

Chapter 19: Engaging and Amplifying Community Voices: An Interview Assignment Sequence

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3. “Growing Up with a Handicapped Sibling, Kids Can Be Cruel” by Zachary Kintz

Transcript

Community Member Cory Thrush: My brother is 5 years older than me. He’s mentally handicapped in the sense that he’s considered slow. If I had to put a label or categorize it, he’s got about the mind of a 12- or 13-year-old. He’s fully functional, takes care of himself. He can cook. He can clean, bathe himself. Where Rob needs help is making life decisions.

One of the tough things about growing up with a handicapped sibling, kids can be very cruel. I spent a lot of my younger years growing up with Rob getting into fights defending him, and getting my butt kicked by older kids. It’s shaped me from the sense that I have zero patience for people that make fun of handicapped, disabled, special needs people. I’m a pretty calm guy, pretty laid-back. Situations that involve stuff like that, there’s no place for it. I tend to look at people like that, that there’s something missing in you. If you can make fun of somebody like that, or be cruel to somebody like that, you’re missing a human part that I don’t know how to give you or how to teach you. And I think a lot of people in society make fun of stuff that they don’t understand.

There are a lot of people that I won’t waste my time with being friends or associating with if I see a cruelty or an unkindness to them. If anything, shaping my life, I won’t be around people like that. I have better things to do. Better people to invest my time and my efforts and my heart and my love and my care for other people. I love my brother, and one of the beautiful things about him is he’s happy all the time. If you ever feel like you’re having a really bad day, and your life sucks, go to a Special Olympics event or go to a workshop that people are unbelievably happy, and they have struggles that we know nothing about. And to see them dealing with their struggles and their difficulties but they constantly have a smile on their face. They’re happy to see you. They’ll hug you, shake your hand, be excited. It’s an amazing thing to see.