

ATTAINMENT'S

# Whose Future Is It?

student reader

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# Getting Started

**Outline:** At your IEP meetings you plan for your future.

It is your meeting and you are in charge. You help your teachers and others make decisions about your education.

You start the Transition Planning Process in high school. Transition meetings are a bridge from school to the adult world of living and working on your own. You are in charge of your future.

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**Goal:** You will learn about planning meetings and help make decisions about your school program.

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**D**o you agree with this sentence? “Before I get more involved in my transition planning meeting, I should know what it is.”

Every year there are planning meetings where people make decisions about your school program. Have you ever been to one?

If not, maybe it’s time for you to go. Or, if you have been to one, think back on what happened there.



Many students your age have said they felt bad about the meetings they went to. They felt like other people talked about them but not to them.

They said a lot of the talk was about things they didn't do well. Like math or English. They said they were bored, embarrassed, and glad when it was over. Sound familiar?



It doesn't have to be that way. First, you have to learn what these meetings are about so you can charge, because they are your meetings about your future.

If you learn what your meetings are called, such as Transition Planning Meeting or Individualized Education Program, IEP, you will better understand what your meeting is about.

So what do the letters I, E, and P in IEP mean? They stand for **Individualized Education Program**. Let's look at each word.

**Individualized** — for one person, you

**Education** — what you learn at school      =      **IEP**

**Program** — what you do

**A**n IEP meeting team makes decisions about your education, and you are a part of this team. You are the most important part of the team because the meeting is about you.



You have probably heard about IEP meetings. They are held several times a year beginning in elementary school.

But when you turn age 16, you will also have transition planning meetings. Sometimes transition planning is part of your IEP meetings.

This book uses the word **transition** often. What does that mean? Think about a bridge that takes you from one side of a river to the other. The transition planning process is a bridge that takes you to your future. That means it prepares you for life after you graduate from school.



**Transition skills** are things you need to know to get from one point in your life to another, like walking across that bridge from school to the adult world. Transition planning helps build that bridge.

**Transition planning** means making decisions about what you need to learn to be successful as an adult. You'll learn more about transition plans and goals as you go through this book.

It would be helpful for you to have a copy of the **transition planning form** that your school district uses, but your teacher may not have it on hand. That's okay.

Ask to see it when possible. Or, volunteer to get it yourself. This isn't a top secret government document. You have every right to see it.

If they can't find one, there is a transition planning form in the Whose Future Instructor's Guide that your teacher can get for you. Got the form in hand? Take a look at it so you get a feeling for what this form is about.

## **FUN FACT:**

Starting at age 16, transition planning must begin. Did you know that it says in IDEA that at age 16, your goals must be based on your plans for your adult life? It says your transition services must be "based on your needs, taking into account your preferences and interests." It's the law. They have to do it.

**A**s you go through this book, you will work on getting ready for your transition planning meeting. But first, you should know some things about these meetings. They are held at least once a year. There are many reasons to hold IEP meetings:

1. To see if you can get services you need. You might have to take some tests to decide what services might help.
2. To make plans for your adult life. That's why you're in school.
3. To talk about how you did in school during the school year and set new goals for next year.
4. To change your class schedule if your school program does not meet your needs, or if your goals change.
5. To talk about graduation or make changes in your school program if you don't need special services anymore.

A number of subjects may have been discussed at your last planning meeting. Look at those listed below and see if any were discussed.

1. To see if you can get services you need to learn better.
2. To make plans for your adult life.
3. To talk about how you did in school during the year and set new goals for the next school year.

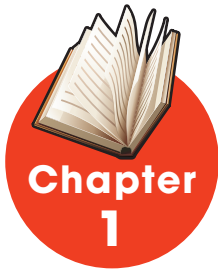


4. To change your class schedule.
5. To talk about graduation or make changes in your school program if you don't need special services anymore.

At the end of each session before the next one begins, there are a few things you have to have done. Don't worry, we're not talking major homework here.

Okay. So that's it for now. See you next chapter.

**Go to Your  
Workbook**



## Chapter 2 Who Attends Your IEP?

**Outline:** It is important for you to have certain people at your IEP meetings. First of all, **YOU** should be there. Your special education teacher and other teachers will be there. So will related service people and your parents. Friends, siblings, and your principal can come too. They are part of your education and have ideas that will help you plan your future.

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**Goal:** You will choose people who you think should be at your transition planning meeting.

