thunder dog

The TRUE STORY of A BLIND MAN, HIS GUIDE DOG & the TRIUMPH of TRUST at GROUND ZERO

Michael Hingson with Susy Flory
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Discussion Questions

1. Michael’s parents decided to mainstream Michael by sending him to a regular school instead of a school for the blind. What did Michael gain by being mainstreamed? What did he miss out on? What do you think parents consider when making the decision whether or not to mainstream their child?

2. Despite advice Michael’s parents were given, they were determined to treat Michael just as they would treat a child who was not blind. How did his parents’ decision to treat him like a normal child help him adapt?

3. Michael faced discrimination almost on a daily basis, but he chose to have a good attitude rather than become angry. What can we learn from Michael about the ability to have self-control over our emotions and choose constructive actions rather than destructive actions?

4. Michael recalls Mr. Herbo, one of the teachers that had a great impact on his life. In what ways did Mr. Herbo have a positive influence on Michael’s life? Can you recall a teacher who made a difference in your life?

5. Michael notes that blind people do not automatically have heightened senses of smell, hearing or touching, but that these senses must be developed as with any other person. What, then, do Michael’s talents, such as riding a bike using echolocation, tell us about the power of the human body to adapt to and overcome challenges?

6. Have you ever known a person with a guide dog or therapy animal? Michael frequently refers to his relationship with Roselle as that of a team: they must work together. How might knowing how to effectively work in a team shape Michael’s interaction with others including Roselle?

7. Michael writes, “I have always felt that every life experience helps us prepare for what is to follow.” This is evident in Michael’s story when his keen senses help him decode the situation in the World Trade Center. Have you noticed in your own life that previous experiences prepared you for what was to follow?

8. Did you like the way the story went back and forth between important life molding events in Michael’s life and the actual escaping the World Trade Center story?

9. Why do you think Michael is anxious that the lights in the stairwell will go out when he can’t see anyway?

10. On page 173, there are 9 things (Guide Dog Wisdom) Michael learnt on 9/11 from Rosella. What do you think about them? Is it wisdom we could use in our own lives?
11. Michael is passionate about the importance of sharing our experiences with others. How might sharing a story help the teller process an event? What is it about stories that help humans connect?
Interview with Michael Hingson, Author of “Thunder Dog”

December 2010

Malia: Hello this is Malia McKinney and I’m here with Michael Hingson, international public speaker and author. Congratulations on your upcoming book, “Thunder Dog, a Blind Man, His Guide Dog and the Triumph of Trust at Ground Zero.” I understand it’s due out next summer to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11.

Michael: First of all Malia, thank you very much for meeting with me. Yes, the book is due to be out late next summer. Amazon says it will be out August 2nd, and our goal is to have it for the National Federation of the Blind Convention in Orlando. We are all very excited about the book and the opportunities it brings.

Malia: So Michael, 10 years later, what are the biggest changes that you see that have been ushered into this country by 9/11?

Michael: I think the biggest change is that people are allowing fear into their lives much more and not taking control of their lives. Also, the fact that we are so divided when there isn’t a need to be. On the other hand, I see great opportunity for growth. We’ve made such wonderful strides as challenges become more visible and we work together to create solutions to meet those challenges.

Malia: Michael it seems that there are factions in this country that would like to use the memory of the events of 9/11 to keep people polarized. How is your message different?

Michael: I agree that there are people who have been playing on fear. We’ve seen it in the recent political elections and in the media. What we aren’t hearing often enough is talk about how strong our unity was after 9/11. We could still have that unity today if we worked at it. I think that trust is still under attack in this country. It is up to us to reassert our leadership as individuals, first in our own lives and then in the form of collective leadership, getting those who have been tasked with serving us to work together instead of wrangling.

One of the lessons from 9/11 that I share is not to focus on the things that I can’t control but to focus on the things that I can. Despite the things we do not have direct control over, there are many situations we can influence. Trust and teamwork are two things we can work together to achieve. We should be demanding that our politicians, our leaders, work together, regardless of party affiliation. We should be demanding unity and collaboration. If we don’t do that now we’re going to be in worse trouble later.

Malia: So Michael, your book contains lessons that can help unify, heal and empower. Can you give us a little bit more detail about that?

Michael: Besides not worrying about what we can’t control, at the end of the day, there’s nothing better then having a good dog bone and time to play, relax and move on. Roselle and every guide dog I’ve ever had does that very well. Another is that teamwork works. The fact is that on 9/11, my guide dog and I working together helping other people get out, as well as
allowing other people to help us. Team work is critical for our very survival. Trust is the second critical factor. I trust my dog every day to do her job and she trusts me to do mine. It doesn’t get any better than this simple, strong message.

Malia: I can see now how trust and teamwork apply to nearly every aspect of life, to enrich it. The title of the book, “Thunder Dogs” certainly arouses imagination. Tell us about the real life hero in this story.

