

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## A Platform to Empower the Disabled

03/06/21 / **Keyword: empower**

ECP coach Alison wants to tell everyone about 'Special Books by Special Kids', where disabled people tell their story on camera, creating an abundance of videos worth watching.



Photo by [Nathan Anderson on Unsplash](#).

As someone who generally thinks of YouTube as a source of entertainment, when I discovered 'Special Books by Special Kids' (SBSK) a few years ago, I was **taken aback** with the enormous educational value and impact of their videos, which never fail to bring a smile to my face and a tear to my eye.

With over 2 billion views across social media, SBSK is one of the largest disability platforms in the world, providing a space for disabled and **neurodiverse** people of all backgrounds to share their story. However, that wasn't the creator's original intention.

During his time as a teacher of children with various disabilities, Chris Ulmer collaborated with his students on a project designed to **empower** them to become self-**advocates** and storytellers. The avenue to accomplish this goal was for his students to write about what life was like from their perspective. Sadly, no publishers were interested in the book his students had created together, so they began filming short videos to spread awareness of their classroom project, which they uploaded to the SBSK Facebook page for their local community to see. This was the only goal besides having fun while learning valuable skills to succeed in the digital age.

Despite his humble expectations for the project, one day, Chris received a phone call **out of the blue** from someone working at

ABC News, which led to a story about his class being broadcast worldwide by ABC World News. One of his videos was then uploaded to ABC's Facebook page, gaining hundreds of millions of views within a week.

Suddenly, SBSK's Facebook page had 150,000 followers from all around the world, and Chris started receiving emails from disabled people of all ages, many of whom wrote to share experiences of their time in school and asked whether Chris would be interested in interviewing them for a video.

SBSK evolved to include both his students and these new friends from outside the classroom. **By** May 2016, the Facebook page had 400,000 followers, and Chris realised then that this project could end up having a tremendous impact on the world. In order to pursue this **endeavour** full-time, he made the difficult decision to give up his teaching job and began travelling around the USA interviewing disabled children and adults of all diagnoses.

Over the years, SBSK has featured hundreds of individuals and their stories, **surpassing** 2 billion views in over 130 different countries. Although the content has spread around the world, their mission remains the same: to give people a platform to

### Useful vocabulary

- to empower somebody:** to give somebody more power
- to be taken aback:** to be surprised
- neurodiverse:** having atypical mental patterns (not neurotypical)
- advocate:** a person who publicly shows support for something
- out of the blue:** without warning, unexpectedly
- by (+ date/time):** indicating something happened before that date/time
- endeavour:** a project, an attempt to achieve a goal
- to surpass something:** to go beyond sth, to be more than sth
- to acknowledge:** to recognise
- to adhere to something:** to believe in and follow the practises of sth

### Let's chat about that!

1. Do you live with a disability or know someone who does?
2. What is neurodiversity?
3. Do you think platforms like SBSK are important? Why?
4. Have you watched any of the SBSK videos? Do you like them?
5. What else can we do to empower disabled and neurodiverse people?
6. Do you think political correctness is important when talking about disability?

# LIVE! English Events

Come and socialise in English!

## COFFEE SATURDAYS Important news!

5th June at 11:00 to 12:30

Panadería Bertiz, Calle Francia 23

That's right, we're meeting face-to-face!



## Cinema Nights

Friday 25th June at 18:15

Send a WhatsApp to John on 657731354

share their truths, while **acknowledging** that each person's story is different and valid, **adhering** to the belief that everybody has a story that's worthy of being heard from them directly.

Personally, I've been recommending this channel to everyone I meet, since it's opened my eyes and heart to all the wonderful ways we're different, or as the website describes it: "the diversity of the human condition".

Written/adapted from [sbsk.org](http://sbsk.org) by ECP coach Alison Keable

Click [here](#)  
to meet Blake and Tanner in  
one of Alison's favourite  
SBSK videos.

Talk or write about these statements:

*"Disability is a Social Oppression"*

*"Respectful language is more important than political correctness"*

Both were taken from a [website](#) in the UK, which also provides the following definitions:

**impairment** = a medical condition that can be lived with (e.g. cerebral palsy)

**disability** = the physical barriers and attitudes in society that prevent an impaired person from participating in normal daily life (e.g. fear, ignorance, narrow doorways)

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