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**W**ho was at your last planning meeting, or IEP? Were you there? Were your parents, too? Which of your teachers were there? Many adults may come to your IEP because you are working with them on your goals for your future. With their help, you will make your future plans. This is a time to discuss your needs and your future.

You need to find out who has attended these meetings. Later on you can think about whom to invite.

So . . . who has been showing up at your meetings?

You don't really know? Well, no problem. Here is how you can find out. The people who come to your IEP meetings almost always sign a form. You can tell who was there by looking at that form.

So at the end of this chapter, ask your teacher to help you get a copy of your most recent IEP or transition file.

Here's who should be at these meetings?

1. **Teachers** almost always have to be there. They do a lot of work getting ready for the

meetings. They would like you to do more of the work, but that's another topic.

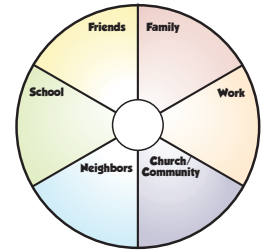
2. According to the law, someone from the school district, other than the teacher, has to be there, too. That might include your **Principal**, **Vice-Principal**, a **Diagnostician** (those folks who gave you those tests), or maybe someone from the **Special Education Department**.
3. **Related services people** do things that help you do better at school. Like **Speech Therapists**, who work with your talking skills. **Physical Therapists** help you exercise. **Occupational Therapists** help with adapted technology, or help you learn job skills. **Adapted Physical Education** staff help you exercise in the gym or at the rec center.

There are a lot of related services people. You may already know some if you are working with them.

Okay. To be honest with you, that's most of the people you can count on being at these meetings. Sometimes, more are there, but not usually. There is only one more group or person who probably was at your last meeting. Your mom or dad, or both.



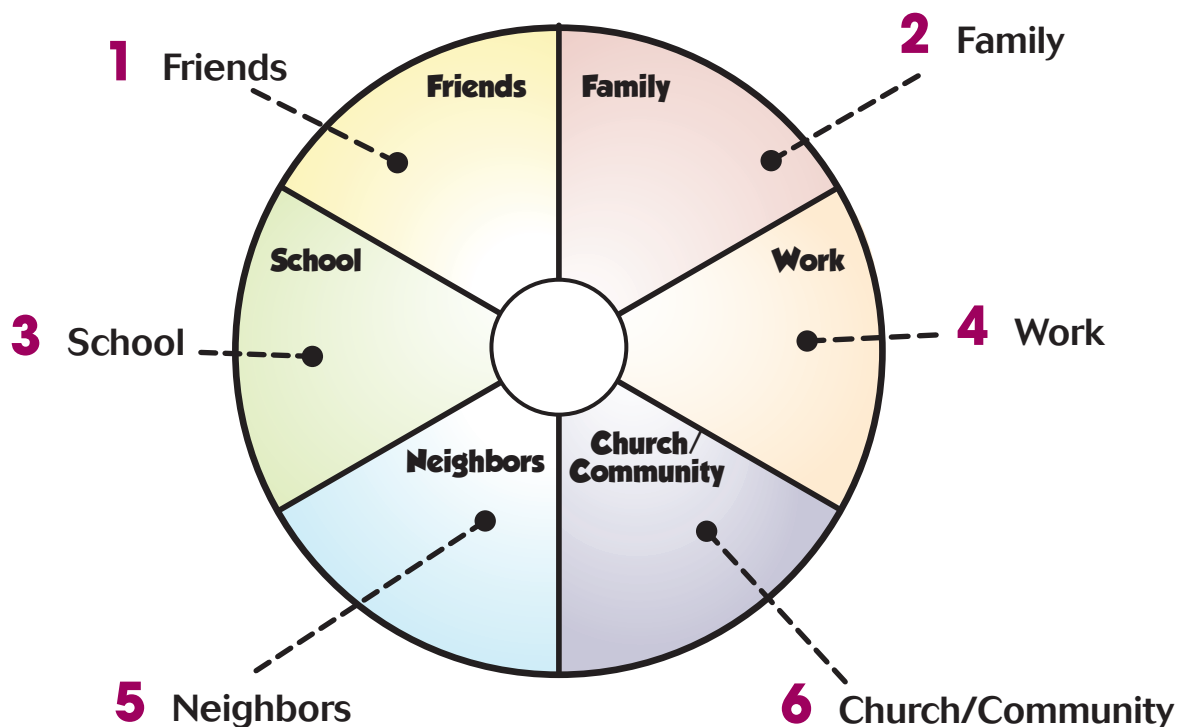
**H**ere's what you can do to help you get ready for your next meeting.



