The parallel track, and how to get off it

The whole seminar in one page. Read it, do the two sentences, and keep them somewhere you will find them again.

WHAT THE PARALLEL TRACK IS

The quieter, lower, gentler version of an ordinary life that gets laid down for a disabled young person, never out of malice, usually out of kindness, close enough to the main track that you do not notice you are on a different one. The easier set. The trip you are left off "for safety." The placement chosen for you. Each is small. Added up over years, it is a smaller life.

WHAT IT IS NOT

An accommodation is not the parallel track. Braille materials, extra time, a quiet room: those give you the same race on equal terms. The parallel track is the lowering of the goal itself. Learn the difference, so you keep the adjustments you need and refuse only the lowering.

THE ONE TEST QUESTION

Would a sighted student with the same ability be offered this?

- If **yes**, it is probably a fair adjustment. Take it.
- If **no**, it is not about your ability. It is about your eyes, and that is the parallel track. You are allowed to say so.

Write that question where you will see it. It will save you years.

YOUR TWO-SENTENCE TASK

- **Sentence one.** "I have assumed that I will never ..." Finish it with one thing you have quietly decided is not for you.
- **Sentence two.** "But the fact is ..." Finish it with one fact that argues against it: a person who did it, a tool that makes it possible, a rule that protects your right to it. A fact, not a feeling.

That is one assumption moved off the parallel track and back onto the main one, in your own words. Keep the paper.

THREE WHO WERE OFFERED THE TRACK AND REFUSED IT

- **Henry Fawcett (1833 to 1884).** Blinded at twenty-five, he became a Member of Parliament and Postmaster General, and opened the Post Office to women and disabled people.
- **John Stanley (1712 to 1786).** Lost his sight as a small child, learned music almost entirely by ear, and became Master of the King's Music.

- **David Blunkett (born 1947).** Born blind, schooled at a residential blind school, he became the first blind Cabinet Minister in modern British history.

They did it with a slate and a stylus. You have a screen reader, a braille display, and the Equality Act. The question is not whether you can. It is what you do with the head start.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- **Your rights:** the Equality Act 2010, plain-English guide at equalityhumanrights.com
- **Education support and your EHCP:** the Council for Disabled Children, councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk; IPSEA (free SEND legal advice), ipsea.org.uk
- **Living and working blind:** RNIB, rnib.org.uk; Thomas Pocklington Trust (further and higher education), pocklington.org.uk
- **For families:** LOOK UK (mentoring for blind and partially sighted young people and their families), look-uk.org

WATCH THE SEMINAR

The full fifteen-minute video for this companion lives on the Sightlines by Hayley channel and on the seminar page, where the complete script is also published. Next in the mindset track: seminar 05, asking for what you need without shrinking.

Sightlines by Hayley is a youth-led project in Woking, Surrey, founded by Hayley Huixi Xie. Free to use and free to share.