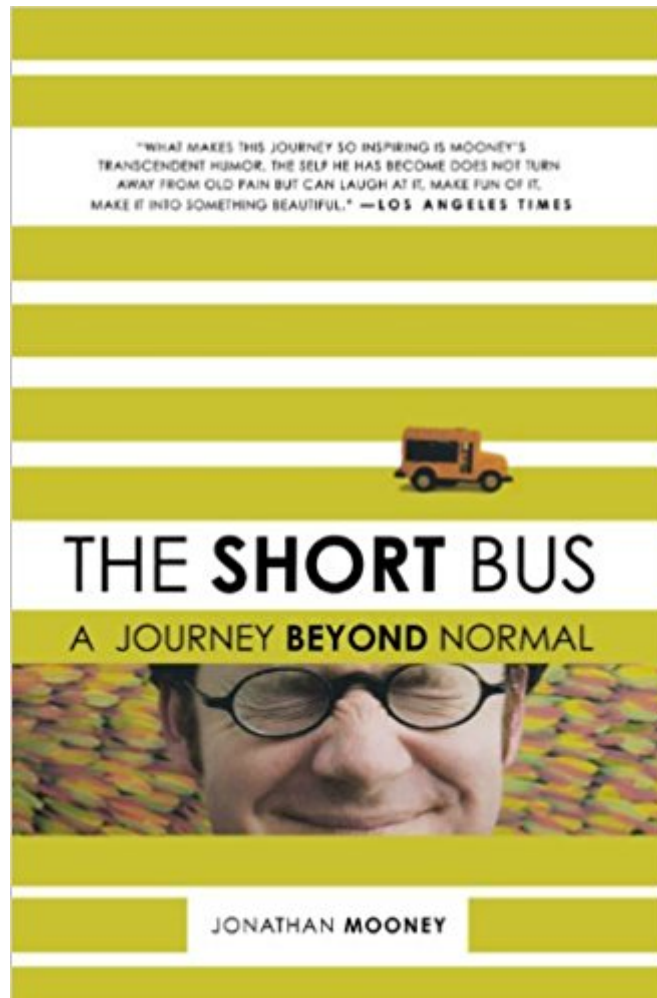




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The Short Bus: A Journey Beyond Normal



Synopsis

"What makes this journey so inspiring is Mooney's transcendent humor; the self he has become does not turn away from old pain but can laugh at it, make fun of it, make it into something beautiful." —Los Angeles Times

Labeled "dyslexic and profoundly learning disabled," Jonathan Mooney was a short-bus rider — a derogatory term used for kids in special education. To learn how others had moved beyond labels, he bought his own short bus and set out cross-country, looking for kids who had dreamed up magical, beautiful ways to overcome the obstacles that separated them from the so-called normal world. The Short Bus is his irreverent and poignant record of that odyssey, meeting thirteen people in thirteen states who taught Mooney that there's no such thing as normal — and that to really live, every person must find their own special way of keeping on. The Short Bus is a unique gem, propelled by Mooney's heart, humor, and outrageous rebellions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Adult/High School — Many kids with physical, mental, and learning disabilities have ridden the short bus to special-education classes, signaling that they were different, singled out, not normal. Mooney was one of those short bus children who hated school because he was dyslexic and couldn't read until he was 12. In 2003, a few years after he graduated from Brown University, he cowrote a book on learning disabilities and began a career of public speaking on the subject. Then he set out on a journey. He bought an old short bus and traveled from Los Angeles to Maine

to Washington and back to L.A., stopping to visit with various people who were also not normal. Along the way, he confronted his own preconceptions and assumptions about people with autism, Down syndrome, deafness and blindness, ADHD, and other so-called disabilities. In this book, he deals with the question of What is normal? This is a story about a young man coming to accept himself, but also a cautionary tale about what happens in schools, in the workplace, and in society when people fail to recognize that everyone is normal, just in different ways. Mooney is an engaging writer with a sense of humor about his own failings, and his story is an entertaining and enlightening one.

— Sarah Flowers, Santa Clara County Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Jonathan Mooney is an uplifting, rebellious voice who will strike a chord with anyone who has ever had a hard time marching in step in a culture of conformity. His book is not just about how Jon found personal success after growing up with severe learning differences (dyslexia and ADHD), it's the story of his journey to accept himself by finding others labeled "disabled" or "not normal" who have survived and even triumphed. In person, in his amazing speeches around the country, Jonathan speaks with heart, spirit and energy, helping audiences re-imagine their lives. He does this same thing in his remarkable, magical book. Get on the short bus and fasten your seat belts. No matter who you are, you won't be the same at the end of this ride.

— Edward M. Hallowell M.D., author of *Delivered from Distraction: Getting the Most Out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder* and other books

“Curious and compassionate, clearheaded and self-questioning, enlightened and illuminating, Jonathan Mooney takes us on a modern yet timeless odyssey. In his drive across America, he steers us past his own painful memories, through the history of disabilities, and into the lives of people who refuse to be oppressed. A long overdue tribute to our brothers and sisters on the short bus, and a desperately needed battle cry against the tyranny of normalcy.

