



BEING YOU

Educator Viewing Guide



BEING YOU

Dear Educator,

For more than 11 years, Roadtrip Nation Education has been committed to helping students define their own paths in life. Our mission is to show young people how to harness their unique strengths and interests to create academic and career opportunities. We do that with the most powerful of tools—personal stories. The stories we share introduce young people to career possibilities they may never have heard of, and to people who have carved out different paths to fulfillment and success.

We want to inspire and empower all students to create their own success stories. 1 in 5 people in the United States have a learning or attention issue—brain-based difficulties like dyslexia, dyscalculia, and ADHD that affect reading, writing, math, attention, and organization. And we know they can thrive in school and in life with the right support.

That's why we've partnered with Understood (understood.org), the leading online resource for parents of children with learning and attention issues, to bring you this documentary and resource guide. *Being You* features the insights and experiences of young people and industry leaders with learning and attention issues—people who have faced these challenges head-on.

To bring awareness to these stories, we invited three young people with learning and attention issues to join us on the road. Noah, Nicole, and Stephanie explore what it means to be a young adult with these issues. In *Being You*, you'll see the three roadtrippers travel across the United States, meeting with diverse leaders who also have learning and attention issues. Their insightful conversations, shared experiences, and life lessons open the door to new discussions about the challenges of living with learning and attention issues, and ways to help young people reach their potential.

This guide is designed for educators to use in a group-viewing format. It's a great way to learn more about supporting students with learning and attention issues and connecting with their parents. The film can also spark meaningful conversations with young people about finding their strengths and defining their futures. You can show *Being You* in your classroom, encourage your school to host a school-wide screening, and share the film with parents of students with learning and attention issues.

In addition to resources for you and your students, we've included a discussion guide to help parents have conversations with their children about goals and aspirations, and how to achieve them.

See you on the road!



PRE-VIEWING

We've learned a great deal about learning and attention issues in recent years, thanks to ongoing brain research. But many myths and misconceptions persist—even among professionals. Knowing the facts is the first step toward understanding the challenges students face and giving them the support they need.

Before watching the documentary, discuss the following questions and answers with your viewing group.

ASK

What are learning and attention issues?

The term “learning and attention issues” covers a wide range of challenges that students may face in school, at home, and in the community. It includes brain-based trouble with reading, writing, math, attention, and organization. Many students are formally identified with conditions like dyslexia, dyscalculia, or ADHD. But there are many others who struggle without ever being identified or getting support.

It's a myth that kids with learning and attention issues are “just being lazy.” While learning and attention issues may not be as visible as other health issues, they're just as real.

ASK

What causes learning and attention issues?

In some cases, these brain-based issues appear to have a genetic component. A child with ADHD, for instance, has as much as a 35 percent chance of having a parent or sibling who also has ADHD. A child with dyslexia has a 40 percent chance of having a sibling with similar reading problems.

You may hear people attribute learning and attention issues to poor vision or hearing. It's true that some learning and attention issues may result from how the brain processes sights and sounds. But this isn't the same as having poor eyesight or hearing.

Learning and attention issues aren't the result of a child's upbringing.

ASK

Who do you know with a learning or attention issue?

1 in 5 people in the U.S.—that's 20 percent—have a learning or attention issue. Chances are you have friends, colleagues, or family members who face these challenges, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis. Learning and attention issues are lifelong conditions that have nothing to do with IQ. But many people living with learning and attention issues learn helpful strategies and use their strengths to have successful and fulfilling lives and careers.

People with learning and attention issues are just as bright as their peers.



What can we learn from watching this film that will help us help our students?

Having learning and attention issues plays a huge role in shaping a student's experience in school and in life. The challenges can make kids feel anxious and frustrated. Struggling to achieve what comes more easily to their peers can lower a student's self-esteem and self-confidence. Making sure students feel supported and understood is essential to ensuring that they reach their full potential.

All students have strengths, passions, aspirations, and dreams, and those with learning and attention issues are just as capable of reaching their dreams. Teachers can help these students think big about the future, and they can provide the tools and encouragement to help their students get there.

