



# Youth Discussion Guide for the Campaign for Disability Employment's “I Can” PSA

Fostering CAN-Do Attitudes  
Among Youth and Young Adults

What can  
**YOU** do?

The Campaign for  
Disability Employment

[www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org)

## About the *Campaign for Disability Employment*

The *Campaign for Disability Employment* is a collaborative effort between several disability and business organizations that seek to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers and others to recognize the value and talent they bring to the workplace, as well as the dividend to be realized by fully including people with disabilities at work.

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### Funding and Support



Office of Disability Employment Policy,  
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[www.dol.gov/odep](http://www.dol.gov/odep)

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Guide available in alternative formats.  
For more information, please visit:  
[whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org)

**What can?**  
**YOU do?** The Campaign for  
Disability Employment  
[www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org)

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# “I Can” PSA Discussion Guide

## Introduction

At work, it’s what people CAN do that matters. That’s the simple yet significant message that several leading disability and business organizations decided they wanted to communicate when they joined forces to create the Campaign for Disability Employment.

Because myths and stereotypes continue to create barriers to employment opportunities for qualified people with disabilities, members of the *Campaign* launched *What can YOU do?* – a national public education effort to emphasize the value and talent people with disabilities add to businesses and organizations. As part of the *Campaign*, they decided to produce a public service announcement (PSA) featuring people with disabilities – not actors

– who CAN and DO make valuable contributions to America’s workplaces and economy every day. The result was “I Can.”

“I Can” features seven people with disabilities

sharing what they “can do” on the job when given the opportunity.

They represent different ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds and disabilities – some apparent and some not. The people in the PSA were chosen to reflect

the diversity of skills people with disabilities offer and to challenge common misconceptions about disability and employment.

“I Can” was filmed in July 2009 at participants’ actual workplaces. The people featured include:

- **Bob Boorstin**, a Fortune 500 corporate policy director
- **Patty Rivas**, a grocery store co-owner and manager
- **Michael Saulter**, a carpenter and landscaper
- **Mat McCollough**, a communications manager
- **Josh Sundquist**, an author and motivational speaker
- **Meg Krause**, an Army veteran and public relations consultant
- **Cheryl Collier**, an elementary school teacher

After sharing their job skills, participants remind viewers that at work, it’s what people CAN do that matters and ask viewers to consider what they can do to advance disability employment and America’s ideal of equal opportunity for all.

What can?  
YOU do.

“I Can” features seven people with disabilities sharing what they CAN do.

## Suggested Use for Guide

To support successful employment outcomes for youth and young people with disabilities, it is important that all people, with and without disabilities, value each individual for his or her skills and talents. This is an especially important lesson for today's youth – our nation's future leaders. Today more than ever, businesses need loyal and productive employees who can think differently about how to solve problems and get the job done. People with disabilities do this in America's workplaces every day.

The *Campaign for Disability Employment* highly encourages the use of the "I Can" PSA and accompanying Youth Discussion Guide to start a conversation among all youth, with and without disabilities, about the importance of focusing on ability and talent, not making assumptions about what people can or can't do, and setting goals for employment. The "I Can" PSA encourages everyone to set employment goals high and to remember that at work, it's what people CAN do that matters.

What can  
YOU do?

**Start a conversation  
among youth about  
the importance of  
focusing on  
ability and talent.**

Youth and adults may use this guide to plan and lead a discussion among young people in classrooms, community organizations, religious organizations, sports teams, clubs and other settings. The proposed objectives of the "I Can" discussion are to encourage youth to:

- Recognize that all people have many different types of skills and talents
- Consider their own career goals and the steps they'll need to follow to achieve them

- Think about the concepts of value, loyalty and productivity in the work environment
- Understand that incorrect assumptions create obstacles to success for people with disabilities in school and at work
- Realize that through their own beliefs and attitudes, they can play an important role in improving opportunities for people with disabilities
- Appreciate the importance of work to one's identity and self-esteem

## Planning for a Good Discussion

A good discussion can take place anywhere if the location is accessible to all participants and steps are taken to help them feel comfortable listening and speaking without being judged. This means making sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute if they want to and encouraging participants to follow basic courtesies, such as taking turns to speak and respecting others' comments even if participants may disagree with them.

