direction, her lack of vision often drew her into the obstacles set by our tutors. I could feel that her limbs were trembling because of the freezing water. However, there was no sign of giving up from her. Her focus was fixed on the flag located in the bow. Indeed, I was so proud of her when we arrived at the bow successfully. Not only was I in awe of her bravery, her perseverance also inspired me to hold onto my goals.

Such experience was not only fruitful to the blind, we also benefitted from it immensely. Yet, we could merely have such opportunity to work with the handicapped when the society offers this rare chance for us. In order to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities, it is best to start a campaign by cooperating with other companies and arranging an array of approaches in which the public can work with the disabled continuously. For example, the government should promote the culture of including the handicapped into the workforce. With sufficient training, they can work as a cashier in a restaurant, perhaps initially with an employee standing aside to assist them. To help students gain knowledge and experience to interact with the disabled, more experiential learning opportunities could be offered to students such as a Community Day. Under such circumstances, the disabled will be able to meet more people and be given more chances to prove that not only people without disabilities can reach their potential and make contribution to the society. On the other hand, the public can understand more about them and change their perspective towards these equally deserving members of the society.

It is essential for the society to acknowledge that people with disabilities are no different from us aside from their respective limitations. They can accomplish great things with adequate practice and determination. It all depends on whether we are willing to accept them with no prejudice, discrimination or unfair treatment. Even when they are challenged, they will feel supported if we are willing to offer a hand to them, or maybe simply by giving a smile or nod of encouragement. These small deeds will not only brighten up their day, but also spread a positive message of harmony and inclusion in the society. With our concerted efforts, I believe that one day we can create a bigger and better world without walls.