

# Chris Packham

## CBE

Chris is a nature lover, documentary maker, photographer, television presenter and author.

At school, Chris was socially excluded and experienced bullying. He found calm in the natural world, and it became the focus of his career.

In 1979 he enrolled in a BSc Zoology course at the University of Southampton.

Chris specialised in animal behaviour, a subject which he had a lot of experience with, having raised a kestrel in his teenage years, as well as badgers, foxes, reptiles, mice... you name it, he had one!

Chris had a particular fascination with “unloved” animals like insects and bats. He continues to advocate against speciesism, pointing out that people treat pet animals like cats and dogs very differently to insects, rodents and reptiles.

Chris was diagnosed autistic in 2005.

### **Questions**

Why do you think Chris feels a connection with animals, especially the ones who aren't traditionally loved?

What sort of role model is Chris for young people?



# Greta Thunberg

Greta Thunberg is best known for her climate activism. Born in Sweden in 2003 she has been an activist since her early teenage years. She had different ideas to the group, and started her own protest - the school strike.



Greta's school strike idea went viral, and global! This attention meant Greta was invited to speak with world leaders, and she took the opportunity to be uncompromising, telling world leaders that without doing anything to protect the environment, they were stealing from their children's futures.

In 2019 Greta went to the USA to speak at the UN Climate Action Summit. She traveled there and back by boat, refusing to fly due to the environmental impact.

As well as her main passion - environmental issues, Greta is pretty active on social media and isn't afraid to embarrass public figures, or get involved in memes.

Greta was diagnosed autistic in childhood.

## **Questions**

How does Greta's autism help her in her work? Are there any ways in which it could be a problem?

How would Greta's strengths fit in your workplace?

# Benjamin Zephaniah

Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah was born in 1958, and diagnosed dyslexia at 21 while attending adult education classes. He had been expelled from school at 13 years old and could not read or write.



While he was still at school he kept trying, even making up a story on the spot in an English lesson because he hadn't had time to write during the class. This wasn't enough for teachers to believe in him; one even told him he would end up dead or in prison.

Benjamin took these words to heart and decided to turn things around, moving to London with the dream of becoming a poet. He said being dyslexic makes him a better writer; if he doesn't know how to spell a word he has to think of a different or a better one to use. This creativity is what made his poetry so amazing.

Benjamin had a theory that dyslexia is the default for the human brain, pointing to cave paintings and early pictorial writing systems as evidence. His poetry is designed to be heard, not to be read silently.

## Questions

What strengths do you think Benjamin's dyslexia brought to his work?

Are you surprised to find out he had sixteen (16) honorary PhDs?

# Siena Castellon

## MBE



Siena is multiply neurodivergent, she was diagnosed with dyspraxia, dyslexia and autism while at school. Siena was bullied at school, so badly that she moved school twice before she was bullied again at her third school.

At the age of 13 she founded Quantum Leap Mentoring to support and mentor other neurodivergent young people. She used the website to write about her experiences of bullying to pass on advice to other children in the same position, and as a result was chosen to sit on the National Anti-Bullying Youth Board.

Siena founded Neurodiversity Celebration Week in 2018 at the age of 16, has had two books published and has won many awards. She is now studying computer science at Stanford University, and made the Forbes 30 under 30 in 2022 for her social impact.

### **Questions**

Do you think Siena's neurodivergence is a strength? What traits do you think she leaned on to make a success of her social impact work?

What kind of role model is Siena for neurodivergent and neurotypical young people?

# Simone Biles



Simone Biles, also known as the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time), was born in 1997 and was raised by her grandparents from the age of six (6). She showed a natural talent for gymnastics and was taken on by a local gym which honed her skills and helped her compete at a national, and then international level.

In 2011 Simone's (grand)dad decided to have her assessed for ADHD, as her energy levels were far higher than other children her age. She began taking medication to help her focus at school while she continued to train and compete at an elite level.

In 2016, shortly after making history at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics by winning four gold medals at her first games, hackers released her medical records. Simone told the world about her ADHD on social media, and has since declared that it is her superpower.

Simone is still competing and hasn't ruled out appearing for her country at the 2028 Olympic Games. She has five (5) moves named after her, more than any other gymnast in history.

## Questions

Why do you think Simone calls ADHD her superpower?

What challenges do you think Simone has faced, and how might her neurotype have helped her do this?

# Daniel Radcliffe

Daniel Radcliffe is one of the most well known British actors thanks to his role as Harry Potter in the film franchise.



Daniel has dyspraxia, a neurodevelopment condition which affects his co-ordination.

He has spoken publicly about how this caused difficulty at school, especially with writing and tasks like tying his shoelaces.

Daniel says “It has never held me back... some of the smartest people I know are people who have learning disabilities... the fact that some things are more of a struggle will only make you more determined, harder working, and more imaginative in the solutions you find to problems.”

In his career on screen and stage, Daniel has been nominated for forty two (42) awards, winning twenty two (22) of them including two (2) Broadway Audience Awards for *Equus*.

## Questions

What sort of role model is Daniel for young people?

What challenges do you think dyspraxia gives Daniel in his acting career?