Key Terms

Educators, doctors, and other professionals may use unfamiliar terms when talking about learning and attention issues. They may even use different terms to refer to the same set of issues. Being aware of the terms different professionals use can make it easier to communicate with parents, special education teachers, and others who support students with learning and attention issues.

If you're watching *Being You* with other educators, consider playing a matching game with the terms and definitions below, or making a fill-in-the-blanks worksheet. You can work together to gain a better understanding of the terms as you complete the activity.

We've included key terms from the film below, but there is much more to learn. For additional key terms and more information about learning and attention issues, visit Understood.org.

504 plan: *A plan that protects a child's civil rights and lists the accommodations a school must provide, such as audiobooks, note-taking aids, or extended time to complete tests, so that a student with a disability has equal access to the general education curriculum.*

Accommodations: *Tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for students with disabilities.*

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): *A condition characterized by symptoms that include inattention, distractibility, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. But not all of these symptoms need to be present for a child to be diagnosed with ADHD.*

Dyslexia: *A specific learning disability in reading. Kids with dyslexia may have difficulty with reading, spelling, and performing other skills related to the use of printed language.*

Individualized Education Program (IEP): *A plan required by federal law that details the specialized instruction, support, and services (such as speech therapy or multisensory reading instruction) a school must provide to meet the individual needs and goals of a student with a disability who qualifies for special education.*

Language-based learning disability: A disorder that may affect the understanding and use of spoken or written language as well as nonverbal language, such as eye contact and tone of speech.

Learning disability (LD): A disorder that results in learning challenges that are not caused by low intelligence, problems with hearing or vision, or lack of educational opportunity. Many children with learning disabilities have difficulties in particular skill areas, such as reading or math. These children may also have trouble paying attention and getting along with their peers.

Nonverbal learning disabilities (NVLD): Difficulties recognizing and responding to unspoken or nonliteral communication. These difficulties may make it hard for kids to understand body language or sarcasm. Kids with NVLD may also have weaknesses in areas such as abstract reasoning and spatial skills.

Reading disability: Another term for dyslexia, sometimes referred to as reading disorder or reading difference.

Response to intervention (RTI): A comprehensive, multi-step process available to students in many public schools that closely monitors how the student is responding to different types of services and instruction.

Self-advocacy: The skills and understanding needed to enable children and adults to explain their specific learning disabilities or needs to others and cope with others' attitudes.

Special education: Specialized instruction designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, provided in public schools at no cost to parents. It can include specialized activities in gym, music, and arts education and specialized instruction in the classroom, home, or other settings.

Specific learning disability (SLD): The legal term for a learning disability. SLD is a disorder—unrelated to intelligence, motivation, effort, or other known causes of low achievement—that makes a child struggle in certain areas of learning, such as reading, writing, or math.

Find more terms at Understood.org

Meet the Roadtrippers



STEPHANIE WHITHAM

Growing up, Stephanie thought she was the only one who learned differently. It wasn't until college—an achievement she was told she'd never reach—that she realized she was part of a much larger cohort of people who experience the world differently, and have harnessed that unique perspective to make significant contributions to the world. She aims to show young people the many faces of learning differences, and help them see that they can accomplish what they put their minds to—not despite, but *because of*, their differences.



NICOLE KORBER

Diagnosed at an early age with learning and attention issues that made reading and writing difficult, Nicole has always had to work harder to do what many consider simple tasks—but she's never let that deter her from reaching her goals. Although she was told she could never go to college, she recently graduated and has gone on to land a respected job. She's proud of her accomplishments, but seeks to find deeper purpose with her work, and hopes meeting people with similar challenges who pursued their dreams will build her confidence so she can do the same.



NOAH COATES

18-year-old Noah isn't sure what's out there in the world or how he fits into it. He wants to pursue a career in the entertainment or video game industry, but he's not sure how to begin making his way—especially with his learning and attention issues. He doesn't want to let ADHD and dyslexia stand in the way of his dream, and hopes to find mentors who prove it's possible to pursue a goal no matter what's thrown at you.

