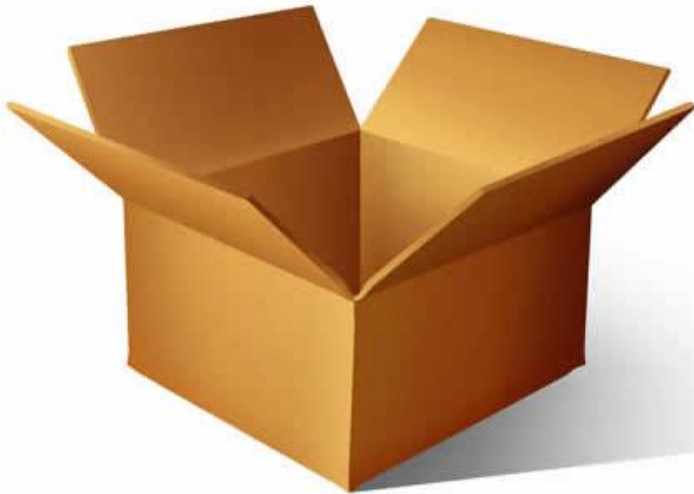


# **Life Outside the Box**



# The Journey Began



Elizabeth Ann Persaud  
January 22, 1979

# A Bump in the Road



Official Diagnosis December 1979

My Parents were told I would have a short-lived life or even die.

