

The screams still reverberate in my head to this day. Curdling screams stretching the limits of human ears. They bounce around in my head just like they jumped off the walls of our small house for five long years. My sister was born with autism. A disability crippling the body's natural ability to react and socialize. Her only release was to scream. Her mind intact in some kind of shell of a body, scraping to get out. I was seven years old and had no idea this was in any way out of the norm for a five year old. Parents argued and cried behind closed doors, but their screams of anguish and agony were no match for my sisters. They did not shield us from one another, however, quite the contrary.

We spent every waking moment together, and every day I talked with her. I guess after awhile I grew to expect the only answer I would get was an enraged tantrum. Things carried on this way for two years, but for some reason, I never stopped trying to fix it. Being that young, I had no idea of the astronomical odds we were fighting. Then the imitation started. Anything I did with a toy, she mimicked. Obviously this wasn't good enough, and I kept engaging her. Slowly, the fits ebbed away. Grey silence and empty eyes were all my conversations were drawing out of my sister now. It was like her mind was hibernating for a stretch. Resting for something big.

Then, the day came, it started like most others. We were playing together in the basement, her mocking my action figure motions as usual, when my Mom called for me. I yelled, "I'm coming Mom!" and was about to get up when I heard "I'm coming Mom!" again. At first I thought it was an echo, then, I turned around and saw something that might as well been a dream. Her mouth was moving, but not in the usual way. Gone were the scowl and the tears. Lips moving, fumbling around words. "I'm coming Mom!" she yelled again. Back then, I had no idea the enormity of this moment in my life, all I could think was "it's about time." The first time my Mom heard her speak, it looked like she'd been touched by an angel. She started crying. Soon after my sister was not only mimicking, but absorbing, comprehending.

A year afterward she was removed from her special needs school and enrolled in the local kinder-garden. Today, we go to the same high school. Everyday we drive to school and can talk about anything. Today I realize that we overcame an improbable. She is no longer a statistic, she is to every one else what she always was to me, a loving person. Soon she'll enroll in a college and have discussions with the same professors that say what's been done is impossible. And everyday when she gets out of the car and waves goodbye, she flips the odds. She's living proof with enough passion and hard work, you can achieve miracles.

I will always keep the first seven or eight years of my life in a special place in my heart and mind. In everything that I've approached since those days I've brought the same intensity and passion. Sure there have been let downs and set backs but they've always shaped me and better prepared me for the future. I believe if you pour your heart and soul into something that you are deeply rooted in, no matter what the outcome, you will never fail.