

IT'S NOT
EASY TO
BE...
ME



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Music: Five for Fighting "Superman"

HARD THINGS

Two of the hardest things for
people with disabilities to do are:

1. talk about their disability
2. identify their strengths

STUDENTS ARE IMPORTANT

Some of our best information for helping students with disabilities comes from self-advocates.

IT'S NOT EASY

There **is** nothing easy about being a self-advocate and talking about your disability.

QUOTES ABOUT IEPs

The following quotes came from students with disabilities across the state of Oklahoma as they were learning about IEPs and talking about their strengths and challenges.

STUDENTS KNOW EARLY

“I’ve known since I was in third grade that something was wrong with me. I wish someone had explained LD to me then.”

ONLY ME

“I hate having a disability. No one in my family has one. They tell me that everyone has disabilities. But how come I get an SSI check? No one else in my family gets one -- only me.”

GOOD AT SOMETHING...

“You want me to tell you something I am good at? I am good at flunking. I am good at messing up. How's that?”

WHY HAVE AN IEP?

“What am I good at? Nothing. Isn’t that why I have an IEP?”

THE OTHER SIDE

“There’s nothing easy about having an IEP. Going over to the other side without being seen – that’s hard. I don’t want people to know I have an IEP.”

IEP MEETINGS?

“I thought IEP meetings were places where my dad and my teachers got together and talked bad about me.”

MEETING TIMES?

“We always met before or after school, and I sneaked in the back door of the counselor’s office so no one would see me going in there.”

WHEN TO START?

“When should students start going to IEPs? Like I told you, third grade. If it’s not too late. Maybe sooner. Maybe second grade for some students.”

DO OVER

“If I had it to do over again, I would have gone to my IEP meetings in the third grade.”

START SMALL

“Students shouldn’t go to a whole meeting all at once! Start off in elementary school, with just finding out who is there and what the meeting is for. Just stay for that part.”

WHAT ABOUT A DREAM?

“I dream a lot about just getting done with school.”

DO YOU HAVE A VISION?

“Oh, I don’t know about a vision. My Mom wants me to get on with the check, you know, that SSI one. Then I don’t have to worry about the future.”

BEST ADVICE

“My best advice for becoming a self-advocate? It is so hard to talk about your disability. I still get embarrassed. But you get a little more used to it. Friends are the hardest. If you can tell your friends, you can tell anybody.”

GET OVER IT

“Just get over it and do it. My special ed. teacher made me talk to all my other teachers last year. I thought I would die. But this year I just did it and got it over with. And it was a little easier this time.”

“WORTH IT”

“If I can help someone else out to understand more about my disability, and others, then its worth it. But I didn’t always think that way. It’s a lot harder to think that everyone owes you. They don’t.”

YOU OWE YOURSELF

“You owe it to yourself to speak up. It’s not easy to do that. Did anyone tell you having a disability is easy? Tell me who, and I will tell them it is not easy.”