Being You

4,381 Miles



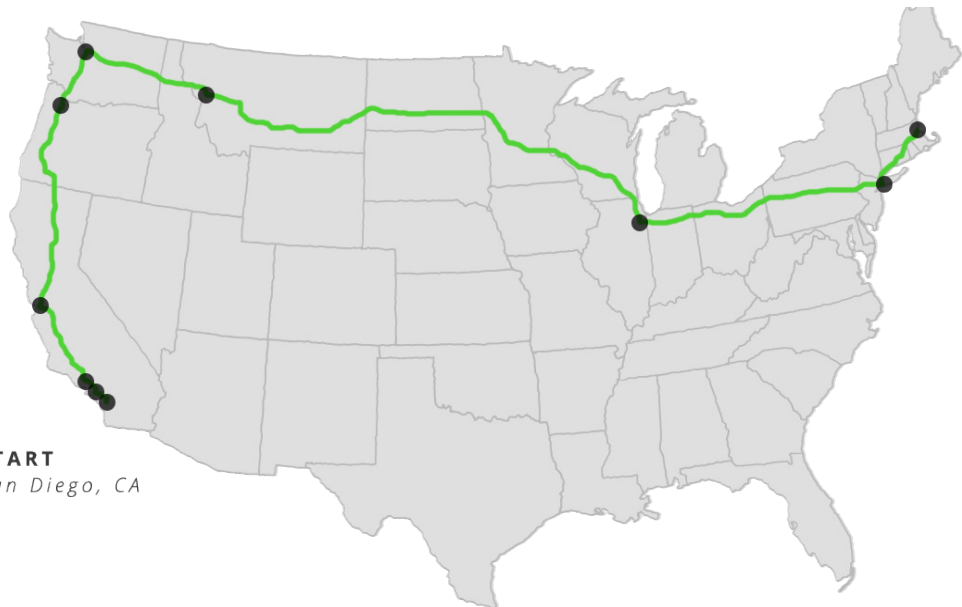
19 Interviews



28 Days



START
San Diego, CA



FINISH
Boston, MA

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

While you're watching *Being You*, or immediately afterward, take a few notes on the questions below. Discuss your responses with your fellow educators, or write a summary of the documentary to share with your staff.

1. Sculptor and educator John Rodrigues, who has dyslexia and ADHD, explained that when he made ice sculptures, his “mind felt relaxed.” What are some strategies you can use to find out how your students relax their minds and feel creative?
2. In what way did John view his issues as opportunities to learn instead of barriers to his education?
3. In your opinion, why are students with learning and attention issues at a greater risk of not finding what they love to do? How can this affect their approach to future academic and career aspirations?
4. Comedian and TV show host Howie Mandel, who has ADHD, likened the lack of support early in his life to a form of isolation—until he had a “me too” moment. How can you help students with learning and attention issues feel less isolated and alone?
5. Pete Denman disclosed that he had some degree of shame when sharing his learning and attention issue with others, and that he lacked the self-confidence to talk about it. Have you encountered students who experienced shame when discussing their learning and attention issues?
6. What realizations do the three roadtrippers have after meeting successful individuals with learning and attention issues?
7. LeDerick Horne uses the term “cognitive diversity.” What do you think this term means?
8. What facts in the documentary surprised you about students with learning and attention issues?
9. Eye to Eye founder David Flink said that his passion is making sure there is an opportunity for all kids to learn, no matter how they learn best. What are some ways you differentiate your teaching style to give every student the opportunity to learn? What else are you willing to change about your teaching methods and expectations to make sure all students learn best?
10. David also talked about how he would act out in school to mask his difficulties. How can you help students with learning and attention issues feel less ashamed of their difficulties? How can you help them feel comfortable enough to talk about their struggles so they don't have to hide them like David did?