Look at the circle that looks like this. It is called a **pie chart** because it is cut into different pieces. Like a pie.

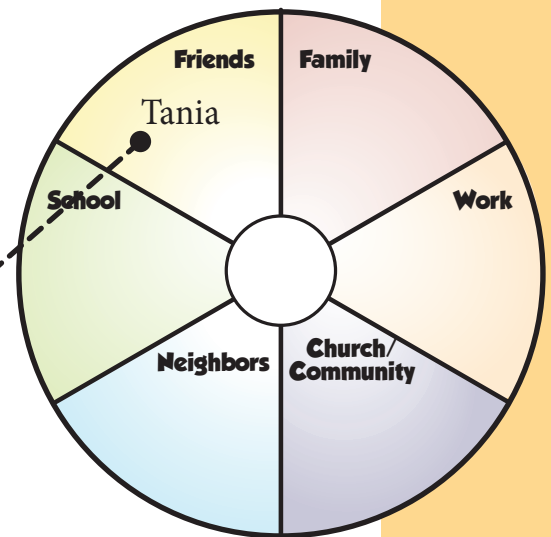
Your name goes into the center of the pie, because it is your meeting. Then your parents and other family members and friends go into the other pie slices. Next, your special and general education teachers and related services. Finally, your psychologist. Principal. Vocational rehabilitation counselor. Your advocate. Job coach. Neighbors.

Now, think of people you know. There are six pie pieces in the circle. They are for:



**T**hink about the name of a person you know and like for each of the six pie pieces.

Start with **friends**. Who is your best friend? How about other friends? Who might you like to have as part of your planning team?



It is a good idea to have friends come to your IEP meeting. They know you as well as anyone. It is easy to talk to friends. They know what you are trying to say. But only invite them if you want them there. You have to make that decision.

Huh? What's a decision? Hang on! We will talk about that later.

Next, go to **family**. Who do you feel most close to in your family? Your mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin?

Go to the **school** pie piece. Who do you feel close to at school? Is there someone in your homeroom you would like to be part of your planning? Is it someone your age, a teacher, or another adult?

Do you have a **neighbor** who you talk to and trust?

In the pie piece for **church/community**, think about people you like and trust. Think about people at work, church, or any place you spend time.

Do not invite friends if you do not want to. The same thing is true for a brother or a sister, or any other family member.

Here is another thing to consider. If you are 16 or older, you are going to transition meetings. Or, at least your IEP meetings are partly about your transition plans. Make sure those who will help you be independent as an adult come to those meetings. That is why **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Job Coaches** or your **boss** from work should be there too.

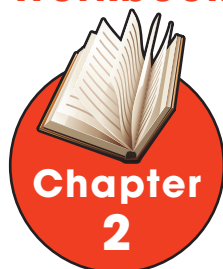
Just so you know, a vocational rehabilitation counselor might help you find a job. A job coach can help you learn the things you need to do on the job once you start. If you can think of anyone else who can help you live independently, invite them too.

Well, that's probably enough for this lesson.

OK. So that's it for now.

Later.

**Go to Your  
Workbook**



Chapter **3**

# Your Preferences and Interests

**Outline:** What do you want to do when you graduate?

What do you like to do? Some jobs may sound interesting and others, not so much. Think about what kind of job you would like to do and places you would like to live. Then consider your skills, and what you think you would be good at. Find a job that interests you.

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**Goal:** You will identify your transition needs based on your preferences and interests.

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**W**elcome back. We have a question for you.

In Chapter 1 you read this: “IDEA says your transition goals must be based on your needs, taking into account your preferences and interests.”

What does that mean? Hint: ask yourself what your future plans are. Ask yourself what you want to do after high school. Then ask yourself why you want to do that.

You are correct. Your future plans will depend on your needs and what your preferences and interests are. Like what kind of job you would be good at. Where you want to live. And how you want to live.

For example, do you really like to go to the movies? If so, then movies are an interest of yours. You might want to find a place to live near a cinema you can walk to.

See if you agree with this: “Before I lead my transition planning meeting, I should know my transition preferences and interests.”

