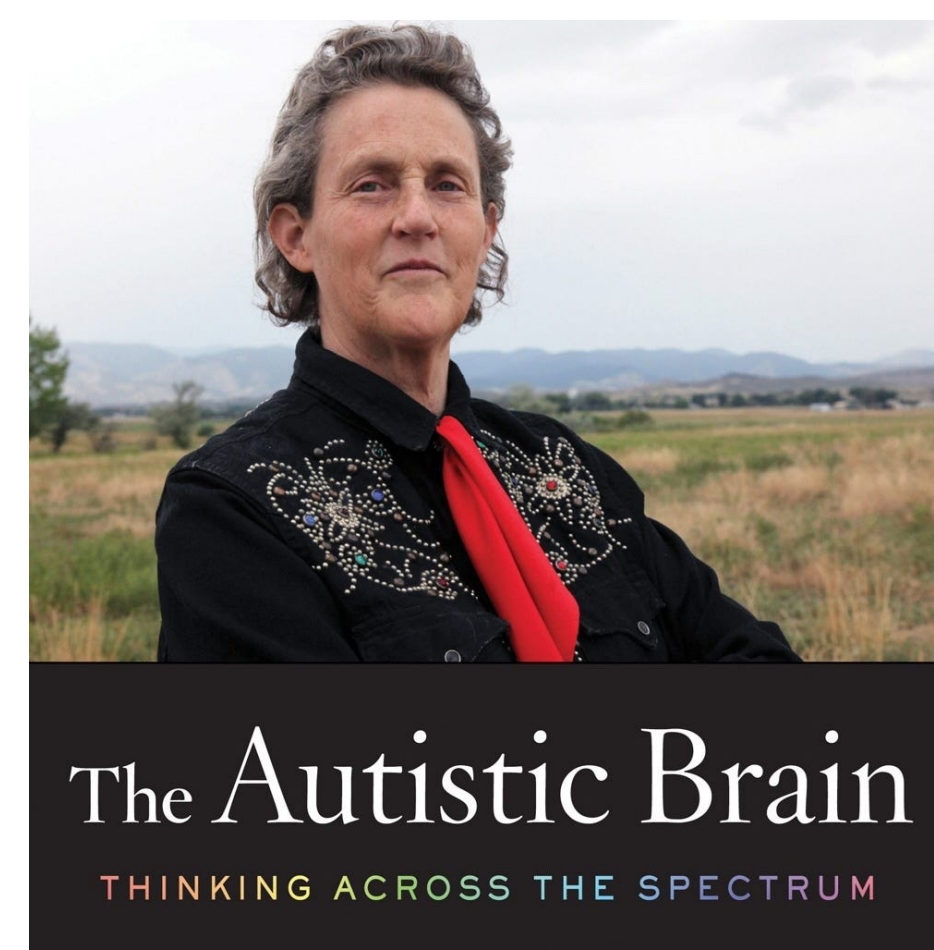


# Celebrating Scientists with Disabilities

According to statistics, around 26% of adults in the U.S. have some type of disability.<sup>1</sup> This includes difficulty in mobility, cognition, hearing or vision impairment, and many others. To mark the **National Disability Employment Awareness Month**, we're highlighting a selection of scientists working in STEM fields that experience some form of disability.

The history of science contains many accomplished individuals who have had disabilities during their career. Below are the highlights of 4: Temple Grandin, Sang-look Lee, Wanda Diaz Merced, and Stephen Hawking.



## Temple Grandin

Temple Grandin has authored more than 60 scientific papers on animal behavior. In 2010, Time magazine included her in the 100 most influential people in the world.

When she was two years old, Grandin was diagnosed with "brain damage" but it wasn't until adulthood when she was diagnosed with autism. She is now an active and strong proponent for those with autism.



## Sang-Mook Lee

Born in Korea, Sang-Mook was a successful oceanographer when in 2004 he suffered a spinal cord injury that left him paralyzed from the shoulders down.

Now he uses his platform as a means to promote others with disabilities. He says, "Before, I was trying to become number one in my field like everybody else. I was running full speed one way. Now I have a bigger purpose. It has let me see the wholeness of life."



## Wanda Díaz Merced

As a child, Wanda Díaz-Merced used to enjoy looking up at the stars, which is why she became an astronomer and has studied phenomena like gamma ray bursts.

Unfortunately, as an adult, she lost her sight due to diabetes complications. This did not slow her down however, as she pioneered the use of a technique called sonification that allows her to continue to study advanced physics. Her advice to students: "Never give up...the only thing that matters is your determination."



## Stephen Hawking

One of the most recognized scientists around the world, Stephen Hawking was a theoretical physicist praised for his work on general relativity and black hole radiation.

Hawking was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) which is a fatal neurodegenerative disease that affects motor neurons. He is perhaps best known for his novel, *A Brief History of Time* and in 2009, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the U.S.