“No two people are alike and no two people think alike—that’s the beauty of humanity.”

— **Howie Mandel**
comedian, TV host, actor

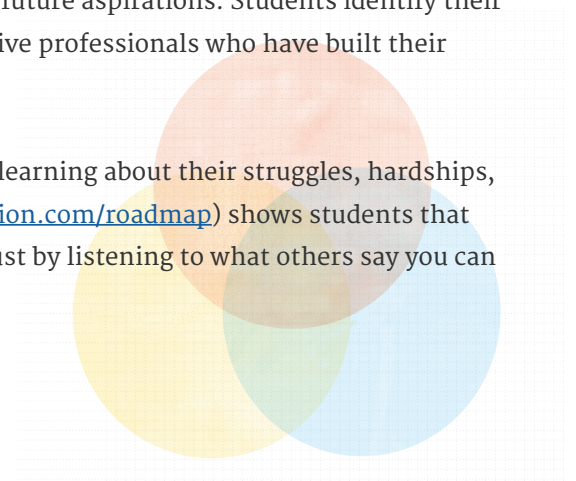
AFTER VIEWING

You can learn more about your students with learning and attention issues—and help them discover their potential—through these two interactive experiences. (One for them and one for you!)

For Your Students: Roadtrip Nation's Roadmap

This online resource helps young people connect what they love to their future aspirations. Students identify their interests and discover future possibilities through the stories of innovative professionals who have built their life's work around interests similar to each student's.

Students can also make a personal connection to these professionals by learning about their struggles, hardships, and strategies to overcome anxiety or self-doubt. Roadmap (roadtripnation.com/roadmap) shows students that there's a way to build your life's work around doing what you love, not just by listening to what others say you can or should do.



For You: Through Your Child's Eyes

It might be difficult to understand what your students are struggling with and how best to support them.

Understood's interactive tool, Through Your Child's Eyes (u.org/tyce), helps people who don't have learning and attention issues experience what it's like to struggle with reading, writing, math, attention, or organization issues.

These short interactive experiences take you into the mind of a student with learning and attention issues. You'll get insights from students as well as from experts in learning and attention issues.

CONNECTING WITH PARENTS

Parents and caregivers can be a tremendous resource as you seek to help students with learning and attention issues manage their challenges and reach their potential. Developing an open line of communication is key.

Parents will come to the table with different levels of understanding about their children's issues. Some will be extremely knowledgeable and excited to share what has worked for their child in the past and what hasn't. They might even have some suggestions for activities and interventions that you and your students can try together (like assistive technology or finding quiet space in the classroom to take a test).

Others won't be as far along in their journey and may need additional support. They may be worried or scared. These parents, in particular, will look to you for guidance—not only on how to address their children's challenges, but maybe even on how to talk to their children about them.

Let them know how and when they can reach you with questions and concerns. And when it's time for parent-teacher conferences, provide them with Understood's Parent-Teacher Conference Worksheet (u.org/parent-teacher-worksheet). If parents fill it out ahead of time, it can help make the meeting more productive for both of you.

Whether parents are experts in their child's learning issues or are still learning about their child's challenges and needs, it's important that you work together as a team to make a difference in their child's life.

Inspiration From Industry Leaders

To help students create an open and supportive community, Roadtrip Nation and Understood have created an online community of industry leaders who have learning and attention issues.

Check out the following stories to inspire you, your colleagues, and your students to continue to share their stories and support those with learning and attention issues. Read how these community members found careers they love, as well as their insights and recommendations for those considering similar professions. Find more stories at beingyou.shareyourroad.com/community.



