

Disability Awareness: Speechless (Television Series) Est. Time: 30 Minutes Viewing/45 Minutes Class

Objective

Explore how individuals with physical disabilities are sometimes perceived and how those perceptions can impact the individual.

Overview

The sitcom *Speechless* follows a family of five, including a teenager with cerebral palsy. The oldest of three siblings, J.J. DiMeo uses a wheelchair for mobility and relies on a communication board to speak. The show humorously displays the challenges often faced by families of individuals with physical disabilities. In this episode J.J. comes across a hockey team composed of players with disabilities and wants to join the team.

Activity

View the following episode of *Speechless* and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *Speechless* (2016–2019), Season 1, Episode 9

Studio: ABC

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. Do you think J.J.'s classmates were insensitive for their response to his football play during gym class? How would you have responded in that same situation?
2. Compare the initial responses of both J.J.'s mother and father to his desire to play hockey. Which parent do you most identify with? Explain.
3. How did this episode alter your perception of individuals with physical disabilities?
4. As a teacher, how might you use the insight gained from this episode to encourage independence of students with physical disabilities?