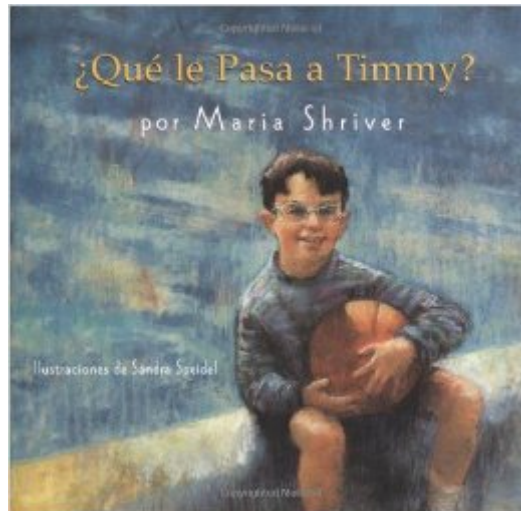


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# Que Le Pasa A Timmy?



## Synopsis

When 8-year-old Kate meets a boy who seems somehow different, she feels funny inside. After talking with her mom, though, Kate begins to understand that Timmy is just like her in many ways. Timmy has special needs; he takes longer to learn than Kate, and can't walk or run as well. But he also "loves his family, he wants friends, he goes to school, and he dreams about what he wants to be when he grows up." Kate and Timmy meet, and the seeds of a friendship are planted. For all those children who ask their parents why someone looks or acts "different," author and journalist Maria Shriver's *What's Wrong with Timmy?* provides a base for discussion. Kate's mother models appropriate behavior, speaking to her daughter calmly and directly, and providing examples from her own life to help Kate understand about Timmy. Illustrator Sandra Speidel's soft, intentionally hazy pastels are lovely; bold, enlarged phrases on the opposite pages of text act as captions. Shriver and Speidel collaborated previously on the tremendously popular *What's Heaven?*, also starring Kate and her mother. (Ages 4 to 8) --Emilie Coulter

## Book Information

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Age Range: 9 and up

Grade Level: 4 and up

## Customer Reviews

As a writer who gets around in a wheelchair and conducts disability-awareness workshops for school children, I've been a longtime collector of books that acquaint kids with people who have disabilities. This book is among the most disappointing I've ever seen. Here's why: 1. The book

centers on a mother-daughter dialogue (actually, more of a mother monologue) \*about\* a kid who has Down Syndrome. How easy it would have been to transform the manuscript into a dialogue \*with\* a kid who has Down Syndrome!2. The choice to change the font to big and bold whenever a disability-related word is introduced is counterproductive. Take a sentence like "And then I saw that she was in a WHEELCHAIR." [This may not be Ms. Shriver's exact wording, but it's close.] The large, dark letters send a danger signal to readers young and old: "Whoa! Being in a wheelchair is cause for alarm, fear, panic." This is the very opposite of what disability rights activists have been striving to convey in books, film and television for decades. Ms. Shriver is to be commended for her work on behalf of people with disabilities. Although well intentioned, this book does not further the cause she champions.

I was very curious to read this title from Maria Shriver knowing her family background with people with special needs. My brother has Down's Syndrome, so I know what it is to be on the receiving end of other children looking at my brother and wondering (sometimes outloud and sometimes in facial expression, stares and body language) wondering "What's wrong with him?" Recently one little girl asked my daughter, "Why is your uncle so freaky?" These are truths: that people "in the world" don't always use politically correct terms... not by a long shot... and as fellow citizens we can educate those who have not yet learned some of the simple truths this book teaches. One warning (to those who do not share this view) the book takes a very spiritual stance in its explanations. Another shortcoming is overcome very simply. Each page has quite a bit of text and I thought, "This is way too much on a page to teach the very littlest children who really need the lessons the most" and then I saw the bolded, larger words on each page could be the only words read. Those words would be enough for the littlest ones to understand the message of the book. It would be tough to write a perfect book on this subject that pleases everyone. This book makes a sincere effort and will be helpful for many who read it.

I just read *What's Wrong with Timmy?* It was a pleasure to read, especially having my own son, Craig, 13 years old, who has Down syndrome. It really hit home with me how other children sometimes view Craig. I am recommending that our school district order copies so teachers can read with their students. It was a very positive story focusing on the strengths of children with special needs and how much alike we all are. Kudos to Ms. Shriver for a touching book that I hope gets widely read and helps to de-stigmatize our children! This is a very hopeful book that should be read by every elementary and middle school student, and discussed in class with their teachers...

As a mother of a four year old little girl with Down Syndrome, I find it offensive and ignorant on the part of the author to use the word 'retarded' in this day and age. As a parent of a child with special needs, we fight a hard uphill battle to educate people of the hurtful use of the word "retarded". I would advice the author on her next book to use intellectual disability or maybe that the child just has some special needs, why do we have to label a child.

I am sure Ms. Shriver has the goal of helping to making life easier on kids with disabilities, but she glosses over a really complex set of circumstances. This book highlights the fact that others stare at the handicapped. A "normal" little girl is attempting to find out why Timmy looks and acts differently. Her mother attempts to explain carefully the similarities she shares with Timmy instead of the differences. The mother shares a story from her own childhood in which she was uncomfortable the first time she actually met a child in a wheelchair. The little girl has difficulty understanding what "disabled" means and her mother tries to make it as simple as possible, yet complete. The mother decided the best way to explain was for the girl to actually meet and talk with Timmy. Kate is surprised to hear Timmy say his feelings are hurt when people call him "retarded" because she never thought of that before. Kate decides to invite Timmy to play ball with her and her other friends. The other children stare at Timmy at first, but one by one they all accept him with his disability and the game is started - (this part of the book was a little too fairy tale and certainly not realistic, unfortunately). It was encouraging to me the reader, when Katie's Mom tried to explain that God makes lots of different kinds of people and that friendship with others less "able" can be a very positive experience. The end of the book has the little girl deciding that there is nothing at all wrong with Timmy. Being the parent of a mentally retarded daughter, I felt this book was a nice attempt at a very complex subject. However, real life just does NOT deal out many pleasant experiences to most of our handicapped children. Unfortunately, it is a long, hard uphill battle for them to become even marginally accepted. Rarely does a "normal" child so quickly end up with the perception that there is "nothing, - nothing at all" wrong with "Timmy."

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