

Educator's Guide

A Chance to Be Me

*Video Presentation & Class Discussion
on Developing Relationships with
Students with Autism*



The video *A Chance To Be Me* is about three students who are affected quite differently by autism. What makes these three unique, is not that they have autism, but that they have close friendships and acceptance in their school community. This however, is not a typical situation. Due to the nature of the disorder, *it's* difficult for most people with autism to make friends. They are often isolated and not accepted by their peers.

A Chance To Be Me demonstrates opportunities to know someone with autism despite the disorder and the social pressures of their peers. The lessons students learn through this presentation are not exclusive to issues faced by young people with autism. They can easily be applied to many interpersonal issues all students deal with.

Autism Ontario and **Together for Autism**[®] have developed an interactive video for junior, intermediate and high school students as an orientation to autism. This guide has been provided to help promote further classroom discussion on accepting people with autism.

Please share the previewing of this video with all school educators and/or your parent council.

Initiating Student Dialogue on Accepting Students with Autism

A Chance to Be Me, which is 22 minutes in length, can be viewed on its own but to have the greatest impact, a class presentation with discussion time might take up to an hour.

The video has been structured as follows:

- Introductory session with information about autism followed by a short responsive interview with students who had not previously been aware of autism.
- Three segments which provide some insight into individuals with varying degrees of autism. Each segment is followed by responses from the student group.

The video can be stopped at any of the above segments to allow for classroom discussion. The students' comments from the video as well as the following suggestions may help facilitate your dialogue.

Section One: First Impressions

- When does a child show signs of autism?
- What are the three most common areas that affect a person with autism?
- How *would* you feel if you saw someone behaving differently?
- Do you think a person with autism *could* be picked on in our class or school? How and why?

Section Two: Impressions of Chelsey

- How does Chelsey show her feelings?
- What touching does Chelsey not like? How does she react?
- What might other kids say about you if became friends with someone like Chelsey?
- Do you think Chelsey's brother might be treated differently or teased? How do you think he would feel?

Section Three: Impressions of Sean

- What is Sean's favourite interest?
- What are some of the things that Sean can do?
- How could you help be a friend of someone like Sean?
- What are some examples of body language (ie. facial) or phrases that Sean may have difficulty with? How could you help someone like Sean understand those cues or words?

Section Four: Impressions of Brian

- What are some of the signs of autism that Brian shows?
- How can you have a conversation with someone who has difficulty with words?
- What do you think would happen if someone like Brian moved to our school?
- If you were to invite someone like Brian to participate in a school project or activity, how might you include him?
- Why should students like Brian be included in regular classes?

General Questions

- What are some of the lessons you have learned from this video and how do they apply to other situations in your life?
- Look at our school community. For discussion purposes, we have a student with autism who attends classes. What do we do well? What could we do better? What could we do differently?

Additional Information on Autism

The website of Autism Ontario features a range of resources that can benefit educators, care providers, families and advocates of students with autism.

www.autismontario.com