

My brother has autism

If you want to know something about sport, he will tell you the names of all the team. He'll even tell you the date they joined if you ask. If you ask him about holidays, he will tell you it was Portugal in 2011, and on the Thursday we went to watch Barcelona play and they won 3-0. The last time he ate prawns was on a Friday 4 years ago, but he didn't like the texture. He is one of a kind with the most wonderful abilities.

He is caring. He is funny. He is him.

His ways are not like mine and not like many, his unique ways often get seen as 'weird'.

Acceptance wasn't easy. I remember teachers saying, he's not as well behaved as you, or, he doesn't take after you, the look on my friends faces when they first heard the funny noises he would make.

To compensate I decided I should be the best at everything. I dreamt about going to university and making my parents proud. To me, I could be the only 'proof' that my parents were good parents so that other people didn't judge. Let me tell you I could not have been more wrong...

To be that person dealing with a disability means every day is different. One day it's chaotic the next it's rewarding. I remember a friend saying I'd grown up far too quick, but I always had that motherly instinct. I felt like in school I needed to be there for him. Why has he had no dinner? Why is he walking around on his own?

Sometimes I love him and sometimes I hate him and that's okay.

I have always been a confident person; I could talk the legs off a donkey. So, trying to understand and accept that my brother didn't want to hang out with friends or go out anywhere was difficult. At times, I often felt confused how somebody could be so scared to talk to other people (I mean I loved it). I didn't understand why he didn't want a phone – I couldn't part with mine. I wondered and still do wonder on his bad days if he does hate his big sister, but then an hour later he wants a movie night with me. I didn't understand why he looked so normal but he didn't act what is judged as 'the norm'.

What I don't question is will he be ok? Because I know he will be. He has faced challenges that I myself and you will probably never face. He is a blessing that has made me more aware of all the differences around us. Because of him I am more patient, kind and helpful.

Judging a person does not define who they are, it defines who you are; accepting that each individual is different and some a little bit more different makes you a better person. At no time is anyone above you. Disabilities unravel feelings and emotions, you never know where the tunnel ends, but you walk with your family and travel the distance. My parents are the most inspiring, caring and loving people and with their determination and persistence, Kyle and I have grown up as strong young adults with respect, love and loyalty.

Kyle, you are you. Don't you ever change.

To any siblings out there, you are brave and your mum and dad love you just as much, but your sibling needs that extra bit of attention. Keep being bold and brave.