

That's My Life is a series of five 5-minute programmes featuring young disabled people talking about themselves, their lives and relationships. The personal testimonies explore their hopes and aspirations and the films reveal how assumptions and prejudices can create barriers for people regarded as different. Breaking down barriers is a primary objective of the series.

Young disabled people will benefit from seeing their peers talking frankly about themselves and revealing their membership, not only of the disabled constituency, but of the all-important youth culture too.

That's My Life aims to open up areas for reflection, discussion and action for both staff and pupils. The ideas form a thought-provoking series that acts as a springboard for follow-up work.

Each contributor to this series was given a camera to take photos of things they felt really important to their lives, to record those things most dear to them as a perspective on how they feel about the world. Some of the photos were used in the films as 'stills'.

Curriculum Relevance

KS2 and KS3 PSHE and Citizenship

- Learning about the society in which children live and the range of experiences it contains
- Developing a sense of social justice and moral responsibility towards others
- Realising the consequences of teasing, bullying and the lack of tolerance it implies
- Respecting and appreciating difference

Programme 1: Carl

Carl has been blind since he was very young. He is very keen to be independent and is constantly exploring ways to make this happen. Schoolmates Paul and Jonathan often play cards, usually poker, with Carl. They use Carl's set of Braille cards. They are supportive and don't find the fact that they have a blind friend at all odd or different.

Carl used his disposable camera to take the photos, helped by his family and friends.

Carl is into music and in his last year at school. He has his own rock/reggae/funk band called 'The Orx' in which he sings and plays the guitar. The band compose their own songs, one of which is featured in the film.

His ambition? To train to be a teacher, possibly of languages. He has sought out a role model, a language teacher who is also blind.

Activities

- What do you want to be? Have you got the right to be whatever you choose?
- Talk about Carl's situation and think about what you would do to make the world work for you if you were in Carl's place.
- If you had a visually-impaired friend, how do you think you could offer support?

Programme 2: Stacey

Stacey is very proud of her independence. She gets out and about by herself all the time although she does love to go shopping with her friends. Sometimes she finds other people's reactions to her impairment, often when she is out alone, patronising and upsetting. Stacey has cerebral palsy (CP), which causes a disorder of movement and posture because part of the brain is not working properly or has not developed as it should. It is not a disease or illness and it is non-progressive. No two people with CP are the same. Movement difficulties can vary from the barely noticeable to the severe.

Activities

- Is Stacey entitled to get into shops? What should shop owners do to encourage more disabled people to shop independently? How would you feel if shop keepers, either by attitude or physical barriers (high steps at the shop entrance, for example) made access to shops difficult or impossible for you?
- Take a trip down a street near you. Think how you could change the environment to make it easier for disabled people to gain access.
- Have you ever made comments about or stared at a disabled person in the street? If your answer is 'yes', now that you've heard what Stacey has to say, would you still do so?

Programme 3: Christopher

Christopher enjoys lots of activities including Boys' Brigade and riding lessons. He was proud to be picked to do the office duties at school, on the reception desk and taking messages. He has Asperger's syndrome, which is seen, medically, as a learning disability. Christopher is at the 'mild' end of the spectrum. Just after filming, Christopher was extremely successful in his SATs.

Christopher has experienced a lot of bullying. He was seen by some of his peers as someone different and therefore 'picked on'. He reflects on bullying and empowers himself by writing an open letter to bullies everywhere.

Activities

- How would you deal with bullying either if you were being bullied yourself or if you knew someone else was being bullied?
- Compose an open letter to bullies everywhere.

Programme 4: **Natalie**

Natalie is shy. She is a great dancer and wants to be a chef. She is deeply involved in lots of activities such as dancing and drama, belongs to a youth club and is a Girl Guide. Natalie is a quiet, happy and positive child with a strong, caring family but she has been treated badly by bullies in the past. 'Circles of Friends' is continuing to be of great help to her by providing a great deal of support within her school. Natalie's circle of friends ensures that she isn't taken advantage of or bullied in any way. They, too, benefit from the circle.

Natalie has Down's Syndrome which is a learning disability.

Activities

- Think about setting up a Circle of Friends. What sort of things might you want to discuss? What would you gain from being in the same group as a disabled person?
- Natalie wants to be a chef. Some people might say that a kitchen is not the right place for a person with Down's Syndrome. What do you think?

Programme 5: **Elliott**

Elliott uses a personal assistant (PA) sometimes whilst indoors or out and about. For Elliott this can be a family member or a friend. In the film Elliott has his older brother, Marlon, acting as his PA. Elliott is very interested in style and fashion. Using a wheelchair is a style statement as well as a means of transport.

Like Stacey, Elliott has cerebral palsy. Elliott went to a mainstream school and found that some of his peers were 'over helpful'.

Activities

- What ways can you think of to offer someone like Elliott peer support? Do you wait until they ask you or do you do it anyway?
- Marlon is teasing Elliott about not having a girlfriend. Elliott says it's not because he can't get one. What do you think about disabled people having boyfriends or girlfriends?
- Could you design a wheelchair that a young disabled person might think is cool?

PSHE and Citizenship for 7–14 year olds

That's My Life



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