— Rachel Simon, author of *Riding the Bus with My Sister*

“Hop on board *The Short Bus* with Jonathan Mooney to experience a one of a kind ride. Purposefully taking readers far beyond the limits of 'normalcy,' he drives deep into the heart of human existence--asking us where do we truly stand in our acceptance of diversity? As the informative, insightful, and irreverent guide of the tour, Mooney bares his soul and his ass in equal measure. Passing through the unpredictable landscape, we encounter the often disarming beauty of human difference embodied in the everyday lives of (extra)ordinary people who--by their very existence--shatter the ideals of "mainstream" America. Ultimately, *The Short Bus* is a true

celebration of survival and diversity.

Dr. David J. Connor, Co-author of *Reading Resistance*

"The Short Bus is a must-read account of a subversive journey through the heartland of normalcy. Mooney's trip is like Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* or Kerouac's *On the Road*, only his subjects are a colorful gaggle of people with learning disabilities who share a refreshing irreverence towards the received ideas of a therapeutic society. Mooney writes with a strong power of observation and a refreshing writing style that makes you understand how good a writer a card-carrying dyslexic can be. Anyone interested in America, disability, or the pleasures of being alive should read this work.

Lennard Davis, author of *Enforcing Normalcy*

"This book should be required reading for anyone who thinks they are in the business of "helping" or "serving" people with disabilities. Mooney understands the power that comes when disabled children and adults claim their identity, reject social constructs of what is normal, and define success on their own terms. By journeying beyond normal, Mooney shows the way to a more human, more interesting destination that can transform the field of education, lay bare the shortcomings of the helping professions, and help disabled people get in touch with their own power.

Andrew Imparato, President and CEO American Association of People with Disabilities

"Get on Jonathan Mooney's bus--he will drive you to the heart of the matter.

Simi Linton, author of the memoir *My Body Politic*

"The Short Bus is a wonderful 'on the road' story that beats out even Kerouac's book. . . . Superbly written.

John McKnight, author of *The Careless Society*

"In this wonderful memoir, John Mooney charts his passage out of ableism and saneism. Along the way, he teaches us the possibility of joining him in a state of mind beyond the binaries of the normal and the pathological. A true pleasure to read!

Bradley Lewis, MD, PhD, Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University

"The Short Bus should be tucked into the back of every short bus seat as a treat. And it should be required reading for every PTA, every school board, and every person involved with kids in any way.

Josh Blue, Card-carrying member of the *Freak Club*

"The view from The Short Bus is candid, irreverent and eye opening. Mooney takes us *On the Road*, asking what happens when you stop chasing the horizon of normalcy and start reveling in your differences.

Harold S. Koplewicz, M.D., Chairman, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, NYU School of Medicine, Author of *More than Moody* and *It's Nobody's Fault*

"Ride Jonathan Mooney's The Short Bus and you will be changed. With captivating storytelling, Mooney kidnaps the reader away from 'normal' for a journey that is hilarious, heartbreaking, and ultimately liberating. Anyone has had to deal with the ill fitted suit of 'normalcy' in their coming-of-age will recognize the

struggles in these stories -- and as it turns out that means every one of us! The Short Bus gives us a whole new way to understand all young people, and to support the genius of difference in our communities. —Michael Patrick MacDonald, author of All Souls and Easter Rising

So this book came highly recommended and was also mandatory reading material for my major. Personally I did not feel as though the ideas were all that new, wild, or enlightening. But then again, I am from Olympia... so I guess "weird" is not that weird to me. Now that I live in NYC I am surprised at how bland and narrow minded people can be, even in a huge and "progressive" city. Apparently not everyone appreciates individuality. The book is a good read with some interesting characters. I just didn't feel like it was as epic and transcending as some people indicated to me. I thought he was actually pretty "normal" all along.

As a special education teacher, I was very excited to read this book. As much as we love and accept our students for who they are, its often hard to see and understand life through their eyes. I thought this book may help me do so and provide me with relatable experiences, but it did not live up to my expectations. It was a good story overall ... but was a slow read.

Excruciating book. This man created an extended and elaborate experience as therapy to serve his personal needs. I was disappointed that he did not focus more on the people he was meeting. He focused on his insecurities in an extremely self-indulgent way. I hated this book for almost every page. I think this man needs some real therapy and should stop using alcohol to cope. The only reason I made it through was because I had to for class. I have never disliked a book this much!

this book was something assigned for one of my junior college lvl classes. we had to read to get a feel for an aspect of how people perceive disability in society. i think that the unique perspective of the author brings some real insight to how people in and out of the disability "community" if you would react to each other. this may be only one perspective but it is one that was well thought out. worth the read to broaden your vision if the topic of disability is new to you.

It opened my eyes to the many struggles my son experienced in school and continues to have on a daily basis living with ADHD.

I rode the short bus for 2 years in middle school due to be out of district. I do not remember being

teased but, I do remember the entire time I was in the mildly retarded special Ed class my brain felt like a blob not learning anything. I can relate with Jonathan Mooney in so many ways. I did not think Jonathan was demeaning as he rode across country . He was embracing it & trying to let go that he is strange & learns differently.

I heard Mr. Mooney at a seminar and had tears in my eyes. I just wish we could get beyond all this testing and truly give a foundation to our special needs students.

I had the pleasure of hearing mr. Mooney address the freshman class at university of Idaho this week. His book is the "common read" selection for this year for U of I. I read his book and was very glad my son is attending a school that is supporting the ideas expressed in this excellent story. Please read this book. It will let give you the gift of a new perspective on education, human dignity and how we as a society define normal (and the price we pay for that ridgid definition).Mike

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