

Discussion Guide

for the *Campaign for Disability Employment's*
Public Service Announcement **"Because"**



Fostering "Can-Do" Attitudes at Work and in Life

What can **YOU** do?

The Campaign for
Disability Employment
WhatCanYouDoCampaign.org

About the Campaign for Disability Employment

The *Campaign for Disability Employment* is a collaborative effort among leading disability and business organizations to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Employers and others are encouraged to recognize the value and talent employees with disabilities bring to the workplace.

To encourage positive images of people with disabilities succeeding in communities and the workplace, in 2009 the *Campaign* launched *What can YOU do?*, a national public education effort emphasizing the valuable contributions people with disabilities bring to businesses and organizations.

Members



American Association of People with Disabilities



Job Accommodation Network



National Business & Disability Council



National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce



Society for Human Resources Management



Special Olympics



U.S. Business Leadership Network

What can? YOU do?

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www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org

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What can
YOU do?

"Because" Discussion Guide - Introduction

The key message the *Campaign for Disability Employment (Campaign)* communicates in the "Because" public service announcement (PSA) is that the support of family members, mentors and others can dramatically affect the ultimate success that young people, including those with disabilities, achieve at school and at work.

As part of its *What can YOU do?* initiative, the Campaign produces PSAs featuring real people with disabilities who CAN and DO make valuable contributions in their workplaces and communities. "Because" is a sequel to the award-winning PSA, "I Can" released in 2010.

The first PSA, "I Can," features people with disabilities sharing what they "can do" on the job when given the opportunity. The second PSA, "Because," focuses on the important role that mentors and other influencers play in helping people with disabilities build self-esteem and acquire the skills to excel in school and to hold responsible and challenging jobs. The video features seven people with disabilities, ranging from school-age youth who are pursuing their passions to adults who have successful careers.

The video shows each individual's interaction with mentors, parents, teachers, coaches, colleagues and supervisors who devoted time and effort to encourage them to succeed in their pursuits. The main message is that because someone in their lives "cared," the individuals believed they could excel and set high expectations for themselves.

"Because" was filmed at locations that included participants' homes, schools and workplaces. The people in the PSA were chosen to reflect a variety of personal situations, activities and accomplishments that people with disabilities have experienced with the support of others who care and believe in them. The seven people featured are:

- N'Dea**, a young girl
- Kayla**, a high school student
- Frank**, a catering facility employee
- Jonathan**, a high school art student
- Ford**, a college athlete
- Juliette**, a communications executive
- John**, a business executive

At the end of this guide is brief information about the PSA participants.



Suggested Uses for the Guide

Valuing each individual for his or her skills and talents is critical to supporting successful employment outcomes for all youth, including those with disabilities. The *Campaign for Disability Employment* recommends using the “Because” PSA as a tool to start a discussion about: 1) the importance of focusing on an individual’s unique ability and talent, rather than making assumptions about what he or she can or cannot do; and 2) the benefits of fostering high goals and expectations by supporting and encouraging all young people – including those with disabilities – to develop their talents.

For Adult Audiences

This guide can be used to plan and lead a discussion among parents, teachers, employers or members of any other group or organization dealing with children or young people with disabilities. It can also be an excellent tool for stimulating discussions within affinity groups or employee resource groups (also known as business resource groups) or to promote disability inclusion in their organizations. In addition, it can be used with educational leadership, mentoring groups, community and civic leaders and those involved in workforce issues, such as workforce boards and economic development councils.

The objectives of these discussions are to help people to:

- Recognize that people with disabilities can achieve high goals and workplace success and that the likelihood they will do so is heightened when they receive support and encouragement from family members, mentors and other influencers;
- Embrace a positive attitude about encouraging young people with disabilities to set and reach employment goals; and
- Realize that they can take action and seek ways to support and/or employ young people with disabilities.

