

Articles

A SISTER'S LIFE

Understanding disabled school children

In a garden there are lots of different flowers, yet no flowers are the same in shape, colour, or type. Humans are the same; there are lots of different hair, skin and eye colours, personalities, and people.

Some people are really smart, some people are not so smart, and some people have a disability. People with disabilities have all sorts of different problems, some can't walk, some can't talk, and some can't even think or do anything for themselves.

Disabled people are no different than anyone else; they are still humans with feelings and hearts.

If everyone gave a bit more help to disabled people, then life wouldn't be so hard or lonely for them. Try to imagine how it feels when people tease or stare or laugh at disabled people, how much that must hurt them.

What gives people the right to treat them like that? People need to think about how they would feel themselves if it were them.

Imagine if you were disabled and everyone stared and laughed and teased you! You would be really upset because it's not your fault; it's not what anybody had planned but you're still getting teased. Well that's how a disabled person feels because they didn't plan it, and it's not their fault either.

It's not CLEVER or COOL or even FUNNY to act like that, it only makes you look really bad.

In our life, we do things every single day that we don't even think about, and we don't really care when we do them because it's easy and we expect to be able to do it.

Disabled people have to fight every day for every thing they do. Even to eat or talk or walk is a big challenge.

We could all make their day a lot better with really simple things, like a smile or a wave, or even a conversation, because they can still hear what we say and they still feel in their hearts.

So, next time you see a disabled person, PLEASE stop and think how you would feel if it was you, and give them a smile, and say hello.

By Tanealle Jayde, a 12 year old student at Karoo Primary School, Rowville in Victoria. Her younger sister Shanae, now a ten year old, was diagnosed with Rett Syndrome at age 2. ®

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This article first appeared in the A56 Scholastic Newsletter.

**Our friend and classmate Bradley – thoughts from students of 8 SA,
Warragul Regional College**

We were thrilled to receive articles from students of Warragul Regional College about their classmate Bradley. Unfortunately, we do not have the space to publish them all and offer a selection. A special thank you to all those who wrote down their thoughts and to the teachers involved - we are sure our members will be very interested to read about school life with Bradley.



I have been in Brad's grade pretty much since we were in grade prep and now that he is in year 8 he has matured a whole heap more than he was. He used to run around and hit people in the face and make them cry. This was in grade prep. Brad is now in year 8 and it is only on occasions that he might get a little bit rough with the girls but most of us normally do and he might play fight with the boys.

Daniel O'Dea

I have been with Brad mainly all my life. In school Brad and I have grown up with each other. In grade 2 Brad used to take Sammie's tin of fruit off her and hit her on the head with it. Brad is a good mate to me. Brad does mainly everything that we do. He goes on camps, he does English and maths with us, he likes to play Basketball, football and he loves to run. Brad adds a lot of fun to our class he makes all of us laugh and some days he can be very cranky.

Amanda Hume

A few weeks ago our class was split up into groups of five and Brad was in our group. We were assigned to a task: to make a toy that we thought would be popular on the shelves. Brad was very excited. We had received a box of colourful stuff, like feathers, straws and balloons. The group were arguing on what toy we should make, except for Brad. He was into the box and had got a large red balloon. He blew it up and started to glue features on it. We all realised what was happening and asked what he was doing. He replied: 'I'm making a bird.' We all decided to help him and it looked pretty good when it was finished. If it wasn't for Brad we mightn't have got anything done. He had the best idea of the day.

Peter Koziell

Brad is a 14-year-old boy with Down syndrome. I have known Brad for nearly 18 months now - a lot of other people in 8 SA have known him for a lot longer than I have. Once when we had free time I was playing table tennis with Brad, and I found out that he is quite good at table tennis; he is that good that he beat me! He also tried climbing the rock wall. He almost got all of the way around. He was not really scared to do any of the activities - he was really good on camp. Brad is talented in many different ways just like people without Down syndrome, or any other disability. I think it is great having Brad in our class because I love helping others with disabilities. And you also have to be careful in what you do when Brad is around because he might copy you, but in the wrong way and do something silly or inappropriate. But it is great having a person with Down syndrome in our class.

