



“I love my human rights” series: Teresa Pocock’s story

Conversation guide

Introduction

This guide has been prepared to assist communities, organizations, and Grade 10 -12 classrooms explore themes in BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner’s “I love my human rights” video series. The video series uses storytelling as a tool to help personalize complex human rights concepts and encourage empathy and action. In Teresa Pocock’s video, she shares the importance of self-advocacy and the right of people with intellectual disabilities to live where they choose. Use the questions provided to explore the video’s themes.

To consider in planning the activity

These questions touch on subjects that may bring up difficult emotions for people who have experienced ableism, have family members or friends with disabilities or experience a similar lack of power in decisions about where they live.

- You may wish to use some of the questions as journal prompts, so that participants can reflect on them individually before discussing them.
- While preparing for this activity, take some time to identify which of these questions should be omitted from the conversation or modified to avoid putting participants at risk.
- Check in with participants who may be uniquely impacted before the activity to let them know about the content and see how they feel about participating in the activity. Follow up with them after the activity and offer to connect them with community-based supports if needed. Information is provided in the Community Resource section.

Getting started

Take steps to ensure that participants feel safe and comfortable to express themselves:

1. Watching the video may raise difficult or unexpected emotions, especially for those who have experienced ableism, have family members or friends with disabilities, or have similar experiences of disempowerment. Ensure people know they can step away temporarily or do whatever they need to do to take care of their well-being. Tell the group that everyone has a responsibility to create a space that is as safe as possible, especially for those who may have or be close to similar experiences as those shared in the video.
2. Highlight that creating a safe space does not mean that the space will be comfortable for everyone. Discussing this video may lead to some discomfort for those learning about the history and experiences of people with intellectual disabilities in BC. Tell participants that it’s okay to feel this discomfort because it helps us reflect on attitudes and actions and contribute to positive change.

3. The purpose of this discussion is to listen to and learn from one another. Ask participants to help develop a community agreement to create a space where people show mutual respect and listen attentively to what others share. Examples may include:

- listening actively
- being present
- sharing only your own story
- opening your mind to learning new ideas
- showing gratitude when people share their experience
- knowing you have the right not to share your story
- respecting confidentiality

Once the community agreement is developed, the group can come up with ways to ensure that the guidelines are followed and respected. For more information about creating a community agreement, see [Safer space policy/Community Agreements: The Anti-Oppression Network](#).

4. Identify ways for everyone to participate and to be heard. For example, consider taking turns speaking around a circle or pausing from time to time to invite those who have not yet spoken to have the opportunity to contribute.
5. Take breaks. Pause for tea, snacks, and movement breaks.

Pre-viewing activity

Invite participants to think about and/or share some decisions they have made today. Give a few examples to get the list started.

Viewing the video

Point out the closed captioning and transcript options to assist students in listening to Teresa's story.

Open the conversation

Choose a few of these questions that will work with participants. Begin with questions that will ease them into the conversation in an emotionally safe manner.

- What did you think while watching the video?
- What did you feel while watching the video?
- Did you find anything surprising in Teresa's story?
- Teresa describes the nursing home as "not nice." What do you imagine Teresa's life might have been like in a nursing home?
- The video helps you get to know a bit about Teresa's life in Vancouver. What are some things that are important to her about her life in Vancouver?
- Teresa talks about herself as capable. Why do you think that word is important to her?
- Teresa calls herself a self-advocate. How did Teresa advocate for herself?
- While Teresa demonstrated strong advocacy skills in defending her right to choose where she lives, she acknowledged that her sister and community members helped her. What are some ways the community might support Teresa to meet her immediate needs? What supports could they provide that would have a more long-term impact on people's right to choose where they live?

Deepen the conversation

Choose a few of these questions that will help the conversation to go deeper.