Agree? We thought so.

IDEA was written to make sure your transition goals are based on what you want to do as an adult. That is why it is important to be at these meetings. Nobody knows better than you what you want to do with your future.

**A**t your meeting, be clear about what your interests and preferences are. Then you can help others help you. To be ready, think ahead about what your interests and preferences are before the meeting starts.

Here's our question for you. Will you spend some time thinking about your interests and preferences? It's an important question because your future is important.

Your interests and preferences will be different from those of others. That is because every person is unique. That is why they are **your** interests and preferences. That does not make your interests better or worse than those of other people. Just different. Unique.

Unique means individual. That's why they have **individual** education plans, instead of **group** plans! Your transition IEP should be different from other students' IEPs. That is because it is based on your unique needs, and your unique preferences and interests.

So that is the first step. Knowing that you bring unique needs, preferences, and interests to the meeting. The next big step is letting others at the meeting know about your needs. That is another reason you have to tell people what you need, and what your interests are.





**L**et's back up a minute and think about your unique qualities. What makes you who you are as an individual.

Think about these things. What are you afraid of? Do you want to get married someday? If you were to invite six people to dinner, who would you invite?

Now, think about this: Would anyone else answer exactly the same as you did? Oh sure, some of your friends might invite the same people. Some might want to get married. Some would be afraid of the same things. But you are the only person who will answer exactly the way you did on all the questions.

So . . . it's time to put the "individual" back in IEP! Let's start by looking at the things you need for a successful transition from school to adulthood.

But first, why think about this now? That's easy to answer.

Someday soon you are going to be out of school. So you must be ready when that day comes.

Now, you might want to live with your parents the rest of your life. Telling you what to do and what you can't do. Giving you an allowance that is not enough for your needs. And boring. BOOORRRRING.

**S**o you need to be ready to be independent and excited about what you're doing. The next few years of your school program are supposed to get you ready for that day. Let's think through this a little more.

Do you know what year you will graduate? If not, go ask your teacher. But for now, let's assume that your last day of school is the end of this school year.

Now, on June 1 of this year, where do you want to live?

Be specific. In a house or an apartment, or somewhere else?

In a city? What city? In what part of the city? Do you want to live alone, or with someone else?

Think about it and write down your answer on scratch paper.

What do you want to be doing during the day? Working? Where? Doing what? Going to school? Where? Learning to do what?

How do you want to spend your leisure time?  
Hint...those are things you want to do on your own time.

## **FUN FACT:**

Did you know that according to IDEA, students who need extra services to do better in school might be eligible for school services past the age of 18? It changes from state to state and not all students qualify, but you may have the chance to stay in school longer. Good news or bad news? Depends how you use that time.



**T**here are many things to think about before you graduate.

But what do you have to know to make them happen? That's what you have to figure out so that on June 1 of that year, you can begin to do these things. Instead of sitting at home. Bored. With no money. And nothing to do.

What do you need to do to be ready for your life after school?

You will need lots of things . . . right? Things like money. You have to have money to pay for a place to live. You might want to get a roommate or live in a small apartment. You will need to have money after you graduate. There are many ways to get money, but the most common way to get it is to earn it. To work for it.

Which takes you to your second area, what to do with yourself during the day. You probably will need to work. And want to work. Being at home all day with nothing to do is boring. And you won't make any money to do things you want to do. What did you write down about working? Do the jobs you listed pay enough money to live independently? Are there enough jobs like that in the real world? Do you have the abilities to do the job? What do you have to learn to do the job? How will you learn that?

**T**hese are important questions. This is why you need other people to help you make good decisions about your future. Seriously . . . there are a lot of questions to ask here. Figuring out what your transition needs are is hard. You need to be independent by the time you leave school. To do so you will need a lot of help. You will need a lot of transition services . . . everyone does!

You won't spend a lot of time right now talking about transition needs. That will happen when you get into the goals section of *Whose Future Is It?* For now, it's enough to know that your transition needs should be based on your interests and preferences.

So let's talk a little more about interests and preferences. Your transition services are based on them. But what do they mean, really?

First . . . it doesn't mean that everything in the world that you are interested in or you prefer will become a transition need.

