

## ABOUT THE VIDEO

**A Mind of Your Own** is intended to boost the self-esteem of kids affected by learning disabilities and to heighten awareness among their classmates, friends and relations.

## ABOUT KIDS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Kids with learning disabilities have trouble with processing information that can affect anything from reading and writing to physical coordination.

Sometimes kids don't even realize that they have a learning disability. All they know is that they can't keep up in school, so they feel stupid and angry with themselves, even though they are often very bright. Other kids may tease them and make them feel as though they don't belong. Parents and teachers can also get impatient and frustrated with these kids if they don't recognize or understand the disability.

Learning disabilities can make kids feel lonely, confused, hopeless and worthless, even if they know that they're smart. Without help, they may give up trying, and as a result, may never learn to appreciate their own strengths. But once their differences have been identified, and with professional help, they can learn to cope and achieve their goals. And everyone has special talents and qualities, like acting or photography, great people skills, or exceptional creativity. Focussing on these strengths can build confidence and self-esteem.

## A NOTE TO TEACHERS

Teachers should preview the video and read the suggested questions and activities before use. Some kids with learning disabilities may find the topic too sensitive and will not feel comfortable revealing or discussing their problems in front of their peers. Having children work in small groups of 2 or 3 may make it easier.

Learning disabilities can affect reading, spelling and math. They can also interfere with a student's attention, making it difficult to sit still and concentrate. Some have difficulty integrating spoken language and sequencing, which makes it hard to follow people who speak too quickly or who give too many instructions at once, so they can't listen and write instructions at the same time.

If you suspect that you have a student with a learning disability, you may choose to avoid any suggested post-screening activities that will highlight their differences. Contact your school counsellor, special education department, or a local/provincial learning disability association for help and advice.

# A Mind of Your Own

*"Intelligence is what you're capable of. People are different."*  
- Max, age 13

*"A learning disability is like a big rock. You have to work on it until it becomes a piece of dust"* - Henry, age 11



Henry

It is estimated that in every Canadian classroom, there are two or three kids affected by a learning disability. Although they are generally of average or higher intelligence, these kids struggle every day to keep up with the class and to be accepted.

Meet Henry, Stephanie, Matthew and Max, four incredible kids who won't let their learning differences hold them down. As they confront their disabilities and revel in unique talents like singing and chess, it becomes clear that "different" can also mean wonderful.



Maxwell

This warm and inspirational video will encourage and boost the self-esteem of kids struggling with learning disabilities, and foster understanding in their peers.




Matthew

Director: Gail Sweeney  
Producer: Tamara Lynch

37 minutes, 27 seconds  
Order number: C9199 001



Stephanie

 **Closed captioned.**  
A decoder is required.

**TO ORDER NFB VIDEOS, CALL TODAY!**  
1-800-267-7710 (Canada)  
1-800-542-2164 (USA)

[www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)

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National Film Board of Canada  
P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville  
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5

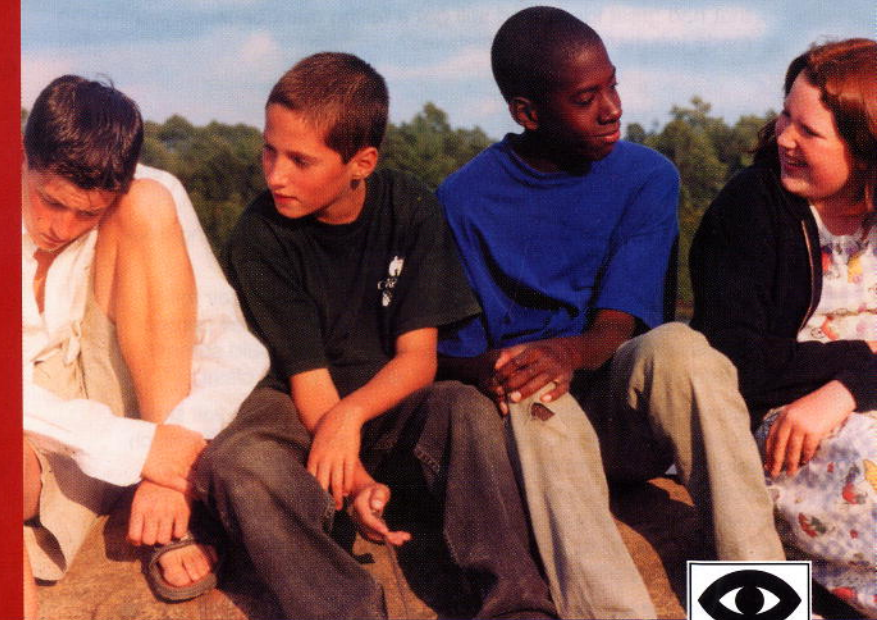
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# A Mind of Your Own

**WINNER, AMTEC AWARD OF MERIT, 1999**

A Mind of Your Own



VHS

C9199 001



A National Film Board of Canada Production

## Suggested Questions and Activities

### BEFORE THE SCREENING

- It is recommended that teachers read and discuss the following questions with the class before screening the video, to allow students to see the issues from a more personal perspective. Keep notes of the students' responses.
  - Everyone is good at something. What are you good at?
  - Have you ever had trouble learning something that other kids found easy... like music, computer games, or the rules of a sport? How did that make you feel?
  - Have you ever been teased because you weren't as good at something as all the other kids? How did that make you feel? What did you do about it?
  - Have you ever teased someone about their abilities or yelled at them for making "dumb" mistakes that weren't their fault? What could you have done or said instead?
  - How would your life be different if you had trouble reading and writing and were always trying to keep up with the class?
  - How would you feel if you worked for hours on an assignment that had great ideas, and still got a failing mark because you made too many spelling mistakes?