A discussion about the "I Can" PSA is not meant to be a training exercise or test. Rather, it is meant to help people think about certain things more broadly – specifically assumptions they may make about people with disabilities. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the suggested questions included in this guide. It is not recommended that participants be required to take notes. However, it might be helpful to provide participants with pen and paper to write down any thoughts or reactions they want to remember later. A handout with brief information about the "I Can" PSA participants is included at the end of this guide and may be helpful during the discussion.

When it comes to ensuring accessibility, the two main areas the leader needs to consider are physical access to the meeting space and access to the discussion content. The discussion should take place at a location that is accessible to anyone using a wheelchair or other mobility aid (for example, there should be a ramped or level entrance to the building and access to an elevator if the meeting room is not on the ground level), has accessible restrooms, and offers seating useable by all participants.

If print materials are used (such as the recommended PSA participant handout at the end of this guide) alternative formats, such as large print or Braille, should be provided upon request. It is also important to determine whether a sign language interpreter, realtime captioning or assistive listening devices are needed. Please keep in mind that securing an interpreter, materials in Braille or other accommodations may take time, so this should be taken into account when planning the discussion.

The “I Can” PSA is captioned and, thus, accessible to viewers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty processing audible information. Finally, the discussion leader is encouraged to use the audio introduced version of the PSA in order to ensure that the video is accessible to viewers who are blind or visually impaired, and also as a tool to teach the importance of descriptions when showing visuals.

Further information to assist in ensuring accessibility of a meeting site is available at <http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm>.

The recommended amount of time to allow for this discussion is about 40-50 minutes. When possible, smaller groups

are preferred in order to more easily encourage sharing of information and asking questions. The discussion leader should take group size into consideration when setting up the meeting room. For example, circle style might work better for a small group (5-15 people) while classroom style might work better for a larger group (15-30+).

## Materials Checklist

- Access to “I Can” PSA on DVD or via [whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org)
- Audio/visual equipment (DVD player, computer, speakers, projector, extension cords, etc.)
- Copies of recommended handout included as page 14 in this guide
- Whiteboard or flipchart and markers
- Blank paper and pens or pencils for group participants

Discussion leaders new to the concepts presented in this guide may want to review basics of disability etiquette prior to the discussion. It will also be helpful to know a little about disability disclosure. Relevant sources of information include:

- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Fact Sheet, “Effective Interaction: Communicating With and About People with Disabilities”: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/effectiveinteraction.htm>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Fact Sheet, “Disability Etiquette Tips for Speaking Engagements”: <http://askjan.org/media/disetispeakingfact.doc>
- National Disability & Business Council Disability Etiquette Online Presentation: [https://admin.na6.acrobat.com/\\_a203284292/disabilityetiquette](https://admin.na6.acrobat.com/_a203284292/disabilityetiquette)

What can?  
YOU do?

- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth), “The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities”: <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/411-on-disability-disclosure>
- Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Fact Sheet, “Advising Youth with Disabilities on Disclosure”: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/advising.htm>

## Facilitating the Discussion: Suggested Leader’s Guide

Below is a suggested script and structure the discussion leader may follow to facilitate a conversation among youth and young adults about the “I Can” PSA and assumptions about disability and employment. Please note that the discussion leader is not required to follow this script. Rather, the suggested discussion is meant to serve as a guide to assist in moving the conversation forward, if necessary. If the conversation progresses naturally without participants needing to be prompted, then there is no need to stick to the script, but the questions may be helpful in directing the group discussion. The discussion leader should pay attention to the conversation to determine when more or less direction may be needed.

### **Before Showing the “I Can” PSA**

**Group Leader:** *Introduce yourself and invite others to do the same.*

We’re here today to talk about the many things we all can do, including those of us who have disabilities, as well as our goals for the future. This is not a test, and

there are no wrong answers. Rather, we’re going to discuss some important issues about work, life and the way we think about and treat others.

