

Growing Up with Autism

Six years ago, when I was nine years old, I stood in line with my family to ride Slimey's Chutes at Sesame Place in Pennsylvania. I was thrilled to go down the long water slide with all of its twists and turns, but it was a very long wait. Thirty minutes from the point, the sign read. Ten minutes past by slowly when suddenly, my older sister, Christine, went into one of her temper tantrums. She began to "chin" herself and scream hysterically. My dad left the line swiftly and walked up to the employees. My dad was explaining to the employee that my sister had a developmental disorder, Autism. The employee walked over to us and asked my family to leave the line. The employee led us up the winding stairs, "cutting" the other families waiting on the line. Everyone stared at us as we moved to the front of the line. I turned my head away in embarrassment. From that moment on I realized we were not a normal family.

After returning from Sesame Place, I tried learning more about Autism. I slowly learned from watching all of the children at Christine's school that each autistic child is different variations and symptoms of autism, from mild to very severe. From watching Christine compared to the other children, I believed she wasn't as severe as the other children. Through watching Christine, I learned about her behavior and how to handle it. Along with learning more about autism through Christine, I learned about care and responsibility. I saved up one hundred dollars and donated the money to Christine's school. My mom also trusted me to watch Christine and my younger siblings when she wasn't home.

Today, I'm still helping the autistic community. I still try and donate as much money possible to autism research and to my sister's school. I have recently applied to the Science Research Program at Fox Lane High School. If I am selected to attend the program, I am planning on researching autism in hope of raising awareness in my community. Finally, I have begun an Autism Speaks Club in Fox Lane High School. The Autism Speaks Club supports autism research and fundraises money for autism research. My goal for the Autism Speaks Club is to raise awareness throughout the Fox Lane community.

One mistake I made when I was nine years old was turning my head away from the angry line of families at Sesame Place. Never again will I turn or look away in embarrassment of my older sister. I am proud to stand up for Christine and other children with autism. I want to make a difference.