### **FUN FACT:**

**IDEA says that transition services are activities that help students move from school to activities of adult life. Adult life includes college or vocational education, job training and work, living independently and participating in community activities. Such activities as movies, sports, and shopping.**



**Y**ou might prefer Fudge Brownie ice cream from Baskin-Robbins®. That doesn't mean you need to write a transition goal about ice cream. But, say you have been to Baskin-Robbins® many times, and watched how things work there. And what if that made you think you might want to be a manager at a Baskin-Robbins®? Learning what you need to know to work there would be a good transition activity.

It is pretty simple. Your transition services need to work on your transition needs, based on your interests and preferences. That means simply what you want to do as an adult.

But how do you decide what your interests and preferences are? Good question. Start by thinking about them.

First, think about what you do well. What you do best. Not what you like to do best, but what you DO best. Your abilities. They might be school skills like math, science, or reading. They might be things you learned at home like gardening, fixing a car, or playing the piano. They might be hard to learn, like working on computers. Or easy to do but take lots of practice to do well, like shooting a basketball.

You have to be realistic when considering your best skills. Some skills are hard to turn into jobs. For example, some students love to draw cartoons. You might be very good at that, but it is hard to find jobs in that field. Still, you might consider having a

transition goal that looks for drawing jobs. And that's okay.

But be aware that a vocational rehabilitation counselor might tell you that there are only a few jobs for cartoonists. And that those who get them are really good at it. Unless you are really good, too, it may be hard to find a job.

That does not mean you should give up. You have options. You could work hard to get good enough to get one of those jobs. Your guidance counselor will say you have to go to a top art school to improve your skills. That would take at least four years to finish, and you might have to beat out 100 other pretty good artists just to get into art school. Even then, there are not that many jobs for artists.

But it still depends on how badly you want it. And if you are willing to work three times harder than everyone else to do well. Are you willing to take other jobs you don't like to pay the bills while you struggle through art school? And then struggle to find a job?

It is a hard decision. Becoming an adult requires many hard decisions. But even if you don't go to art school, there are other jobs that use drawing skills. Ask your counselor about that. Or, you could decide to draw as a hobby. Maybe a transition goal would be to use the city recreation center to enroll in art classes. You could get to be a better artist, have fun, and meet others who are artists.





**A**nother example of a skill is computer work. Many students like working on the computer and are good at it. You could consider that too. It might be more realistic.

Talk to vocational rehabilitation counselors to see what they think about computer work. Are you good at it? Do you like to do it? Is it realistic for finding a job? A counselor will say there are lots of jobs working on computers. You can do that right after high school if you learn some basic office skills. Or, you could go to a community college and learn more computer skills, and get an even better job.

Another option is going to a vocational training school and learning how to fix computer problems. There is great demand for computer technicians. But you have to already know the skills. Or be willing to learn the skills.

On the other hand, you may decide to keep your hobby interest in computers and use them just for fun. Nothing wrong with fun, and hobbies are a good thing. You might start talking online with others who like computers.

You see how this goes? You look at what you're good at and what you like. Then you explore your options. Find out what is out there for working, living, and playing as an adult. See how well things match.



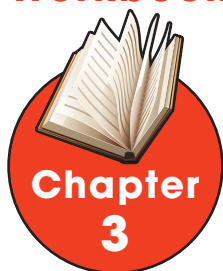
**T**hat's one of the good things that transition planning does—it makes you think about what's out there in the real world.

Sure, you can still plan on being a rock musician or movie star. If you are willing to work for little or no money at jobs that are not nearly as much fun as you think. At best, you will earn enough to scrape by and barely pay the rent. If you are really lucky, you can spend all your time and money going to auditions for commercials or play late night gigs at dead-end nightclubs. And maybe you'll get that break, and then, if you have the talent, you might make a name for yourself.

In the long run, it is your choice. Your option. Your future. But being realistic from the beginning will help you make a good choice.

Okay. So that's it for now.  
Later.

**Go to Your  
Workbook**



# Chapter 4 Disability and You

**Outline:** You have a disability. It does not mean you do not have abilities. You have skills. You can do many things. Some people may not think so. Don't let that bother you. You cannot control what other people think of you. You can control your own future. But you might need some support services. That's okay. Find out what services you need and which ones you can get.