But first, I’d like to go over some things to consider for our discussion. Please use respect and listen to others. In fact, respecting others for what they bring to a group is one of the important things we’ll talk about today. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to our discussion by taking turns and listening respectfully to what each member of the group has to say. If you have something to say, please feel free to raise your hand.

### What can YOU do?

Now, to get things started, let’s learn a little more about each other. Specifically, I’d like to talk about some of the skills and talents that make us each who we are – the things we “can do.” I’ll start.

**Group Leader:** *Share some of your special talents – what you CAN do. The types of statements that might be appropriate include:*

- I’m good at math.
- I can draw/paint/sew, etc.
- I’m good at video games.
- I’m good at basketball.
- I can play a musical instrument.
- I’m good at helping my brother/sister, etc.
- I’m a good friend.

### ? What are some of the things YOU can do?

**Group Leader:** *Encourage participants to share their skills and talents.*





**?** Let's talk about what you'd like to do when you're older. **What's your dream job?** I'll start.

**Group Leader:** Share your career aspirations.

**?** Would anyone like to share what you want to "be" or "do" when you're older?

**Group Leader:** Encourage each participant to share his or her career aspirations.

**?** Who knows the steps you'll have to take to reach your goals? What do you think you're going to have to do to succeed in your dream job? Again, I'll start.

**Group Leader:** Share what is/was required to reach your career goal. For instance, graduate with good grades, go to college, work hard, learn a skill, etc.

**?** Do you think anything or anyone should stop you from pursuing your goals? What if someone told you that you couldn't achieve your dreams? How would you feel?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses, adding your feelings as appropriate.

Now, I'd like to share a short video with you that has something to do with our discussion topic. Pay attention to what the people in this video have to say.

**Group Leader:** Share the PSA participant handout and show the "I Can" PSA.

## After Showing the "I Can" PSA

**?** First, I'd like to ask what are your reactions to the video? What did you like about the video? What didn't you like?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for general responses.

Now, I'd like to tell you more about each of the people in that video. There were seven people altogether, and they are all people with disabilities, not actors playing roles. Each of them has a disability. Some of their disabilities are visible, and others are not.

## Meet the "I Can" PSA Participants

The first person was **Bob Boorstin**, who



said, "I can solve difficult problems for a Fortune 500 company." Bob is an executive for the com-

pany Google and a former speechwriter for a U.S. president. He also worked on several presidential campaigns. He earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree from Cambridge University in England. Bob has bi-polar disorder, a mental health condition. People who have bi-polar disorder may experience extreme changes in their mood, energy levels, thinking and behavior that can be disruptive to daily life. Bob feels key factors in his career success have been taking care of himself and understanding how to manage his condition.

What can  
YOU do?

What can  
YOU do?

The woman who said, “I can run a successful business” is named **Patty Rivas**.



Patty co-owns and manages a grocery store. She holds a master’s degree in social work

from the University of Maryland and worked as a social worker before becoming an entrepreneur. She decided to join members of her family in opening the grocery store because she thought it seemed like an exciting challenge and liked the idea of being her own boss. Patty also has paraplegia. Paraplegia means someone’s legs are paralyzed. Some people with paraplegia can walk for short periods. Patty sometimes uses a walker instead of a wheelchair. Patty says the big factor in her career success has been support and encouragement from her family and friends.

The man who said, “I can manage your home improvements” is named **Michael Saulter**.



Michael is a landscaper and carpenter. Since the time he was

young, he always enjoyed building things and so Michael chose this line of work with this interest and skill in mind. Michael has an intellectual disability that impacts his reading and writing. He says his disability wasn’t a factor when deciding what job to pursue, but that he has had to develop different ways to make sure he understands his customers’ needs. He says even though he works with his hands, comprehension and communication skills are an important part of the job.

**Mat McCollough** is the man who said, “I can publicize your message.”



Mat is a communications director for an office within a large city govern-

ment. His job involves a lot of writing, working with the press and strategic planning with city leaders. Mat earned his undergraduate degree in political science from James Madison University in 1999 and a master’s in public administration from American University in 2004. His first professional job was as a grants manager. Mat has cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy affects a person’s movement skills and causes a variety of physical limitations. Mat uses crutches to help him walk. His speech is also impacted by his cerebral palsy.