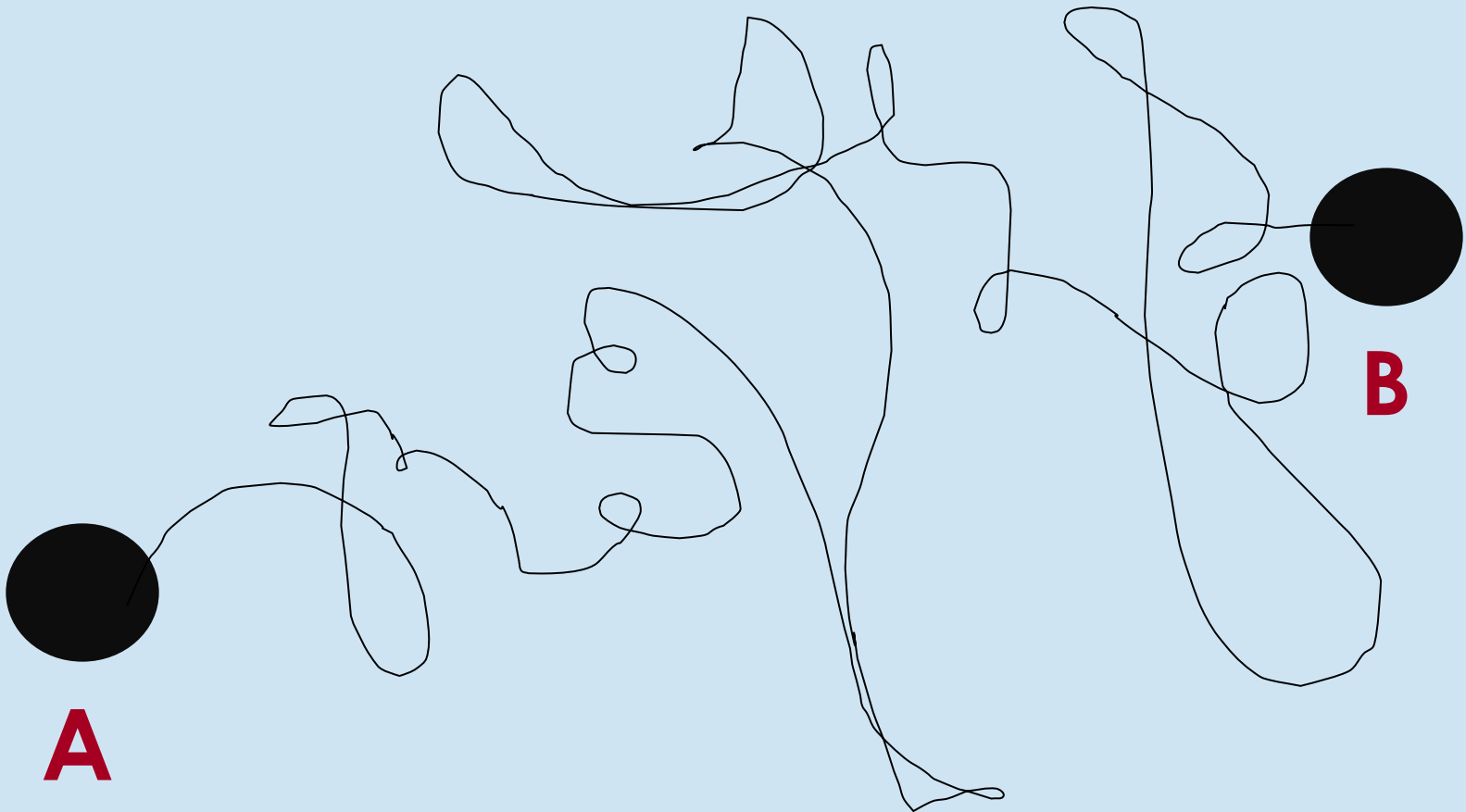
# A Realization

They just wanted me to Walk...

and that's what I *thought* I wanted too.

**I realized I just wanted to get from Point A to Point B**

# Point **A** to Point **B**



# A Bump in the Road: The Assessment



“She won’t and can’t be successful.”

# Why Me?



“What doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger.”

I Stopped Listening to what  
others wanted



and Started Living what I Wanted!



# High School

During my Freshman year I started voicing what I really wanted at my IEP Meetings – because I Could!

It was Empowering!

# Friends, Proms, SAT's and College Placement!



Junior Prom 1996

# A Bump in the Road

What do you want to do when you  
Grow Up?

I was told to get a job at Taco Bell.

This was what some people  
dreamed for me...

A Successful Person is  
one who  
can Lay a Firm  
Foundation with the  
Bricks that are Thrown  
their Way

# I Created My Success

- My Success relied on
  - Knowing Myself
    - Self-Exploration
      - Who Are You?
    - Learning Style
      - What is Your Learning Style?
  - Honestly Exploring –
    - What do I want to Do When I Grow Up?
    - What are my Dreams?
    - What Assistive Technology do I need to accomplish my Goals?

# I Graduated!

## ...and Happy got a Standing Ovation!



I was advised that IF I went to college, I should go to a community college – maybe consider a 4 year University in a few years.

I didn't really know what to do...  
I was Confused...

I moved out and went to  
Georgia State University!



# I Created My Success

- My Success relied on
  - Communication about My disAbility
    - Understanding My disAbility
      - Language is Powerful
      - Talking with Roommates, Boyfriends, friends, Professors, disAbility Service Providers and Employers about my disAbility
      - And Listening
    - Understanding My Weaknesses
    - Understanding My Strengths



There were many triumphs and  
struggles.

I admit it was a tough and  
trying year, moving out was  
maybe not the best decision

BUT

it was MY Decision!