### AFTER THE SCREENING

- What did each of the children have difficulty with in school, and how did they face those challenges?
- How could a student help someone in class who is having trouble with schoolwork and who doesn't have any friends?
- Divide the students into small groups to discuss 1) their initial reactions to the pre-screening questions and 2) if their perceptions have changed. A person from each group could summarize and share what was discussed with the whole class.
- Exploring learning disabilities: the following exercises will simulate what it's like to have certain learning disabilities. After each exercise, brainstorm ways that kids can cope, either through electronic means (tape recorders, laptops), or special help from others. If you know or suspect that some of your students have a learning disability, you may wish to avoid those exercises that could cause them embarrassment or discomfort.

1) *Dysgraphia* – difficulty with fine motor activities/manual dexterity  
In pairs, each student writes a short sentence using the hand they don't normally use. The partner then tries to read the sentence.

**Director**  
Gail Sweeney

**Cinematographer**  
Michael Ellis,  
CSC

**Sound Recordist**  
Mark Harper

**Editor**  
Cathy Gulkin

**On-Line Editor**  
Warren Chinn

**Original Music**  
Bruce Fowler

**Sound Editor**  
Leopoldo Gutierrez

**Re-recording**  
Geoffrey Mitchell

**Producer**  
Tamara Lynch

**Executive Producers**  
David Verrall  
Isobel Marks

**37 minutes**  
**27 seconds**

**Order number:**  
**C9199 001**



2) *Problems with short-term memory, concentration, slow processing*

Call out a phone number with the area code and pause for 30 seconds. Then ask students to write down what they heard. This exercise can also be done with a list of random words. Increase the difficulty by having students recite the list backwards.

3) *Dyslexia (with letter reversals)*

Draw and cut out a large lower case "b." Show how it can be interpreted as a b, d, p or q, depending on positioning. Have the class try to read this passage:

I walked through the baiesies in the filed, bomn tomards the cool mater of the lake. It saw nice no the deach. After a smiw, it mas time to go house.

(I walked through the daisies in the field, down towards the cool waters of the lake. It was nice on the beach. After a swim, it was time to go home.)

- Call a local association for people with learning disabilities and invite a speaker to class. Personal testimony is the most powerful way to have other students relate.

### FAMOUS PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Have the class brainstorm to match the names to the clues.

- 1) Couldn't talk until he was 3 and didn't read until he was 9, so his teachers thought he was mentally slow. Failed his university entrance exams, but went on to develop the Theory of Relativity.
- 2) Had trouble doing schoolwork but used creative talents to become a cartoonist and movie producer.
- 3) This dyslexic movie star learns lines by listening to tapes.
- 4) Dyslexia didn't stop this popular performer.
- 5) Had trouble reading as a child but wrote some of the world's best-loved stories.
- 6) This US president couldn't spell.

*Answers:* 1) Albert Einstein 2) Walt Disney 3) Tom Cruise 4) Cher 5) Hans Christian Andersen 6) George Washington

### FACTS ON LEARNING DISABILITIES

- At least 1 in 10 Canadians (about 3 million people) suffer from a learning disability, but only 3% receive special help in school.
- About 80% of people with learning disabilities have trouble reading. Literacy workers believe that roughly one-half of their clients have a learning disability.
- Two-thirds of students with reading problems become average or above-average readers after getting help in the early grades.
- One-to-one tutoring is the best treatment for people with learning disabilities.

### Related Videos from the NFB

Browse the NFB's website ([www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)) to access the complete catalogue of teaching resources. The following are some suggested titles:

**Eileen's Bag** Eileen is an 11-year-old who feels left out and stupid compared to the other kids at school. An imaginary twin helps her overcome her insecurities.  
Order number C0190 001

**Letters, Words and Stories: Films for Early Readers** Four short animated stories inspire kids aged 4-10 to discover the joys of reading and storytelling.  
Order number C0197 022

**The Mind of a Child** Educator Lorna Williams adapted the teaching methods of an Israeli psychologist to help Aboriginal children in Canada to learn.  
Order number C9195 092

### Other Resources

*Please note: Web addresses may have changed.*

Learning Disabilities Assoc. of Canada Tel.: (613) 238-5721  
[educ.queensu.ca/~lda](http://educ.queensu.ca/~lda)

The Council for Exceptional Children [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

LDOnline, a guide to LDs for parents, teachers and kids:  
[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)