

# EMILY HUFF

Emily Huff wishes there was a magic helmet that would let others experience the unreal voices, hallucinations and self-destructive thoughts that invade her mind without warning. Emily has schizophrenia.

“I had this internal world of fighting and friendship, and all the excitement, all the things I didn’t have in this world,” Emily said. “And I continued to live in that world more and more, and be in the real world with my family less and less.”

Anne Huff, Emily’s mom, decided to pull Emily out of public school in middle school and send her to a private school for students with mental illness. “It was only in an atmosphere that was both therapeutic and academic,” Anne said, “that Emily could begin to really learn.”

“ I am in a doctor’s office, and they are talking like they know every single thing about schizophrenia that is to be known. They don’t! I’m like, ‘You don’t understand anything. When you have seven people living in your head, then we can talk.’ ”

– EMILY HUFF




“ Families are put in positions to have to make really horrible choices. Isn’t it unfortunate that we haven’t figured out as a society, to bring those tools, those accommodations, adaptations, into a public school environment, where everybody can learn. ”

– JAN NISBET



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ Were you surprised to see mental illness included in this documentary? Do you think Emily Huff's story belonged in the documentary?
  - ▶ Do you think it is easier or more challenging to include students with "invisible" disabilities such as mental illness? Why or why not?
  - ▶ How are society's prejudices and fears about mental illness played out in the media? In the health care system? In the law?
  - ▶ Emily was bullied in school, and says, "the more they picked on me, the more walls I put up." What role does bullying play in driving students with disabilities out of public schools?
  - ▶ What role do you think Emily's art plays in her life?
  - ▶ Anne Huff said that keeping Emily's spirit intact is the most important thing she can do. Why did Anne feel forced to remove Emily from the local public school in order to achieve that goal?
- 
- ▶ What characteristics did Emily most want people to know about her? How do you think she could have been supported in general education so that her school community could really know and appreciate her qualities?
  - ▶ Have you or a family member experienced a significant emotional or mental illness? If so, what were the challenges faced?