# The Fight for Independence

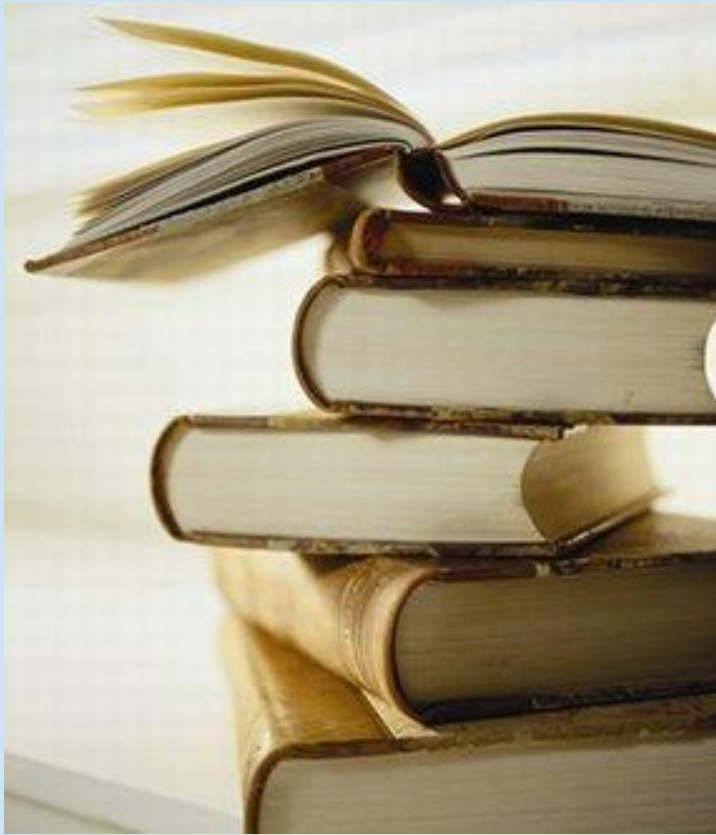
## **Transportation**

There were days I would leave the house at 4:30 in the morning just to make it to a 10:00am class.

It was tiring and stressful...

# The Fight for Independence

## Books



Studying became hard when textbooks were too heavy or large for me to handle.

- Hard to turn pages
- Too heavy to lift on my own
- Would have to lay down to read which caused fatigue much quicker than usual
- Most of my peers loved open book quizzes - I dreaded it!

# The Fight for Independence

## **Books**

Too dangerous & strenuous to carry all of my books in the bag on my wheelchair.

- At the most, I had 17 books for one semester!

I simply did not read most textbooks because I could not hold them.

- I was embarrassed, stressed...it all felt unfair.

# The Fight for Independence

## Access

- I couldn't get inside the GSU Village (dorms) because the doors were manual and way too heavy.
  - Inside the Village
  - Elevators
  - Post Office
  - Community Building
  - My Apartment



# The Fight for Independence

## Access

- The solution offered was to coordinate with friends to meet and escort me in



- I used my backyard neighbor as a resource and called Ga. Tech.



# The Fight for Independence

## **Access!**

- Over the next 2 months we collaborated and using a remote system, I was able to:
  - enter the Village,
  - get the mail,
  - enter the community building,
  - get into my apartment,
  - visit friends down the hall and in other buildings !

INDEPENDENTLY...ALL BY MYSELF...WITH NO HELP!



# Life Can Seem so Unfair



- Sometimes we need someone to tell us it isn't the end of the world.



# I Created My Success

- My Success relied on
  - Failing
    - I learned More from My “Failures” sometimes than my “successes”
    - Give yourself room to fail – and Grow from the experience
    - Share with others
    - Evaluate & Evolve!

Success in the affairs of life often serves to hide one's abilities, whereas adversity frequently gives one an opportunity to discover them.

~ Horace

# Graduation!



May 17, 2002

# I Created My Success

- My Success relied on:
  - Developing a Vision for My Future
    - Created a List (Vision Board)
      - Personal Goals
        - Strong Relationship with my Family
        - Volunteer (MDA and Canine Assistants)
        - Nationally recognized speaker
        - Buy a House
      - Educational Goals
        - BA from GSU
        - Grow web development skills
        - Masters in Rehab Counseling
      - Career Goals
        - Help people through technology (TFL)

# Use Us because We are Among Greatness!

Business executives who pay great sums for consultants to teach them to “think out of the box” would do well to observe the habitually creative thinkers in their midst – people with disAbilities.

