

Telling Stories

By Steven E. Brown

Discussion Questions

1. What would you do with yourself if you had as much downtime as the author describes in the first paragraph? Would you do something differently if you were in as much pain as he describes? Have you ever experienced pain? Does the author's description coincide with your experience?
2. Did you want more information about Gaucher Disease (GD)? Why do you think Brown didn't write more about this condition? Do you know how you can find out more about GD?
3. The author mentions many geographic locations. Why do you think he does that? Have you traveled? If you have, did you find one place the same or different from another? If you haven't traveled, would you like to? Where would you like to go?
4. Did you know there was a disability rights movement? Do you know what this is? What do disability rights mean to you?
5. What is an independent living center? Do you know anyone who works at an independent living center? Do you know anyone who might benefit from getting help at an independent living center?
6. In the essay, the author mentions using crutches and a wheelchair. Do you know people who have used more than one mobility device? Why do you think this happens? Have you ever known someone who sometimes used a wheelchair and sometimes walked? If so, did you find that confusing? Why do you think someone would use a wheelchair some of the time and walk some of the time?
7. Can you imagine being denied a job because you used crutches? Could this happen today, like it did before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)? What is the ADA? If you don't know about it, how can you find out about it?

8. Do you understand why Brown called his diary “Hidden Treasure”? Do you agree with his reasons?
9. Brown offers several examples of disability culture, including his own writing, songs, and movies. Can you find examples of disability culture in your own life?
10. Can you imagine being in a building where you could not go the bathroom? What about being on an entire campus where you could not go to the bathroom? What would you do? How would you go to the bathroom?
11. How do you think someone can be a musician when they are deaf? How can a group of deaf people perform as a rock 'n' roll band?
12. What do you think you would do if you were stuck on the side of the highway at night and you had no way to communicate with the outside world?
13. Brown talks a lot about his adult experiences, but expresses the notion the most essential audience is children. He ends by mentioning a grandson. Why does he think children are the most important audience? If children are so important, why does he keep telling stories about adults? Why does he mention his grandson?
14. What would you want to tell your parents and grandparents or other elders in your life about your life that they don't know?

Writing Activities

- Write about a place you would like to visit. Imagine visiting that place if you used a wheelchair. If you do use a wheelchair, think about how it would feel to visit if you were deaf.
- Write a fictionalized account of one of your experiences.
- Write about what you would do if you spent two weeks in bed and had no access to cable television or a computer.
- Find one example of disability culture on the Internet and write about why you like it or don't like it.

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