Aundrea Lacy
Founder/CEO
Luv's Brownies

"I was diagnosed with dyslexia during my last year of college. My 'struggle' is that I transpose numbers, but that actually turned out to be a blessing: I developed my signature brownie recipe because I accidentally doubled the amount of chocolate!"

beingyou.shareyourroad.com/profile/2829

**Chester Goad**

Disability Advocate

Tennessee Tech University & Author/Speaker

"I struggled with ADD when I was young, but all I needed were the right resources to help me learn. Once I realized what a difference the right access made, I knew that it was my responsibility to work on making sure that everyone had those resources."

beingyou.shareyourroad.com/profile/2765

**Don Winn**

Author and Publisher

Cardboard Box Adventures Publishing

"I am dyslexic. As a child I would have thought it impossible for me to be an author because writing was so hard for me. I later discovered that writing was possible for me and that with hard work and the right tools I could achieve anything."

beingyou.shareyourroad.com/profile/2736

Partner with Parents

Building strong relationships with parents is integral to making sure students with learning and attention issues get the right support. Share the handout on the next page with parents at your school to help them talk to their child about being a student with learning and attention issues, and how together you can all build a stronger learning and attention issues community.

Print out or email the following letter and discussion questions to begin working together with the parents of students with learning and attention issues.



Dear Parent,

As educators, we are always striving to personalize the learning experience for our students in ways that have impact far beyond their school years. We recently watched *Being You*, a documentary from Roadtrip Nation about three young people with learning and attention issues. 1 in 5 people in the United States have a learning or attention issue—brain-based difficulties like dyslexia, dyscalculia, and ADHD that affect reading, writing, math, attention, and organization.

In the documentary, roadtrippers Noah, Nicole, and Stephanie explore what it means to be a student with learning and attention issues. They travel throughout the United States talking to diverse leaders who also have learning and attention issues. Their insightful conversations, shared experiences, and life lessons are featured in *Being You*.

Whether you've already explored the resources available to parents of students with learning and attention issues on Understood.org, or you're new to the discussion, this guide is a great way to spark meaningful conversations about your child's future aspirations and how to achieve them.

We encourage you to watch the documentary with your child and discuss the content together.

Sincerely,

Meet the Roadtrippers



STEPHANIE WHITHAM

Growing up, Stephanie thought she was the only one who learned differently. It wasn't until college—an achievement she was told she'd never reach—that she realized she was part of a much larger cohort of people who experience the world differently, and have harnessed that unique perspective to make significant contributions to the world. She aims to show young people the many faces of learning differences, and help them see that they can accomplish what they put their minds to—not despite, but *because of*, their differences.



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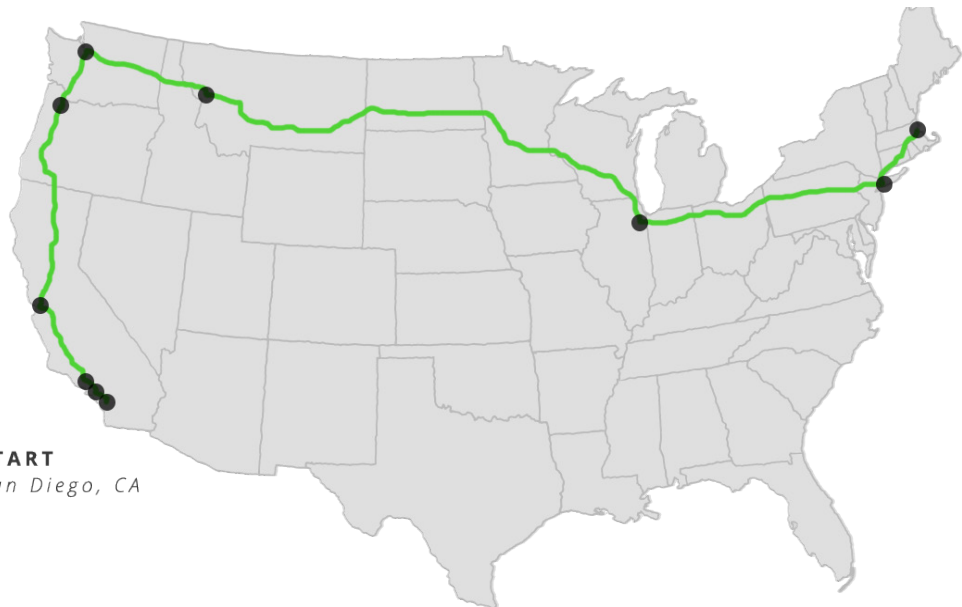
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28 Days



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San Diego, CA



FINISH
Boston, MA

Talk With Your Child

As a parent of a child with learning and attention issues, you may have some conversations with your child that are different from those that other parents have with their kids. But like all parents, you want your child to thrive and build a successful life.