The woman who said, “I can put my military experience to work for your company” is **Meg Krause**.



Meg is an Army reservist. She served two tours

of duty in the Iraq war as an Army medic. When she returned, she earned her degree in public relations from Pennsylvania State University in 2008. Today, Meg works as a public relations consultant. Her education was supported by the GI Bill, which helps active service members and veterans pursue higher education. Meg has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop when someone has been exposed to an extremely traumatic event. Some soldiers develop PTSD after being in combat in a war, but it can also arise after

events like accidents or disasters. People who have PTSD may experience symptoms, such as fear and depression, especially when reminded of the traumatic event, and may have problems sleeping and concentrating. Meg says the key to not letting PTSD prevent her from succeeding on the job is effective communication with her employer and co-workers.

The man who said, “I can motivate your audience” is named **Josh Sundquist**.



Josh is a motivational speaker and best-selling author who earned an undergraduate

degree in business from the College of William and Mary and master’s degree in communications from the University of Southern California. As a motivational speaker, he is paid to travel around the country speaking to groups of young people and adults about his experience as a person with a disability and cancer survivor, strategies for overcoming obstacles and the importance of goal setting. Josh has even spoken at the White House. He is also a skier and competed in the 2006 Paralympics in Italy. Josh has one leg. His left leg was amputated due to cancer when he was nine years old. He says being a speaker and writer is his dream job because he loves telling stories. He got started speaking after hearing a motivational speaker at school and realizing that his experiences might also help others confront challenges in their lives.

The woman who said, “I can teach your children” is



**Cheryl Collier**, an elementary school teacher

who is deaf. Cheryl teaches at the Maryland School for the Deaf and uses sign language to communicate with her students. She went into teaching because she has always liked working with young children. When not in her classroom, Cheryl provides mentoring and support to middle school students as a volleyball coach.

### **Challenging Assumptions**

Each person in the video shared what they “can do” when given the opportunity – what they can do on the job. But they also said some statements that go beyond their skills and talents. These statements were:

- I can boost your bottom line
- I can add value to your workplace
- I can be a loyal and productive employee

**What can YOU do?**

**?** **What do you think it means to “boost a bottom line” or “add value to a workplace?”**

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for general responses.

Contributing your talents and skills at work helps a business profit or grow – or, in other words, helps boost its bottom line. Your abilities – what you CAN do – benefit the workplace and add value to the business.

**?** **What do you think it means to be a “loyal and productive employee?”**

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses.

**I CAN add value to your workplace.**

A loyal and productive employee is someone who works hard, completes his or her work to the highest standard possible, and believes in and contributes to achieving an organization's mission.

In the video, we also hear the people say they can't put their skills to work:

- If I'm not given the opportunity
- If you don't recognize my talents and ability
- If you don't hire me
- If you don't have an open mind and a workplace that is open to everyone
- If you don't realize that America works best when EVERYBODY works

What can  
**YOU** do?

**?** Why do you think some people might not give someone with a disability an opportunity – whether that opportunity is a job or anything else?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses.

Now I'd like you to think for a minute about whether you know someone who has a disability. **What are they like? How do you know them? Do they work? Do they go to school? Do you sometimes make assumptions about what they can and cannot do that are different than assumptions you make about others?**

**Do you sometimes make assumptions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do that are different than assumptions you make about others?**

**than assumptions you make about others?**

I'm not asking you to share this information aloud, but just to think about it for a moment.

**?** What do you think happens when people make assumptions about what a person can or can't do?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses.

It's important to know that in many circumstances denying someone with a disability an opportunity may be illegal. There are laws in place to protect people from discrimination based on disability. Two of the most well known and wide reaching of these laws are the Americans with Disabilities Act, usually called the ADA, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, usually called IDEA. IDEA addresses the educational needs of young people with disabilities, while the ADA was enacted to make America's communities and workplaces fully accessible to people with disabilities.