Sasha Miles

I have known Brad all through primary school and he is currently in my Year Eight class. At first when he talked I could not make out the words he was saying but now I can understand most to all of his conversations. I have seen how much he has matured, improved in his writing and perfected most pronunciations. I think that it is really good that he participates in sport and that he tries so hard. He sometimes misbehaves and he does get punished for his actions. Just last month he got in trouble for spitting and swearing but he still did it. He kept on getting in strife until he finally learnt the lesson. He does not get as severe consequences as the rest of us because sometimes he cannot control his actions and he does not know what is right.

Hugh Davies

It wasn't as hard adjusting with Brad for me as it was for others. I imagine it would be quite difficult for others with no education or background about children with Down syndrome. I have had a lot personal experience with Down syndrome because my aunty works with the Warragul A.T.A.S.S. Brad brings a lot of laughter and fun into our small class of 22 at Warragul Regional College. We are all in year 8 And most of the children in our class have attended primary school with Brad whereas I haven't. High school is a very hard stage in life as to fitting in and adjusting to the new environment, but I feel Brad has done well and it makes everyone smile when he is being himself. I think he is comparable with all of us and we are quite close friends now. Brad, you have a caring and sensitive nature and will go far in life young man. You are a true friend and you mean the world to a lot of people. Good luck for the future!

Hailey McKenzie

I have known Brad since kindergarten for about 10 years. I have lots of things I remember about Brad. I will tell you some of my memories.

Early Memories:

When we were in kindergarten I remember Brad was cheeky. These are some things he did. He use to roll down the hill, finger paint, and he would not only have paint on his fingers he would have it on his apron, face, well all over himself. Another memory is, we did our

kindergarten concert, Brad was a sheep. He had cardboard ears, and a yellow woolly sheep rug over himself. He really enjoyed himself, in fact we all did.

Here are some memories of prep. We were making a cooking book and everyone had a slice or a cake to make, Brad picked a chocolate slice. Chocolate anything was his favourite. We had to make this slice/cake and bring it to school to share. Well Brad brought his slice, I think he had the most. By the time we had finished sharing Brad had bits and pieces of food all over his face, hands and clothes. There is a lot more memories I could share but I will tell you some of my later memories.

Later Memories:

We do Home Economics at our school (foods). We were making chocolates. Brad had melted the chocolate, poured it into the containers and then he decided to lick the bowl. He got his face in there; he had chocolate all over his face! Another one. I was helping Brad do a Venn diagram of him and myself. He wrote our names up the top. Under my name he wrote 'carrot' and so we started another one and he wrote 'carrot' again so I said to him "Why did you write 'carrot' Brad?" and he said "Nothing. I didn't." so we started another one. I grabbed the pen off him before he had a chance to write it again. I asked him why he was writing it he replied, "Because you're a rabbit." It was funny; you had to be there. These are only a few of the memories, there are so many.

I think if I hadn't met Brad, my life would be different. Brad has changed our class and our lives. If you haven't met Brad here are some words that describe him: cheeky, funny, sensible (some times), well I could go on forever. I think Veronica and Graham are very lucky to have Brad as a son.

Sarah McDonald.

I have been in Bradley's class since Grade Five, during that time I have got to know Brad very well. He loves tennis. He's always laughing and having fun and is loved by everyone. Sometimes in our class we, the kids take it in turns to read with Brad or help him with his work, it's a great experience because you are getting to know a very special person with great abilities and a person that loves life.

We are very lucky to have Brad in our class. None would appreciate him more than we do. We have gone through hard times, but most of all fun times. There was this one time in Home Economics which is where we cook, that Brad grabbed the bowl of left over melted chocolate and he licked the whole thing. He had it all over his face and all over his hands but he just kept licking, the whole class gathered around and Brad's integration aide, Tracey, took a photo with the digital camera. I will never forget that.

Brad is a great person and is treated with respect and is an equal to us. We are all very proud of Brad and how far he has come since Grade Five. Good luck Brad and thanks for being the great friend you are.

Lea O'Meara

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