For Young Audiences

This guide can be used to plan and lead a discussion among young people in classrooms, community and faith-based facilities, sports venues, clubs and other settings. It is recommended that the discussion take place among a mix of young people with and without disabilities. The proposed objectives of the “Because” discussions are to help youth to:

- Appreciate the importance of work and success to one’s identity, self-esteem, and ability to contribute to the community;
- Consider their own career goals and what they will need to do to achieve them;
- Recognize that each person has many different types of skills and talents;
- Understand that incorrect assumptions about others can create unnecessary obstacles for people, including people with disabilities, in school and at work; and
- Realize that their own beliefs and attitudes can affect the opportunities available to others and that they can play a role in supporting and encouraging their peers with or without disabilities.

Planning for a Good Discussion

A discussion about the "Because" PSA is not a formal training exercise. Rather, it is to help people think about certain things more broadly – specifically assumptions they may make about people with disabilities. There is no right or wrong answer to any of the suggested questions included in this guide.

A good discussion can take place anywhere if the location is accessible to all participants and they are made to feel comfortable listening and speaking without being judged. This means making sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute, and encouraging participants to follow basic courtesies, such as taking turns to speak.

Accessibility

When it comes to ensuring accessibility, there are two important objectives the leader should consider: physical access to the meeting space and access to the discussion content. The discussion should occur at a location that is accessible to anyone using a wheelchair or other mobility aid. For example, there should be a ramped or level entrance to the building and access to an elevator if the meeting room is not on the ground level. The facility also should provide accessible restrooms and offer seating useable by all participants.

If print materials are used, alternative format versions, such as large print, CD or Braille, should be provided, if necessary. It is also important to determine whether a sign language interpreter, real-time captioning or assistive listening devices are needed, so that arrangements can be made in advance if requested.

The "Because" PSA is captioned and thus accessible to viewers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty processing audible information. The discussion leader is encouraged to use the audio introduced version of the PSA to ensure that the video is accessible to viewers who are blind or visually impaired, and also as a tool to teach the importance of verbal descriptions when showing visuals.

Further information to assist in ensuring accessibility of a meeting site is available at: ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm.

Time Frame

The recommended amount of time to allow for this discussion is about 45 to 60 minutes.

Group Size and Room Set Up

When possible, smaller groups are preferred to encourage information sharing and questions. Group size should be taken into consideration when setting up the meeting room. For example, circle style might work better for a small group (5 to 15 people); while a classroom setting might be more conducive for a larger group (15 to 30 or more people).

The "Because" PSA is captioned and thus accessible to viewers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty processing audible information.

Materials Checklist

- ✓ Access to the “Because” PSA on DVD or via whatcanyoudocampaign.org
- ✓ Audio/visual equipment (DVD player, computer, speakers, projector, extension cords, etc.)
- ✓ Copies of recommended handouts such as the photos and bios of each “Because” participant included in this guide with alternate formats if requested
- ✓ Whiteboard or flipchart and markers
- ✓ Blank paper and pens or pencils for group participants

Additional Background Information

Discussion leaders may want to review information about recruiting and hiring people with disabilities, as well as basics of disability etiquette, prior to the discussion. For more in depth understanding of some of the underlying concepts reflected in the PSA, group leaders or participants also may want to review the “*Guideposts for Success*.” The *Guideposts* are educational and career development interventions that research has identified as making a positive difference in the lives of youth – including those with disabilities. Understanding the *Guideposts* however, is not necessary for stimulating a good discussion.

Relevant sources of information include:

- “*Guideposts for Success*,” ncwd-youth.info/guideposts
- EARNWorks Fact Sheet, “Creating an Inclusive Work Environment” askearn.org/refdesk/Inclusive_Workplaces/Creating_an_Inclusive_Work_Environment?



For more in depth understanding of some of the underlying concepts reflected in the PSA, group leaders or participants also may want to review the “*Guideposts for Success*.”

Leaders Guide for Facilitating the Discussion

Below are suggested comments and some questions the discussion leader may offer to facilitate a conversation among audiences about the "Because" PSA.

Although conversation often progresses naturally without participants needing to be prompted, the questions may be helpful in directing the group discussion. The discussion leader should pay attention to the conversation to determine the degree of direction needed. In some instances there are multiple questions the leader may choose to use depending on how the discussion progresses.



