

Other people
should be labeled
'not disabled yet'



The Tao of Ed

from his talks and interviews



Most people think we are unhappy. Disability has nothing to do with whether you're happy or unhappy.



The prejudice against us is the worst thing around. I call it 'handicapism.' It puts you apart, makes people think that you're something *other* – that you're weak, sick, and unable.

The best thing people all over the world have got going is our differences, not our similarities. We

learn so much from each other because of our differences. Yet we are often so afraid of those differences — right?

One of the things that happens to many of us with disabilities is we wake up; we see how our society has been brainwashed to fear us. People literally *fear* us because of our disabilities. They have terrible misconceptions about who we are.

I have come up with a phrase: ‘temporarily able-bodied.’ I mean, why should I be labeled ‘disabled?’ Other people should be labeled, ‘not disabled yet.’



Remember that a lot of us have been through disability and understand it from within. Often we felt awful about ourselves before we began to rebuild our attitudes and became empowered about who we are and then finally, finally, loved ourselves again.

That is a powerful human experience. That gives us more power to share with people and more knowledge to share with them.

Never think that you don’t know ■■■.

See this? I can be paralyzed from the neck down and be up here in control of all of you. It blows people’s minds — but not mine any more.



Never quit. Never quit, no matter what it is. Never let anybody put you down. I don’t care if it’s the damned doctors; they’re good at putting people down. Stop them, tell them it’s not all right. Beware: medical folks won’t like you

to do that. Why do we lie there and just take it? We can ask a doctor, ‘Why do you prescribe this medication’ or ‘What side effects does it have?’

We need to be in control of our lives. I don’t care who it is. Maybe they have more experience than us medically. But we know how our body feels and we don’t want someone making choices for us. More important than anything else is being assertive about what you feel. Be confident that you know what’s going on with yourself more than anybody else does. Your instincts are probably pretty right on.

At least ask! Don’t go away feeling, ‘Damn! Why didn’t I have the guts to do that?’



The one thing disabled people can do to change stereotypes about disability is to be themselves. Putting on a mask, pretending to be somebody else, won’t change anything.



I look for the challenge; I look for it a lot. The word ‘no’ is a very interesting word. I’ve learned that the word ‘no’ means ‘yes’ sometimes.

I do a lot of fund-raising, so I hustle money. The word ‘no,’ I don’t stop at. That means ‘maybe’ to me. It means try another way; figure it out. And usually, after a while, I am successful. One of my favorite words, is ‘persist.’ If you want to succeed in something, be persistent. Figure out another angle, another angle.

Although you’ve got to have a measure of patience, it’s very important to be militant. If we don’t push, we’ll fall. We need to develop more

militant leaders.

That's why ADAPT is so important. ADAPT is our very experienced wing, people who aren't afraid to go to the streets for what they, for what we all, believe in. The people of Adapt have been in institutions. That's why they're so willing to put their bodies on the line.



One of the problems is that a lot of advocates, when they go inside a [government] administration, they lose the ability to hold people accountable.

The bureaucracy certainly isn't empowering people. It's taking their power away, and having extremely low expectations of what they can do. We know that people can do so much more.



The most important word in the English language is love. That's what this [Partners in Policymaking] gathering is. This is love here, and learning. Get together and you will learn to love each other.

The way I began to break loose of all the bad things that I felt for myself was to reach out to help somebody else. We think our lives are about who we are and our own problems, but the more we help someone else, the more likely it is to help move us on.

We've got a lot to do together.



I'm getting prouder all the time as I see you and thousands of other disabled people saying, 'It's time we got involved and turned things around.'

No one else will do it for us. If we learned anything from the every one of the civil rights movements it's that when others speak for you, you lose. Ø