Michael: The real hero is Roselle, of course. Roselle was my guide dog at the time, my fifth guide dog. The title, “Thunder Dog,” came from the fact that she’s afraid of thunder. On the morning of 9/11 we had a thunderstorm pass over our house about 12:30 a.m., so I had to go down into my basement with her and give her some space away from the lighting and the thunder as much as I could. So I turned up my stereo, I did some work. Even still, she could hear the thunder and was just shaking and quivering under my desk. 5 hours later we woke to go into my office in the World Trade Center. Although we did not hear it at 8:45 and then later at 9:04, as the buildings collapsed it was thunder all around us. So “Thunder Dog” seemed like a naturally appropriate title and I think it’s being well received.

Malia: That’s very poignant to think this dog was afraid of thunder and yet under fire, in life-threatening conditions, she was brave, she did her job and she stayed calm. That’s truly something that is worth pondering.

Michael: And a great lesson: when the chips are down and when people need to work together we do. We should take that into our lives all the time and not wait for the chips to be down; but we can work together. Roselle and I did even in the most adversarial circumstances and the most horrific example possible we worked together and we survived.

Malia: That’s really, really touching. This book promises to inspire virtually everyone and make a perfect gift of encouragement. I understand it can be pre-ordered now on Amazon. How does pre-ordering work?

Michael: It can be pre-ordered my going to Amazon.com and searching on the words Thunder Dog or visit my website www.michaelhingson.com and you will be presented with a link to go straight into the Amazon ordering page. Again that’s www.michaelhingson.com. The way it works is you order the book, it’s $22.95 for the hard cover copy and when the book is out and your book is ready to be shipped you’ll receive confirmation and your credit card will be charged at that time and the book will be sent.

Malia: So by pre-ordering the book now on Amazon we can actually help make it a best seller and spread awareness about this important message of hope in the process.

Michael: Right

Malia: That sounds like a pretty simple way that we can make a difference and again how we find it on Amazon.

Michael: Go to www.michalhingson.com or www.amazon.com and at Amazon search for the word Thunder Dog and you’ll be taken to the place where the book is. The reason were asking
people to pre-order it is that the more visibility it receives and the more orders it gets now the
more interest is demonstrated to the major booksellers and to the publisher and the more
marketing we can get. I think this is a book that virtually anyone will want to read and can read.
Everywhere I speak I’ve been asked, “When are you going to write a book, book”. Literally I
think I’ve had hundreds of thousands of people ask me that question. Well we’re finally able to
get the book done. I’m really excited about the fact that I am and the lady who is working with
me Suzy Flory are able to finally bring this to fruition and bring this out for people to actually be
able to read. So I hope that they will pre-order it and I hope people will be excited about it as
much as we are and make the best seller that we mentioned.

Malia: You know I have to say that although I’ve heard the story and you know obviously we
think we know about 9/11 having lived through the collective experience, the idea about
teamwork and overcoming our fears and also having that trust restored in one another and in
our nation, that is a timeless message and I think that the legacy of that, the positive legacy of
that will touch thousands of people and I’m very, very privileged to know you and to be part of
this project. I just encourage everybody to get a copy of this book and also to be able to share it
with the people that they love.

Michael: Well thank you. And I would say this is just not a book about 9/11. This is a book
about life, about my life. It tells the story of growing up. It tells a lot of the lessons I learned about
blindness, like the handicap isn’t blindness the handicap is our attitude, our misconceptions.
And that’s true in some many different things in our lives. The lessons about teamwork, working
together. The lessons of overcoming adversity not just on 9/11 but in so many other ways. So
we’re going to talk about a lot of things in the book and I think that people will be able to relate
to it and learn a lot from it that I hope they’ll be able to use and take to heart.

Malia: Thank you Michael. I can’t wait to get a copy of Thunder Dog and hope to get your
autograph when it comes out.

Michael: I absolutely will autograph your copy and I’m always willing to autograph any copies.
So we’re glad to do that. So again www.michaelhingson.com and while there you can sign up
for our newsletter or you can go to www.amazon.com and actually order the book my searching
the words Thunder Dog. So thank you very much.

Malia: Alright thank you Michael.

http://michaelhingson.com/2010/12/16/thunder-dog-interview/
Talking Over the Disabled is an Insult to Them

Sunday, July 30, 2006
Deborah Kendrick

It used to surprise people at times when my 3-year-old would order for herself in a restaurant. It was important to me to teach my children to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken about or around, as if they were inanimate objects. My experience with being the center of such inappropriate interaction led me long ago to the conviction that speaking for yourself is vital.

"Would she like the light blue or the dark," a clerk once asked my college roommate about my preference in jeans.

"She would like to see what you have," said I, reaching for the pair of brandname pants in her hands.

The insult is commonly recognized by people with visible disabilities.

If you're in a wheelchair, have a guide dog, walk with an unsteady gait or use a magnifier to see the menu or read the price tags, those accompanying you will often be asked to read your mind.