Your child has his or her own story to tell. Talking with kids about their learning and attention issues can help build their self-confidence so they can tell their own stories and advocate for themselves. Talking together also helps to remove the stigma and misunderstandings that kids may encounter along the way.

After watching the documentary, you can use this discussion guide to start a conversation with your child. The questions will help you use the roadtrippers' experiences as a way to frame your child's thoughts and feelings about learning and attention issues and what the future may hold.

Below are some ways to start a dialogue about how your child can build a life doing something he or she loves.

Learning Differently

Noah, Stephanie, Nicole, and all the people they meet have learning and attention issues. They each learn in a different way and have unique thoughts about it. Explore your child's thoughts about learning differently, and share your thoughts, too. Ask your child the following questions and encourage him or her to open up a dialogue with you or with someone else he or she trusts.

Questions to ask your child:

- The roadtrippers each describe their learning and attention issues and how they are affected by them. How have your learning and attention issues affected you? What's different about your experience?
- Stephanie says she got really stressed out about people knowing she has a learning disability. Do you worry about people knowing about your learning and attention issues?
- John Rodrigues tells the roadtrippers: "You're just as smart as anyone else. You just learn differently." Do you agree? What does learning differently mean to you?
- What are the benefits of viewing the world in a different way?

Questions your child can ask to open up a dialogue with you and others:

- How do you feel about other people knowing about my learning and attention issues? (Or, if you have a learning and attention issue as well, your child might ask: How do you feel about other people knowing about your learning and attention issue?)
- What does learning differently mean to you? How do you learn best?

To read more about working with your child's learning differences and strengths, visit u.org/strengths.

“Me Too” Moments

Realizing you’re not alone can be very powerful for kids and families affected by learning and attention issues. Howie Mandel says the two words that changed his life were “me too.” Use these questions to explore your child’s experience with “me too” moments.

Questions to ask your child:

- Howie Mandel said, “The two words that changed my life were ‘me too.’” Why do you think those words were so powerful to him?
- Can you describe a “me too” moment you’ve had?
- Stephanie started out the trip feeling very alone in having nonverbal learning disabilities. By the end of Being You, she said, “There are so many of us out there and we are this massive, thinking, empathetic power force.” What do you think brought her to this “me too” moment?
- Noah was most affected by meeting with LeDerick Horne. Why do you think this meeting was so powerful for him?

Questions your child can ask to open up a dialogue with you and others:

- Can you describe a “me too” moment you’ve had?
- Do you have friends who have learning or attention issues?

Help your child have more “me too” moments. Explore a collection of stories about famous people with learning and attention issues at u.org/celebrities.

Self-Confidence

Stephanie and Nicole both started the trip unsure of their own abilities. Over the monthlong trip, they gained self-confidence. Use these questions to explore the idea of building self-confidence and to explain to your child how you’ve become more self-confident in your lifetime.

Questions to ask your child:

- Bonnie Kennedy told the roadtrippers, “You create yourself every day. Every action you do, every decision you make, you are creating yourself every day. And when you do that intentionally, you will have confidence.” What do you think it means to create yourself intentionally?
- Nicole explained that one of the things she wanted at the end of the trip was to walk away with courage to be herself. Do you feel courageous in being you?
- What makes you feel confident about yourself?
- How has having a learning or attention issue affected your self-confidence?
- Stephanie also said, “I don’t know what I’m supposed to be doing. I don’t know what to do next, I’m just kind of stuck.” Can you relate to feeling stuck?
- Stephanie said she believes everybody has a purpose and something meaningful that they’re supposed to be doing. What meaningful thing do you want to do?

