

SPECIAL NEEDS
A four-minute monologue
By JANE CAFARELLA

Drama/Comedy

RUTH tells her friend how she learned to finally say 'No!'

Speaking quickly but clearly, stream-of-consciousness style.

The other week, I was at this party, and someone asked me what I did – as you do – and I said, oh I'm a Special Needs teacher, and they said, do you like it, and I said, it's not too, not too bad, and they said they had this friend, who worked at this wonderful school, and they were looking for a teacher just like me and I should go for it.

So, I said, okay – and then the next thing, I'm filling out all these forms, and feeling really stressed.

“Describe your communication skills, on a scale of one to 10!”

Of, course everyone says 10. But I couldn't put 10 so I said six but then they wanted to know why it wasn't 10.

“Describe an incident where you solved a problem!”

Every day's a problem in special needs. Where do I start?

And I thought, well, I talked to my sister for an hour yesterday about her marriage problems, when I should have been writing reports, but that's another story.

“List your referees!”

And I realised half of them were dead. So, I had to ring up the two that were still alive and tell them I was going for this job, and, would you believe it, one of them knew my boss, and I got really, really stressed, as I hadn't resigned 'cos I was worried they'd be really angry, as we were so understaffed.

I'm shitting myself...no joke!

That night I couldn't sleep. When I finally did, I had this dream that I was in this job interview, and the question was something like, “if Olivia has six apples, how many pineapples does Charlotte have?”

“None,” I said, and the interviewer shouted “Off with her head!”

And then I woke up. In a sweat. Happy!

So happy that it was morning... and I wasn't going for a job interview.

But then I thought about it, and I realised...this wasn't a dream, this is my life, and it's a nightmare. For real!

That's me. I'm always saying “Okay, yeah, I'll do it!”

“Hey, Ruth, can you make a seafood platter for 100 people for a fundraiser? “Okay! I'll do it!”

“Hey, Ruth, can I come and stay for a week, or maybe two, and can I bring my boyfriend, whom you've never met by the way.”

“Okay! Sure. I’ll be working all week, and then have to come home and cook for five instead of two, but I’ll do it!

“Hey, Ruth, can you look after the grandkids for a week?” “Okay, I’ll do it.”

That’s me.

And I am ASTONISHED at myself. Astonished that I *can’t* say it.

I can’t say NO. I never could.

It’s just not in my vocabulary.

(Quietly – a confession)

I’m too scared...

Scared that people won’t...like me.

But the truth is, I don’t like my life when I can’t say it. I don’t like myself.

Renewed energy.

No more!

I’ve woken up. For real.

From now on, prepare to be truly astonished.

From now on, I’m telling everyone it’s NOT okay. I can’t do it. I won’t do it.

NO!

‘Cos I’ve got special needs too.

486 words

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