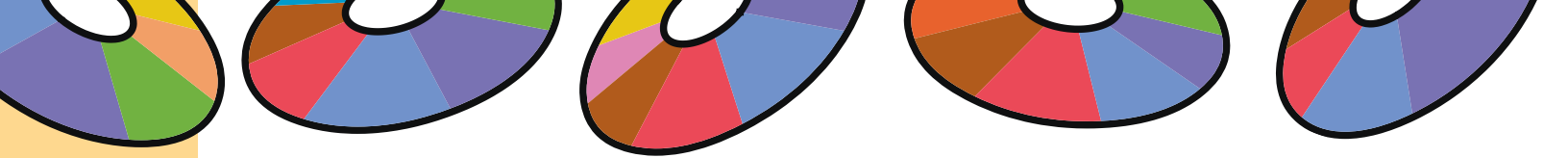
What does the word **disability** mean? What does a person with a disability look like? Does a person with disabilities have rights? Can a person with a disability work? Think about these issues and what they mean to you. Then find the support you need to make the best life you can for yourself.

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**Goal:** You will identify unique learning needs related to your disability.

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**Y**ou have learned you are unique and that you must make the most of your unique abilities and interests.

You will continue to learn about your unique learning needs. And you will learn about the supports related to your disability.

First, let's look at the word disability.

As you know, that word makes some people uncomfortable. It may make you uncomfortable. There is only one unique you, and part of being you is knowing how you learn best and what you do best.

Saying “unique learning needs” points out the fact that every person with a disability has strengths and areas of need.

If you have educational planning meetings, like transition IEPs, you are receiving special education services to assist you in learning more.

Those are the support services you get to help you learn. “Support” means you get help so you can do your best.

**B**ut let's go back to the word disability for a moment. The reason you receive special education services is because you have a disability that makes learning more difficult for you. It also means that you need different ways of teaching to do your best. Those ways of teaching are called supports.

That is nothing to be embarrassed about. The truth is, most of the students at your school would like to get services that would help them learn better.

If you have a learning disability, you still want to be successful, make money, and have a good life. The only way to do that is to get a good education. You are smart. When someone is offering you a service that helps you get a good job, you're going to take advantage of it.

Earlier we talked about who should be at your education planning meetings and the people who provide the services you use. Like your teacher. And you learned about transition services. Services that help you learn the things you need to be an independent adult.

### **FUN FACT:**

In 1975 the United States Congress found that the learning needs of students with disabilities were not being met. Congress passed a law to get students the support they needed. IDEA '04 says that all students should be able to access a high-quality curriculum designed to meet their unique needs, with supports as needed.

**Y**ou also learned about related services, like speech or physical therapy and vocational education. There are other services, like school health, recreation, counseling, and testing. Making sure you have transportation to get to school is a service. And these things are decided at your yearly planning meeting. See why you need to be there?

To get these services, you have to qualify. To do so you have to take tests. Those tests help show your unique learning needs.

You may have learned from your folks or a teacher that you had a disability. It is helpful for you to look at how your disability affects how you learn.

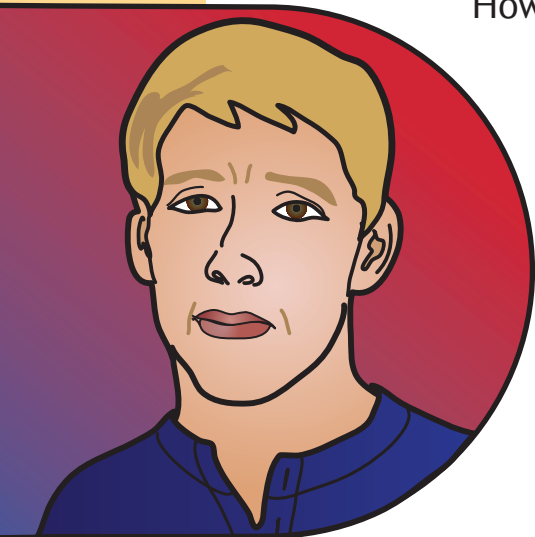
Think about these questions. Do you have a hard time learning?

How about reading or doing math? How do you feel about that?

Are you **frustrated? angry? embarrassed?**

Does it feel like the harder you try, the worse it gets? Do you have a hard time expressing yourself? Telling someone else what you are thinking or want to do?

A lot of young people who have a disability say these things. Some don't think they have a disability. It's hard for them



to think about it because they think it means they are not smart or that they are weird or different from their friends. You don't think that, do you? You're not, you know!

Having a disability doesn't mean those things at all. Think about what disability means and what it means to you. It means different things to different people.

Start by looking at what others think about disabilities. Do you know what a stereotype is? It's what people think about other people they don't know or understand.