Questions your child can ask to open up a dialogue with you and others:

- What have you done to create yourself intentionally?
- Do you feel courageous in being you? How did you get there?

- What about me makes you most proud?
- Have you found your purpose?
- What do you do that you find most meaningful?
- How do I figure out what to do next?

Find ways to help your child develop confidence. Visit u.org/self-esteem.

Transitioning From High School and Support Systems

Whether kids are going to college or starting to work, they're leaving behind familiar support systems when they leave high school. It's important for young adults to understand that they can seek support in college and in their careers, too. Use these questions to explore your child's feelings and brainstorm strategies to identify the supports that could help.

Questions to ask your child:

- Noah's mom says he's been talking about college since middle school, but that he's still nervous. Why do you think Noah is nervous about going to college?
- Are you nervous about transitioning out of high school?
- Evelyn Polk Green said, "It was when I got to college and lost my support and scaffolding system that I completely fell apart." Do you worry about that happening?
- Pete Denman said he was ashamed of his learning disability and never told people. Do you see benefits to telling people about your learning issues? How about disadvantages?
- Who or what has helped you succeed in learning and in being you?
- John Rodrigues gave the roadtrippers some great advice about the future. He said, "Instead of thinking about what you're supposed to do, sit and think about what you really want to do. Don't live someone else's life. You need to take your talents and live your life." Do you feel like you're able to do this?

Questions your child can ask to open up a dialogue with you and others:

- Were you nervous when you left high school?
- Does anything make you nervous about me leaving high school?
- What supports are available for me when I go to college or start a job?
- How do you think I should handle talking to people about my learning and attention issue?
- How has your support system helped you succeed?
- Are you doing what you want to do, or what you think you are supposed to do?

Learn about different paths to success after high school. Visit u.org/leaving-high-school.

Acceptance

Accepting and celebrating learning and attention issues isn't always easy. Use these questions to help talk with your child about how people get to a place where they can appreciate being themselves.

Questions to ask your child:

- How have the leaders in *Being You* used their learning and attention issues to create new or exciting careers?
- Howie Mandel told the roadtrippers to be open to everything and "just say yes." What do you think he meant?

- Evelyn Polk Green said, “You do what you can and the rest you just let go. Grab ahold of what you can make a difference with and what you can change.” Do you feel like you’re able to do this?

Questions your child can ask to open up a dialogue with you and others:

- How do you stay focused on the positive things in your life?
- Have there been things you were afraid of that you just said yes to? Was it worth it?
- How do you learn what you can change and what you can let go of?

Sharing Your Story

David Flink told the roadtrippers, “The call to action is: ‘If you have an LD story, tell someone.’ The key is, take that call.” That’s not always easy to do, but it’s something to aspire to. Share these quotes from *Being You* with your child. You can use them as a springboard for talking to your child about the power of sharing his or her story.



John Rodrigues
Professional Ice Sculptor/Content Specialist
U.S. Department of Education

“My life, ever since I looked for another thing to be good at, has been happy. I’ve been happy.”



Evelyn Polk Green
President, National Board of Directors
Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)

“It’s learning to thrive with [your learning and attention issue] and celebrate it and understand how it has as much to do with your successes as it does with any challenges that you have.”



Nicole
Roadtripper
Being You

“[The people we’ve talked to are] all able to see [their learning and attention issues] in a positive light. I think that’s really important—to be able to look at your challenges and not be angry at them, to accept them.”



David Flink
Founder/Chief Empowerment Officer
Eye to Eye

“It’s part of my identity as much as anything else.”



Nicole
Roadtripper
Being You

“I really feel like if I had someone saying, ‘You know, this isn’t weird,’ that would be really good. That’s one reason I’m doing this. I really want to be OK with who I am.”



Stephanie
Roadtripper
Being You

"Everyone has a story. Everyone has something that makes them unique and who they are."



Noah
Roadtripper
Being You

"I want people to understand they're not by themselves."