**?** Speaking of the workplace, were you surprised by the type of job some of the people in the video have? Why?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses.

Sometimes people make assumptions about the type of job a person with a disability might have or the type of work he or she can do. We all have different abilities, interests and skills. Having a disability shouldn't prevent any person from following their career dreams and reaching their goals.

What will YOU do to help spread the message that at work, it's what people CAN do that matters?

**?** Can you think of a few people with known disabilities who may be in careers or jobs that you might not expect? People who may be good role models for youth?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses. If no responses are provided, people/jobs you could share include Bethany Hamilton, who, after losing her left arm due to a shark attack, is now an author and continues to compete as a professional surfer; President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was the 32nd President of the United States, was a polio survivor and used a wheelchair; Nick Jonas, singer-songwriter, musician and actor best known as one of the Jonas Brothers, has Type I diabetes; Steve Jobs, co-founder and chief executive officer of Apple and previously Pixar Animation Studios, has dyslexia; Daryl "Chill" Mitchell, NAACP Image Award winning actor and rapper, is paralyzed from the waist down due to a motorcycle accident; Sue Thomas, who was the first person who is deaf to work as an undercover investigator doing lip-reading of suspects for the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Scott Eyre, pitcher for the San Francisco Giants and the Philadelphia Phillies, was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at age 30.

## Conclusion

Work is an important part of people's lives. It means more than just getting paid. It means being able to make your own choices about how you want to live your life. The right to work and be recognized for your accomplishments is an important aspect of America's ideal of equality and opportunity for all.

I hope today's discussion will help you think more about the many things YOU can do, not just in your everyday life and activities, but also in the way you treat and interact with other people. By recognizing the special skills and talents each person has, YOU can play an important role in sharing the message that it's what people CAN do that matters.

**?** What is one positive thing YOU can do to help share the message that it's what people CAN do that matters?

**Group Leader:** Allow a few minutes for responses.

The video we saw is called "I Can" and was created by the *Campaign for Disability Employment* – a partnership of leading disability and business organizations. The *Campaign's* website offers a lot of information about disability and employment, including information specifically for young people. I encourage you to visit [whatcanyoudocampaign.org](http://whatcanyoudocampaign.org).

Before we finish, let's hear from those seven talented people again.

**Group Leader:** Show the "I Can" PSA a second time. Upon its conclusion, thank everyone for participating.

What can YOU do?

## Meet the “I Can” PSA Participants



At work, it's what people CAN do that matters. People with disabilities CAN and DO make important contributions to America's workplaces and economy. The “I Can” public service announcement (PSA) introduces us to seven people with disabilities – not actors playing roles – showing what they “can do” on the job when given the opportunity.

### What Can YOU Do?

**“I can solve difficult problems for a Fortune 500 company.”**

*-Bob Boorstin*

Bob is a corporate policy director for technology provider, Google. As one of the millions of Americans living with bi-polar disorder, he works to reduce the stigma associated with mental health conditions.



**“I can run a successful business.”**

*-Patty Rivas*

Patty, who uses a wheelchair, co-owns and manages a grocery store. Her customers evaluate her on her ability - not her disability.



**“I can manage your home improvements.”**

*-Michael Saulter*

Michael owns a successful landscaping and carpentry business. He also has an intellectual disability that impacts his reading and writing.



**“I can publicize your message.”**

*-Mat McCollough*

Mat McCollough has a challenging career as a communications manager. Every day, Mat, who has cerebral palsy, puts his talent and skills to work for his employer, the Government of the District of Columbia.



**“I can motivate your audience.”**

*-Josh Sundquist*

Josh is a motivational speaker, author and business owner. Josh's left leg was amputated due to cancer when he was nine years old.



**“I can put my military experience to work for your company.”**

*-Meg Krause*

Meg is a public relations consultant and Army veteran. She has not let her post-traumatic stress disorder prevent her from succeeding on the job.



**“I can teach your children.”**

*-Cheryl Collier*

Cheryl, a teacher who is deaf, proves every day that at work, it's what people CAN do that matters.

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