Before Showing the "Because" PSA

Introduce yourself and invite others to do the same.

Group Leader: We're here today to explore the importance of encouraging, fostering and welcoming the talents and skills of all people in the community and in the workplace, including people with disabilities.

Before we get too involved in our discussion, I would like to make it clear that this is not a formal training exercise and there are no wrong answers to any questions I might ask. Rather, we're going to discuss some important issues about the way we think of and act toward others. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to our discussion by listening respectfully to what each member of the group has to say.

Think of a person in your life who had great influence on your career and/or life style decisions. This could be a family member, friend, teacher, or even a celebrity.

Encourage each participant to share something about how that person influenced them. The types of statements that might be appropriate include:

- *My teacher encouraged me to write.*
- *My mother made me take piano lessons.*
- *My best friend said I was good with animals.*
- *My boss helped me get organized.*
- *My husband said I should start my own business.*

Group Leader: Now I'd like to introduce you to a few other people and what THEY say about those who helped shape their lives. Pay attention to what the people in this video have to say.

Show the "Because" PSA. You may want to dim lights during showing.

After Showing the “Because” PSA

Group Leader: What are your reactions to the video? Did you like it? How did it make you feel? What did it make you think about?

Possible alternative discussion questions (These questions could be an entire discussion):

- *In your own words, what is the message of this PSA?*
- *Did watching the PSA change how you view people with disabilities? If so, how?*

Allow a few minutes for general responses.

Group Leader: Now, I’d like to tell you more about each of the individuals featured in the video. There were seven people with disabilities, not actors playing roles. Some of their disabilities are more visible and obvious than others. For instance, it appears that the young woman who uses a wheelchair has mobility issues. The disabilities of other individuals in the video, however, are not as apparent.

Read the “Meet the Because PSA Participants” descriptions (page 9).

Does knowing more about these individuals affect what you think about them? How so?

Allow a few minutes for general responses.

Group Leader: Each person in the video shared what they “can do” when given the opportunity and because of the encouragement and support of a friend, relative or mentor. They also made some statements that go beyond their skills and talents. These statements were:

- *I can add value to your workplace*
- *I can be a loyal and productive team member or employee*
- *I can have a successful career*



What do you think these statements mean for employers?

Allow a few minutes for general responses.

Can you think of people with known disabilities who are, or have been, in careers or jobs that you might not expect? *(Probably best to use only with youth audiences.)*

Allow a few minutes for responses.

Fostering “Can-Do” attitudes at Work and in Life

Group Leader might offer some suggestions such as:

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States, was a polio survivor and used a wheelchair;
- Stevie Wonder, award winning singer-songwriter, is blind;
- Former Major League Baseball pitcher Jim Abbott, who pitched for several Major League teams and pitched a no-hitter for the New York Yankees, has one hand;
- Aimee Mullins, athlete, actress and model, had both legs amputated below the knees when she was a child;
- Steve Jobs, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Apple and previously Pixar Animation Studios, had dyslexia;
- Robert David Hall, an actor known for his role as Dr. Albert Robbins on the show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* has prosthetic legs;
- RJ Mitte, an actor best known for his role as Walter White, Jr. on the TV series *Breaking Bad*, has cerebral palsy;
- Lauren Elizabeth Potter, an actress who portrays Becky Jackson, the Cheerios co-captain on the hit TV show *Glee*, has an intellectual disability; and
- Bethany Hamilton, an American surfer who won the ESPY Award for Best Comeback Athlete of the Year, lost her arm at the shoulder after a shark attack.

Group Leader: Can you think of a time when you, or someone you know, made an assumption about what an individual could or couldn't do and then were surprised to learn differently?

Allow a few minutes for responses.

