TED TALK BY STELLA YOUNG:

I'M NOT YOUR INSPIRATION, THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Transcribed by: Adrienne Smith & David Widmann - Humber College

[Ethereal introduction music].

[Applause]

STELLA: I grew up in a very small country town in Victoria. I had a very normal, low-key

kind of upbringing. I went to school, I hung out with my friends, I fought with

my younger sisters. It was all very normal. And when I was 15, a member of

my local community approached my parents and wanted to nominate me for a

community achievement award. And my parents said, "Hm, that's really nice,

but there's kind of one glaring problem with that. She hasn't actually achieved

anything." [Laughter].

And they were right, you know. I went to school, I got good marks, I had a very

Iow-key after school job in my mum's hairdressing salon, and I spent a lot of

time watching "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Dawson's Creek." Yeah, I know

What a contradiction. But they were right, you know. I wasn't doing anything that

was out of the ordinary at all. I wasn't doing anything that could be considered

an achievement if you took disability out of the equation. Years later, I was on

my second teaching round in a Melbourne high school, and I was about 20

minutes into a year 11 legal studies class when this boy put up his hand and

said, "Hey miss, when are you going to start doing your speech?" And I said,

"What speech?" You know, I'd been talking them about defamation law for a

good 20 minutes. And he said, "You know, like, your motivational speaking..

You know, when people in wheelchairs come to school, they usually say, like,

inspirational stuff?" [Laughter] "It's usually in the big hall.".

I mean, that's true for many of us. For lots of us, disabled people are not our.

teachers or our doctors or our manicurists. We're not real people. We are

there to inspire. And in fact, I am sitting on this stage looking like I do in this

wheelchair, and you are probably kind of expecting me to inspire you. Right?

[Laughter] Yeah..

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid I'm going to disappoint you dramatically. I

am not here to inspire you. I am here to tell you that we have been lied to about

disability. Yeah, we've been sold the lie that disability is a Bad Thing, capital B,

capital T. It's a bad thing, and to live with a disability makes you exceptional. It's

not a bad thing, and it doesn't make you exceptional..

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