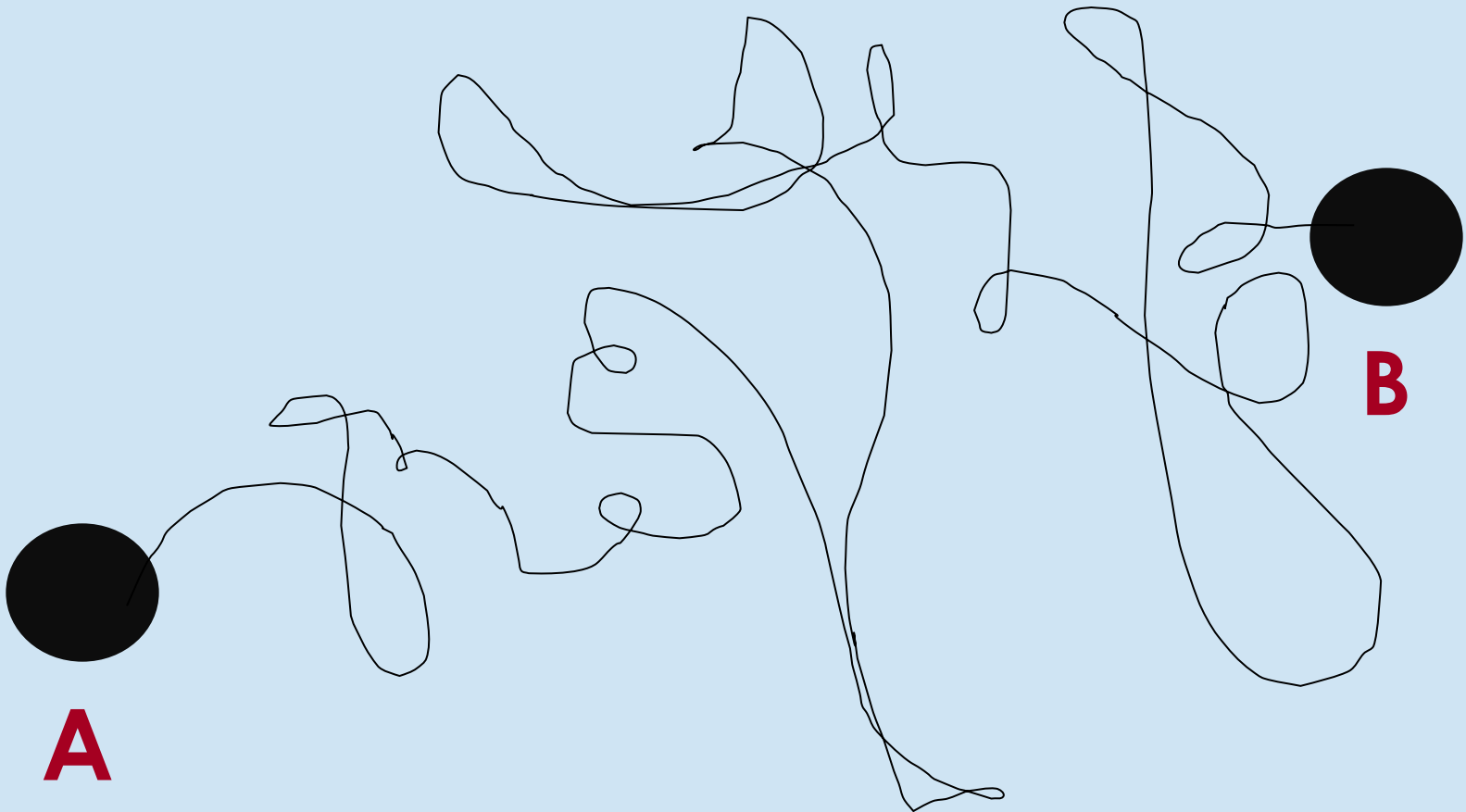
# Use Us because We are Among Greatness!

The necessity of addressing mundane problems with creative solutions has likely prepared many people with disAbilities to be innovative in more complex areas, including the challenges faced by school and business.

