

An aerial photograph of a hurricane's eye, showing a clear, calm center surrounded by swirling, dark blue and white clouds. The eye is a bright, circular area of calm, contrasting sharply with the surrounding storm. The overall scene is a powerful natural phenomenon captured from a high altitude.

In the eye of the hurricane the sky is blue and birds can fly there without suffering harm. The eye of the hurricane is in the very middle of destructive power, and that power is always near, surrounding that blue beauty and threatening to invade it...

In a world of moral hurricanes some people can and do carve out rather large ethical spaces. In a natural world and a social world swirling in cruelty and love, we can make room. We who are not pure ethical beings can push away the choking circle of brute force that is around and within us. We may not be able to push it far away, but when we have made as much room as we can, we may know a blue peace that the storm does not know.

-Philip Halle

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Change takes place in an atmosphere of turbulence. Those of us who want to keep building communities that work better for everybody because they benefit from the gifts of people with developmental disabilities have to intentionally claim and create blue space: a social field in which we can turn our attention and creativity to improving our living answers to the moral questions* whose practical answers determine how people with developmental disabilities show up in our communities.

The stakes are high. The quality of life for people with developmental disabilities, their families and their communities is on the line. Possibilities for a better life grow rapidly as new forms of assistance emerge. So does awareness of people's vulnerability and the costs of missed opportunities for development and community participation.

The politics of austerity results in large scale, top down, untested attempts to manage growing shortfalls of public investment in supports to people with disabilities with abstract metrics and tightly controlled markets.

Demands grow to comply with increasingly complex requirements for compliance with regulations and expenditure controls. The ratio of required paperwork to creative relationship grows larger by the year.

Our whole communities are affected by escalating uncertainty driven by globalization and persistent economic inequality, disagreements about climate change, insecurity, a polarized political process and growing distrust of fellow citizens and government.

Fortunately, desire to join in co-creating person-centered supports is strong. And allies among fellow citizens who want to build more just and inclusive communities can be found in every neighborhood. Mobilizing and joining these forces creates the blue space necessary for development.

—John O'Brien