- Look at the list that you brainstormed before watching the video. How easy was it for you to make and follow through on these decisions? What were some things that made it hard for you to make or follow through on these decisions? How might your ability to make these decisions have changed if you were disabled in ways that you aren't currently?
- Teresa's story is about the right to decide where to live. What are other decisions that people with intellectual disabilities might want to be free to make themselves?
- Can you think of movies or television shows you have watched that feature people with intellectual disabilities? Do they show more about people with intellectual disabilities than just their limitations? Do they show them as capable of making their own decisions? What might you understand about people with intellectual disabilities simply by watching movies or television?
- Teresa and her family worked to get a formal apology from the Ontario government. Why do you think a formal apology might have been important to Teresa?
- Ableism is a term that refers to discrimination against people with disabilities and is used to talk about how people with disabilities are left out or face barriers in our communities. What are some examples of ableism you've noticed or experienced?
- Teresa describes herself as "pretty amazing." Many terms related to disability do the opposite by referring to the disability as a barrier or burden. What are some of terms that focus on disabilities as barriers? What language could we use to replace these terms?
- According to BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, mental disability occurs when a physical or social setting makes it hard for a person with a mental condition or illness to participate. In other words, the barrier to full participation is due to the physical or social setting and not the person with a mental disability. Besides housing, what physical or social settings that may provide barriers to full participation of people with mental disabilities and what can be done to address these barriers?
- In BC, individuals who have experienced discrimination in employment, housing, or services (such as stores, restaurants, or a doctor's office) can make a complaint to the BC Human Rights Tribunal. The video states that the largest number of complaints made to the Tribunal are made by people with disabilities. Why do you think this might be?
- The video concludes with the sentence, "We are inspired by champions like Teresa." People with disabilities often say they don't want to be inspiration for non-disabled people. It can make non-disabled people feel pity for a person with a disability, present the disability as a burden that only exceptional people can overcome, or even distract from people with disabilities getting the support and services they need. Do you think this video makes these mistakes? Why or why not?

Learning more

Choose from these questions and/or resources below to guide continued learning or discussion.

- Teresa talks about loving her human rights, especially the right to choose where she wants to live. Is the freedom to choose where to live a human right? Is it a right for people with disabilities?
- In 1996, BC was the first province in Canada to close large institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. How was this decision made? What impact did it have on people with disabilities living in these institutions? Since 1996, have other provinces made similar decisions?
- Are there adults with intellectual disabilities living in nursing homes in BC today? What is this experience like and why is it decided this is the best option for them?
- What supports and services are available to help people with intellectual disabilities fight for their rights like Teresa?



Bring the conversation to a close

- Revisit the decisions listed at the beginning of the discussion.
- Summarize some key ideas and values that were shared in the discussion that reflect a recognition of and commitment to a human rights-based approach to disability issues.
- Teresa loves her human rights and fought for her right to make decisions for herself. Invite participants to explore what rights are important to them.

Resources

To learn more about human rights and how they are protected in BC

- BCOHRC video: [What are human rights?](#)
- BCOHRC video: [B.C.'s human rights system](#)

To learn more about human rights for people with intellectual disabilities:

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities](#) (video)
- [A right to housing for all: Ensuring a human rights approach inclusive of all persons with developmental disabilities](#) (report)

To learn more about self-advocacy and supports for people with intellectual disabilities in BC

- [Self advocate blog: voices of adults with down syndrome](#) (blog)
- [Down Syndrome International self-advocacy guide](#) (pdf)
- [Community Living BC](#) (website)
- [Inclusion BC](#) (website) and [Inclusion Canada](#) (website)
- [Canadian Down Syndrome Society](#) (website)

To learn more about the history of institutionalization in BC:

- [Truths of Institutionalization in Canada](#) (website)
- [Institutions and People with Intellectual Disabilities](#) (website and videos)
- [BC's Institutions](#) (website and videos)

To learn more about ableism:

- [Ableism 101: What it is, what it looks like, and what we can do to fix it](#)
- [Rewrite the rules - BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner \(bchumanrights.ca\)](#)

To learn more about other people's stories about human rights

- Video series - [BC's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner \(bchumanrights.ca\)](#)