# I Created My Success

- My Success relied on
  - Building win-win relationships
    - Establishing an ever growing solid circle of support
      - Receiving and providing support
    - Diversifying my Circle of Friends and Acquaintances
    - It sometimes is “Who you know”

# Point **A** to Point **B**

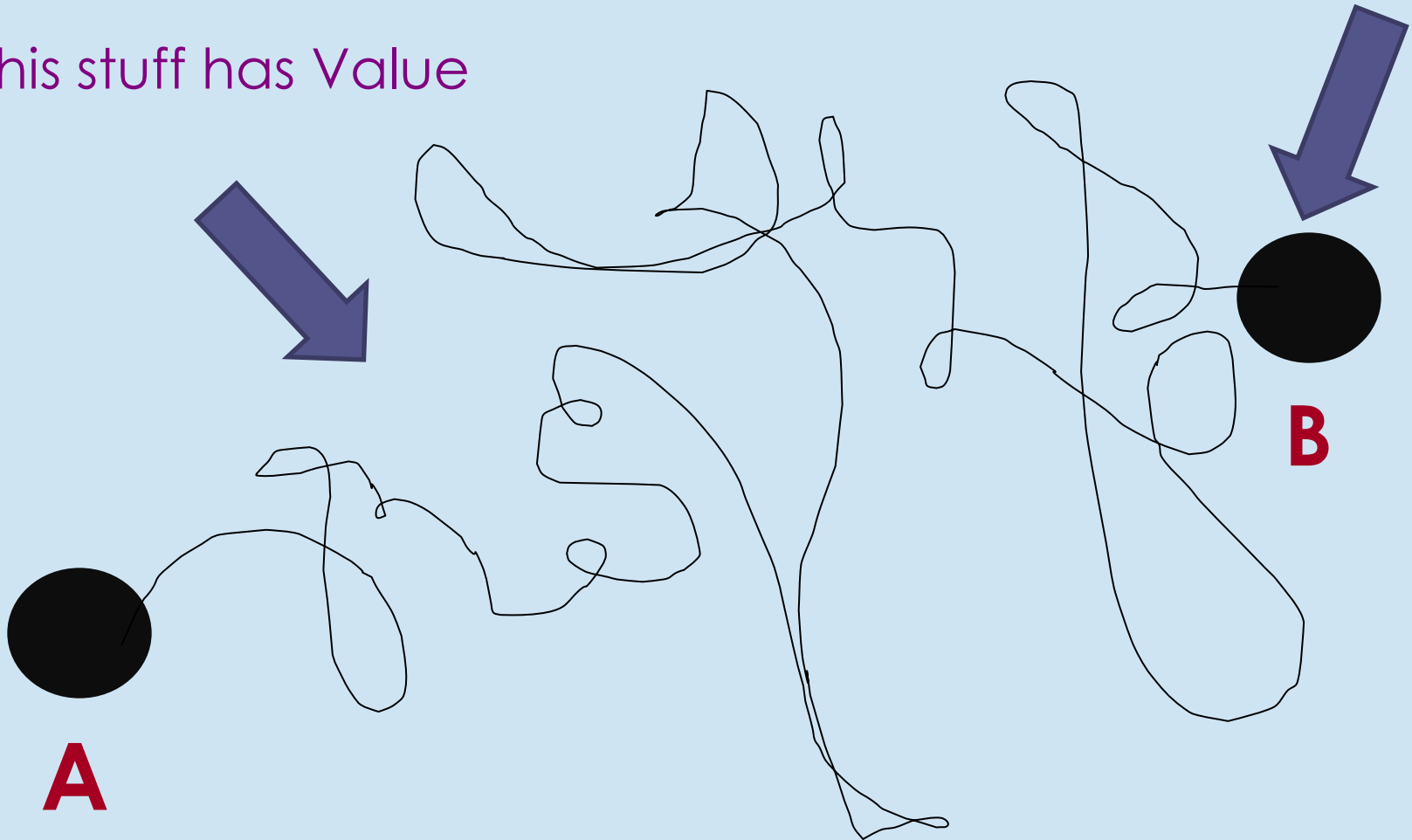




# It All has Value

This stuff has Value

This end result  
has Value



# Give Hope

When you Give Hope you are making positive change and nurturing successful futures in so many lives everyday.

Thank You!