For years, I thought this was just a "blind thing," reserved for those of us who have difficulty making eye contact. I was wrong. Take an aging parent or a child under 12 shopping, and you'll see what I mean.

"Bring her over here," you are told.

"Have him sit there."

"Would he like cream for his coffee?"

Sometimes, humor lurks in these awkward moments. Years ago, I was in a Canadian yarn shop with my husband, looking for materials for a crochet project. He was beginning to tell me about some color options when a sales representative intervened.

"Does she like lavender?" she asked him.

"I don't know," he said, holding the skein to my nose and pretending to sign.

"Mmmm, lavender," I announced, taking my cue. "It smells lovely."

He picked up another and whispered its color in my ear.

I inhaled. "Ivory!" I exclaimed. "It's great."

Silliness is sometimes the only way to avoid the sting of insult. I mean, if a waitress comes up to a table where two people are engaged in animated conversation, why would she assume that
only the one who isn't sitting in the wheelchair is able to talk? But she does. It happens all the
time.

You take your 80-year-old father to the symphony, where he has been going for some 60 years,
and the usher tells you where to "put" him, asks you if he'd like a program. Probably this man
has been speaking, without hesitation, for himself for decades, but now that he doesn't hear well
or is leaning on a walker, he has somehow lost "permission" to state his own preferences.

It may seem a trivial matter, but when you are talked about in the third person, the message is a
clear one of being discounted, irrelevant, secondary to the situation. Whether you receive this
message because you have a disability, are a child, are from another country or have attained
the age of wisdom, the impact is the same.

I taught my children to order food for themselves because it is a simple way of building
confidence, practicing the lesson that "I matter, and so does what I have to say."

You can make a difference if you find yourself playing any of the three roles in this common
scenario.

If you are the outsider, speak to the person who is different—older, younger, disabled, foreign—
with the assumption that he or she will respond.

If you are the companion of the visibly different individual, simply smile and say "Ask him" or
"Tell him" to move the dialogue in the appropriate direction.

If you are the person being discounted for disability or any other reason, assert yourself. Answer
the question, pick up the conversation on your own—or, for quick understanding, try talking
about yourself in the third person. You might get a laugh, and you'll definitely be counted back
into the circle.

The Columbus Dispatch
Deborah Kendrick is a Cincinnati writer and advocate for people with disabilities.

http://www.guidedogs.com/site/PageServer?pagename=resources_access_articles_talking
Meeting a Guide Dog Team: Some Words of Advice

Saying Hello to a Guide Dog Team!

- As tempting as it may be to pet a Guide Dog, remember that this dog is responsible for leading someone who cannot see. The dog should never be distracted from that duty. A person's safety may depend on their dog's alertness and concentration.
- It is okay to ask someone if you may pet their guide. Many people enjoy introducing their dogs when they have the time. The dog's primary responsibility is to its blind partner and it is important that the dog not become solicitous.
- A Guide Dog should never be offered food or other distracting treats. The dogs are fed on a schedule and follow a specific diet in order to keep them in optimum condition. Even slight deviations from their routine can disrupt their regular eating and relieving schedules and seriously inconvenience their handlers. Guide Dogs are trained to resist offers of food so they will be able to visit restaurants without begging. Feeding treats to a Guide Dog weakens this training.
- Although Guide Dogs cannot read traffic signals, they are responsible for helping their handlers safely cross a street. Calling out to a Guide Dog or intentionally obstructing its path can be dangerous for the team as it could break the dog's concentration on its work.
- Listening for traffic flow has become harder for Guide Dog handlers due to quieter car engines and the increasing number of cars on the road. Please don't honk your horn or call out from your car to signal when it is safe to cross. This can be distracting and confusing. Be especially careful of pedestrians in crosswalks when making right-hand turns at red lights.
- It's not all work and no play for a Guide Dog. When they are not in harness, they are treated in much the same way as pets. However, for their safety they are only allowed to play with specific toys. Please don't offer them toys without first asking their handler's permission.
- In some situations, working with a Guide Dog may not be appropriate. Instead, the handler may prefer to take your arm just above the elbow and allow their dog to heel. Others will prefer to have their dog follow you. In this case, be sure to talk to the handler and not the dog when giving directions for turns.
- A Guide Dog can make mistakes and will need reminders to maintain its training. Correcting a mistake usually involves a time-out or leash action. When the dog regains focus and correctly follows a cue, he or she is frequently praised and rewarded with a kibble. Guide Dog handlers have been taught appropriate management methods to use with their dogs.
- Access laws, including the United States' Americans with Disabilities Act and Canada's Blind Persons' Rights Act, permit people who are blind to be accompanied by their guide dogs anywhere the general public is allowed, including taxis and buses, restaurants, theaters, stores, schools, hotels, apartment and office buildings.
- Before asking a question of a person handling a dog, allow them to complete the task at hand.
- Remain calm in your approach and mannerisms.
- Never tease a dog.

http://www.guidedogs.com/site/PageServer?pagename=resources_access_meetguide