There are stereotypes about people and groups of people. You have some stereotypes of your own.

You don't think so? Answer this question:

A boy went to the dentist to get a cavity filled. The boy was the dentist's son, but the dentist was not the boy's father. How was this possible?

The dentist is the boy's mother! Why is that a stereotype?

Because one stereotype about dentists is that they are all men. Yet there are many jobs that women do very well that others think only men can do, like surgeon, pilot, athlete, or coach.



In this case, you see how a stereotype is a bad thing. If others believe only men can be dentists, that could discourage young women from becoming dentists.

There are lots of stereotypes. Most stereotypes are not only untrue, they are unfair, like all blondes are dumb. Not true and not fair. There are lots of smart blonde women and men. Stereotypes about people limit them. Instead, we are all unique people with individual interests and abilities.

Now, you know there are stereotypes about people with disabilities. Even people with disabilities have stereotypes about people with other kinds of disabilities.

Stereotypes can come from your own experiences if you know someone with a different kind of a disability from yours. You look at that person and how they deal with things, and you say to yourself, "All people with that disability must be like that."

You can also get stereotypes from watching a movie or TV. You might see a movie about an American of color who is a hero or a villain and think that all people of color are like that. Note also that not all stereotypes are bad. Like the hero we just talked about. Good or bad, stereotypes are not accurate or true.





**W**e have the right to our own opinions, but we want our opinions to be based on what is true. Let's look at what the law says about disability.

## **1** What is a disability?

In the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) a person with a disability is someone who has a physical or mental impairment. Impairment means a limit. The ADA says that a person with a disability is someone who has a hard time caring for one or more needs, like seeing, speaking, learning, or walking.

A disability is only one part of a person. People like to be known for who they are, not what they have. People with disabilities want to be seen as people first. Most people with disabilities do not like to be called by the label for their disability.

## **2** What does disability mean to you?

People use different words to talk about people with disabilities. Many of them are mean and unfair and create negative stereotypes, like "retarded" or "gimp."

Some call people with disabilities "handicapped," like the parking space. You're not a parking space, right?

Saying that a disability is a handicap means that you can't do things because of your disability.

Many people with disabilities don't like the word handicap. They think of handicapped people as helpless. Handicap comes from the phrase "hand in cap," meaning a person who was begging. You're not a helpless beggar, right?

Another word that is sometimes used to talk about people with disabilities is "challenged." While it is probably true that a person with a disability has challenges each day, many people with disabilities don't like to be called challenged. They say it means they have a problem they have to change.

For example, a person using an electric wheelchair cannot get over a curb. The chair is too big and heavy. You could say that person is physically challenged, but the real challenge is the curb. Add a curb cut or a ramp, and the challenge is gone.

The word disability may be uncomfortable to you. You may think of it as negative. You need to be comfortable with yourself. All people have some type of limitation. Having a disability just means your limitation may be different than for others. People with disabilities should be treated as other people without a disability.

### **3 What does a person with a disability look like?**

Most people with a disability look like people without disabilities. Sometimes people with a disability may not have an arm or leg, or use a support like a wheelchair, walker, or hearing aid.

These supports are called adaptive devices. They are a clue that a person has a disability. But adaptive devices help that person do activities that their disability makes difficult. So a person with a disability may use a wheelchair to get around. A person who doesn't hear everything uses a hearing aid to make the sounds louder so they can hear them.

Some people with disabilities don't need adaptive devices, so their disabilities are not seen. Disabilities that are not seen are called hidden disabilities. Some learning disabilities are like that. You can't see the disability.

Did you know that Tom Cruise, the actor, has a learning disability? He doesn't look like a person with a disability, does he?

A person with a disability looks like herself or himself. Not like anyone else. Unique. All people are unique. Even identical twins have things that make them unique.

## **4 What happens to people when they have a disability?**

One stereotype of people with disabilities is that they shouldn't be seen in public. Because of stereotypes, some people with disabilities have not been given the same chances as other people. They sometimes don't get a chance to go to school with neighborhood friends. In some cases, they may not live at home.

The truth is people with disabilities can do the same things everyone else can, if given the chance and support. Some people with disabilities will succeed. Others won't. Some people without disabilities succeed and others don't. Not much difference.

People with disabilities should be able to choose where they want to live, work, learn, and play, and get the supports to do it.