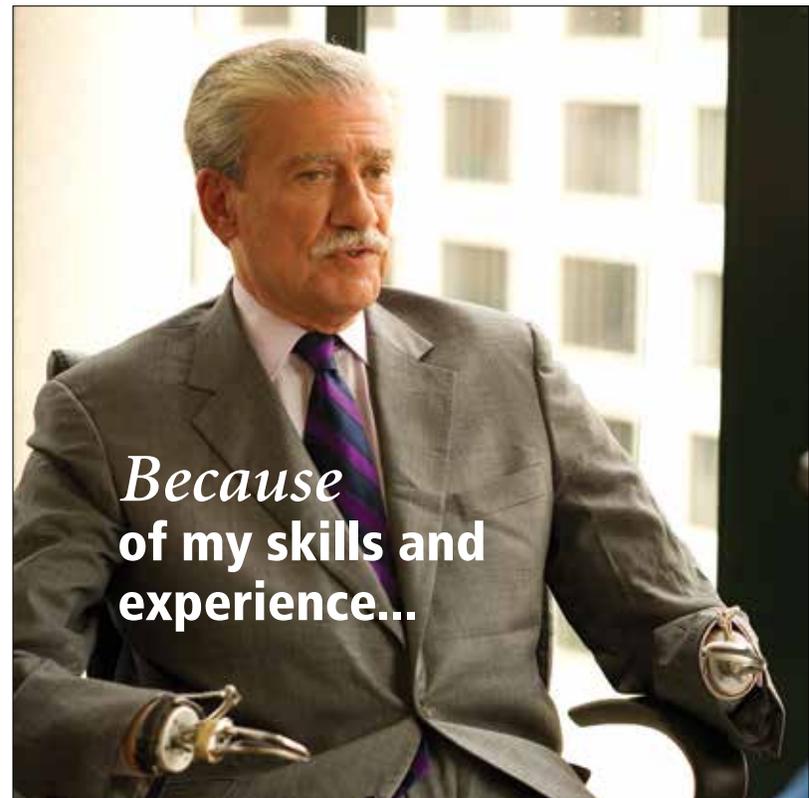
The message is clear: "We all play a critical role in shaping the expectations young people with disabilities develop for themselves." The question then becomes "What can YOU do to help them set and reach their goals?"

Group Leader: After seeing this, would you be more likely to help a young person with a disability get a job? What would/could you do?

Before we leave here, I'd like you to share one positive thing you can do in your home, school or workplace to spread this "can-do" message and make a difference?

Allow a few minutes for each participant to respond.

Consider capturing participants' responses on a flip chart.



Conclusion

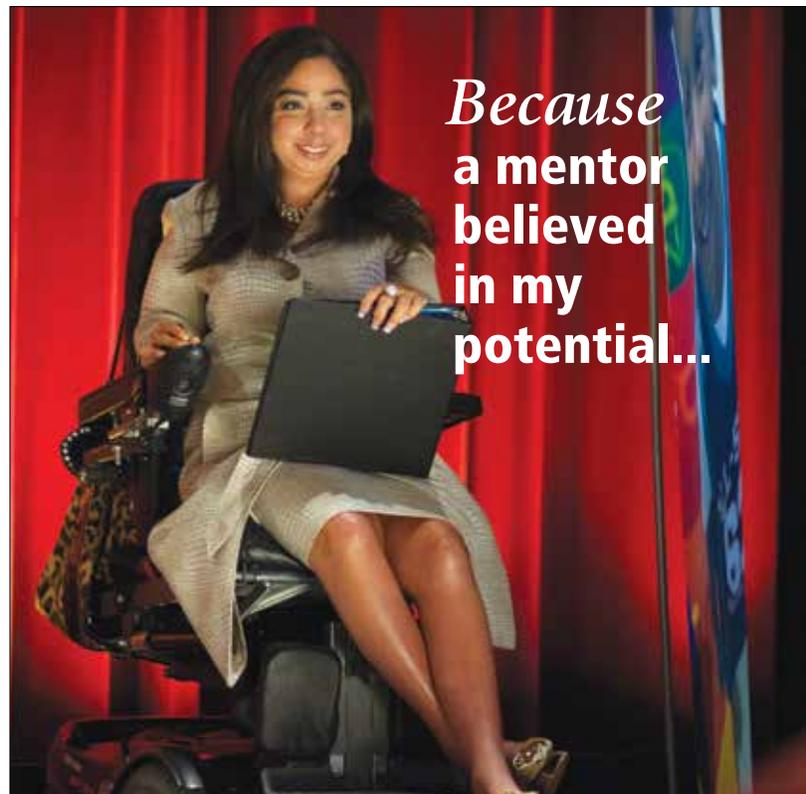
Group Leader: As the people in the “Because” PSA said, when it comes to life choices, it’s what you CAN do that matters. As individuals and as a group, we should consider how people’s talents and skills mesh together to help us all succeed in life.

