



Views from Our Shoes **Growing Up with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs**

Edited by Donald J. Meyer

Ryan Clearwater, 10

My name is Ryan Clearwater. I am 10 years old. My sister, Lindsey, is 13 years old. She has mental retardation. I would like to share some thoughts I have with you for your book.

Lindsey comes to Shepard school with me and I feel O.K. about that. She sometimes is in a regular class and other times is in a special class. I don't feel O.K. when people make fun of Lindsey. It makes me mad and sad at the same time. My good friends understand.

One good time I remember is when I had to read a book to Lindsey at school to make her feel better because someone hurt her feelings on purpose. Reading the book to her calmed her down and I felt good that she was O.K. and safe. I think having a sister with disabilities has made me a more caring and sensitive person.

Lindsey is my only sibling. It is hard to put into words what having a sister with special needs is like, but I can't imagine having a plain old sister. Sometimes I wish she wasn't handicapped—but she is and I can't change that or cure her.

I like to hear Lindsey laugh. I don't like it when Lindsey cries or gets in trouble. Sometimes I'm scared for Lindsey because I can't predict what she will do next. She's in her own little world. Lindsey is a "free spirit" and likes to wander around our neighborhood. We have a fence around my house to keep her safe.

Sometimes I'm jealous of Lindsey. When I ignore my parent's directions, I always get privileges taken away. When Lins ignores them, she doesn't always get punished because she is still learning right from wrong.

When I grow up I want to be involved in sports. When Lindsey grows up I want her to have a job that she enjoys.

Ryan, who likes cards, video games, coin collecting, and sports, lives in Columbia, Missouri.

Jaci Raia, 12

The good part of having a brother with special needs is that no matter what you do to them, they'll always love you. My brother, Brian, is sometimes very caring and other times quite ignorant. Sometimes on rainy days, we play something like office, and we have a blast! And he is very considerate and helpful. He may get a glass if you need one, and remind you to close the cabinet door so you don't bang your head. Brian is always willing to play with me.

Some of the bad parts about having Brian as a sibling are that he hogs the TV, he makes fun of me, and he is just plain Annoying! He always teases me and when someone visits, he sticks to me like he's my shadow. And he does some disgusting things that make me sick.

Since I have Brian as a brother, my life is a little different. People want to make it up to Brian because he doesn't have things that normal kids have, like regular speech. So, once in a while, my parents buy him things he wants that aren't too expensive. Once we were in the mall and he saw a little toy train he wanted. My mom bought it for him. Usually when she buys him something, she buys me a little something to try not to make me feel bad. So I asked her if I could get something and she said, "No, I don't have any money left." She had spent it all on Brian! I got really mad at them. I wanted to take Brian's new toy and break it, but I didn't because I knew I would get into trouble.

Some changes I'd like my parents to make for me are to STOP comparing me to him. My parents keep going on endlessly about how he can't do certain things, he can't talk right, and on and on and on. Another thing is to stop spending so much time with Brian. I feel ignored a lot. And I want my parents to stop pitying Brian! If he does something bad, he gets yelled at. Then if he starts to cry, my parents rush to him and say, "Aw, what's the matter, Brian?" But if I get yelled at and start to cry, they don't even care. They just say, "Stop it, Jaci. There's no reason you should be acting like a 2 year old." It's always the little things that get me mad.

Jaci, 12, likes to read and draw. Her brother Brian, 11, has fragile X syndrome. Fragile X syndrome is defined on page 109! They live in Edison, New Jersey.

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