## **5 What is your first thought when you see someone with a white cane?**

People with blindness may use a white cane to move about on their own. The white cane helps them to be independent. It is a support for the person who cannot see.

## **6 What is your first thought when you see someone with a hearing aid?**

A hearing aid helps some people with hearing loss or deafness. It depends on the kind of hearing loss they have. Some people with hearing loss or deafness do not use hearing aids.

## **7 What is your first thought when you are told that a person has an intellectual disability?**

People with an intellectual disability need more time or support to learn things. People with an intellectual disability are people first and can live in their own homes, drive cars, work at real jobs, and have their own families.

## **8 What do you think when a person has a learning disability?**

People with learning disabilities need more time or support to learn certain things, like reading or math. Some very smart people in history had learning disabilities. People with learning disabilities may use supports like having a test read to them, having more time to take a test, or using a recording of a lesson to learn better. People with learning disabilities are like other people but they learn things in a different way.

## **9 What is your first thought when you see someone using a wheelchair?**

People use a wheelchair because they have a hard time walking or cannot walk. A wheelchair gives them the chance to move around. People think of wheelchairs as big, slow, clunky things you sit in and wait for someone to push around.

Not true! Wheelchairs come in many sizes, shapes, colors, and styles. Wheelchair basketball games are anything but slow. People who use wheelchairs do basically anything they want, like climbing mountains, skiing, or acting in movies.

## **10 What rights do people with disabilities have?**

People with disabilities have the same rights as all Americans. People with disabilities do not give up their rights because they have a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) talks about those rights and gives people with disabilities protection from discrimination. Discrimination means that people treat you unfairly. The ADA says that people with disabilities must have a chance to do the same things that people without disabilities have — to get a good education, find and keep a job, and do things they want to do.

Discrimination happens when others let their stereotypes and beliefs judge what a person can do, instead of letting that person show them what they can do.

## **11 Where should people with disabilities live?**

People with disabilities can live anywhere they want to!! Having a disability does not mean a person has to live in a certain kind of place. People with disabilities are gaining more opportunities to live in places like people without disabilities.

Having a disability can mean that a person uses assistance or support to live where they want. This can mean that a person uses supports to write checks for bills or uses a personal care attendant to help with many life activities. The type of support needed will be different for each person.

## **12 Should people with disabilities be able to work?**

Yes!!! People with disabilities should also be able to work where they want. Having a disability does not mean a person can only do one kind of work. People with disabilities work in all types of jobs.

Too many people with disabilities have to work in low-paying, dead-end jobs, or are not working at all because of job discrimination and a lack of support. The ADA requires that employers provide supports.

But people with disabilities have to first know about supports that will let them do the same job as other workers. This is one more reason it is important to think about how having a disability changes how you learn and work.

## **13 Should a person with a disability get married?**

A person with a disability can get married if they want to! Getting married is something that a lot of adults do. There are some adults who choose to stay single. This choice should be up to each person.

## **14 Should people with disabilities have children?**

People with disabilities can have children if they want to! Having children is something that a lot of adults do. There are some adults who choose not to have children.

This choice should be up to the person.

Stereotypes can limit people more than a disability does. Someday you won't have to think about questions like these because people will know that having a disability is not a dead-end street.

People will learn to judge others on what they can do, not what someone thinks they can't do. Until then, we all have to work to overcome these stereotypes.

Has anyone talked to you about having a disability? Now that we have talked about it, it's probably a good time for you talk with others about your disability.

Talk with your parents, a teacher, or your school counselor. They may be as uncomfortable about this as you are! Tell them you want to know more about the best way for you to learn.

Here are some questions to ask:

- What is the disability I receive support for?
- How was it decided that I have a disability?
- What does having that disability mean for my learning?

If you are still uncomfortable with this, think up the questions yourself.



Remember a couple of things:

- You are not a disability. You are a person with abilities and interests.
- Having a disability just means that you need to find the supports that let you learn your best.
- You do not have to tell others who are not on your IEP team about your disabilities unless you want or need to do so. For example, telling people in your classes is not necessary, but maybe you need to remind your general education teacher about your disability so they can remember to help you. You, your family, and teachers you trust can help you decide if you need to tell others about an invisible disability (learning need). In other cases, if you are in a wheelchair or use assistive technology, people will already know something about your disability.

Okay. So that's it for now.

Later.

**Go to Your  
Workbook**