Everyone has a role to play in fostering inclusive and encouraging attitudes at school and in the workplace. Every day, workers with disabilities add significant value to America’s workplaces and the Nation’s economy. Their skills and talents benefit businesses of all sizes and in all industries. People with disabilities are entrepreneurs, innovators and community leaders.

Knowing all the options and getting positive reinforcement can lead to a good job, self-sufficiency and satisfaction for people with disabilities. Having a job or a career means being able to make your own decisions about how you want to live your life. The right to work and to be recognized for your accomplishments are important aspects of America’s ideal of equality and opportunity for all.

I hope today’s discussion will help you think more about the many things you can do, not just in your everyday life and activities, but also in the way you treat and interact with other people. By recognizing, respecting and welcoming the skills and talents each person has, you can play an important role in sharing the message.

Workers with disabilities can, and do, make important contributions to America’s businesses every day. Everyone wins when employers implement inclusive and flexible workplace strategies.



*Because
a mentor
believed
in my
potential...*

Thank everyone for participating and share with participants any information about diversity and/or disability-oriented initiatives within your organization and direct them to the *Campaign* website for additional information.

Meet the "Because" PSA Participants



The first person is **N'Dea**, a young girl who is visually impaired as a result of cancer of the eye (retinoblastoma) that was diagnosed at age one. She has undergone six surgeries and has one prosthetic eye. N'Dea is outgoing and loves to play with her three older siblings. She also likes to help around the house and her mother encourages her to do her part and *"be responsible."*



Kayla, the swimmer, is a high school student featured with her first swim coach, Rocco. Rocco is an adaptive physical education teacher and was instrumental in encouraging Kayla to take her swimming skills to the next level. She now swims competitively. Kayla has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair when she is on dry land.



Artist **Jonathan** has Asperger's syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder. He says that because his high school teacher helped him explore his options. *"I discovered I can work as an artist."*



Ford is a Georgetown Preparatory School alumnus. While at Georgetown Prep, he was an accomplished member of its nationally ranked Little Hoyas lacrosse team. Ford has a congenital condition that affects his legs. He says he was a leading player because his lacrosse coach *"treated me like everyone else."*



Frank is a young man with Down syndrome who works at a catering company. Frank takes great pride in his work and articulates very well the value of meaningful employment. He says proudly, *"I am a valuable employee."* Frank is also a Special Olympics athlete.



Juliette is an event planner for the U.S. Secretary of Education and also the Department's director of outreach. She has rheumatoid arthritis, scleroderma, and fibromyalgia and uses a wheelchair. She says she owes her success to a mentor who *"believed in my potential."*



John Kemp is the head of the Viscardi Center and former Executive Director of the U.S. Business Leadership Network. He is also a long-standing disability advocate and attorney, who previously worked for Powers Pyles Sutter & Verville PC (PPSV) in Washington, D.C. His awards and accolades are too numerous to mention.

Driving Positive Change

The video "Because" was created by the *Campaign for Disability Employment* – a partnership of leading disability and business organizations, funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor. The *Campaign* maintains a website at whatcanyoudocampaign.org. It has active social media networks on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn that include practical information about disability employment efforts and best practices. Campaign materials may be downloaded or ordered free of charge from the website in the Toolkits section.

Please visit the site to learn more about the importance of welcoming the talents and skills of all people in the workplace.

What can
YOU do?
to help them set and reach their goals

What can YOU do?



whatcanyoudocampaign.org

