

Brandon

Hello, my name is Brandon. I am a senior in High School in Nebraska. I will graduate from high school this May and I would like to attend college next year. I want to be able to work with computers someday.

I have had many diagnoses in my lifetime. Such as: ADHD, Learning Disabilities, Bipolar Disorder, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to name a few. Two years ago I was diagnosed with a Pervasive Developmental Disorder which I understand is supposed to be a form of Autism. So, my current diagnoses are PDD and a Mood Disorder.

I have had an IEP since kindergarten. At first, it was just for Speech and later for my learning disabilities. I don't read or write things very well. I also have a lot of trouble getting along with my classmates. Its not that I fight with them, they just don't seem to like me very well. The best way for me to explain this is to tell what has happened to me while I have been in school.



Most of my time in school has been spent with kids teasing and picking on me. I've always been target to be made fun of. It started with simple stuff like not being invited to birthday parties or calling me bad names. But by the time I entered the sixth grade kids were hurting me in other ways like pulling my pants down while on the monkey bars, treating me as a human pinball on the playground, throwing my clothes in the shower, putting me inside lockers, or holding me down and being used as kid's personal punching bag. I never did anything to them and still don't understand why they were so mean to me. When I told teachers about this, the other kids always denied it, and the teachers told me there was nothing they could do about it.

Also as I got older, somehow I was making my teachers mad at me too. I would forget and lose lots of things. I also got into trouble for not remembering my books, playing with my binder instead of taking notes, not looking at the teacher and paying attention, or not tucking in my shirt. One teacher would make me do jumping jacks or push-ups in front of his class if I did any of these things. Instead of being laughed at by my classmates, I decided to go to resource room when I forgot something and ask for help. When I did this, I got put into an isolation room. Anytime I had problems with the kids in school or with my schoolwork the answer was to have my medications increased. At times, they tried to convince my parents to put me into a group or foster home. I became depressed and cried every night when I went home from school, so I decided to commit suicide.

I didn't tell anyone I was going to do this. But I couldn't take it anymore. I was tired of all teasing, kids hurting me at school and no one at school taking it seriously. No one cared about what the kids were doing to me. They kept telling me it was no big deal. No one listened to me. They told me to work it out myself. So that's exactly what I did. I did the only thing that I could figure that would stop all the torture I was going through in school. One morning I hid from the bus, found a rope in the garage, climbed up and tied the rope to my favorite tree and around my neck and tried to hang myself. My mom found me and held onto my legs. She begged me not to do this, but I kept trying to kick loose. I stopped when she promised me that I wouldn't have to go back to school.

When kids found out that I was in the hospital, they made things even worse for me. They continued to tease, threaten and hurt me more. Some days I came home with bruises or blood on my shirt. After being in the hospital, the only suggestions from the teachers or principal were to increase my medication. My principal once told me "I CHOOSE to act this way and if I CHOOSE to act this way, then I deserved the treatment I get". Most teachers felt that I should learn to work it out myself. So, I decided to hide in the school basement or old locker rooms before school or to run away from school to stay away from those kids. Of course, I was the one who got in trouble for this. This is when my parents thought it would be best for me to go to a private school.

Eventually, I went to a bigger school where I go to school now. I am doing better there. I think this is because the school is so much bigger than my old school. Kids don't tease me as much and I have a few friends now that are from my YES group and my team mates on the speech and debate teams. But most of the time I try to stay away from other kids and be by myself. I still have some trouble with teachers understanding what is really wrong with me.

Since I started school, I have had a lot of doctors, therapists, and medications. It's not that I wanted different doctors or therapists; they just leave and move elsewhere. Every time I get a new doctor or therapist, they seem to give me a new diagnosis and along with that come new medications. I feel like a human guinea pig sometimes and no one cares or asks me how the meds make me feel. Teachers get angry or don't believe me that I feel dizzy, sick to my stomach, or I am tired because of my medications. They tell me I am making excuses and trying to get out of my work. I am not making these symptoms up or it is all in my head. If I were a student with diabetes, cancer or some other illness, and was being teased or having side effects because of medications I wouldn't be treated this way. I hate getting in trouble at school, I want to make my teachers happy and not get angry with me.

I want teachers to help me live up to my potential. I have had a lot of different tests done on me throughout school. These doctor's and psychologists have made many suggestions to help me do better. No one at school follows their advice. They often ignore or exclude classes or programs they are not familiar with, take too much time, or disagree that I need to be successful.

An example of this is my test results from Munroe -Meyer two years ago. My diagnosis of PDD has never been considered on my IEP. The school only used my IQ score and selected tests to verify me as learning disabled only. The school has done nothing to help me with my social skills or preparing me to be out on my own, even though my doctors, therapist, and parents have more concerns about these areas than my other schoolwork.

The worst thing to me is that no one listens to me. I need help with things like reading and writing, but I also need help with other things like getting along with other people, and how to be out on my own. I have no idea what to do after graduation. All the teachers tell me is that I need to leave home. When I tell them I want to go to school and stay at home they get angry at me. This scares me and makes me not want to be around them.

I am very confused on what I need to do to go to school next year or whether I can get a job or what I am supposed to do. No one seems to have the time at school to help me with this. I don't know what to do. I just want them to help me be successful. They act like they don't care and just want to get rid of me. If I am not in school there, I am not their problem anymore. This has been my story no matter what school I was at throughout my life.

If teachers really want to know what helps, just ask. Don't tell us what to do, but listen to what we want to do and what we need to be successful. Don't assume or label us as bad kids or we CHOOSE to be like this. Don't assume that we always come from a bad family or bad parents and would be better off if we were away from them. They are NOT the cause of our problems. My family has been the BEST thing that has happened to me. They have stuck by and continue to support me; they always listen to me and help me figure things out when no one else cares. They love me no matter what. They are not BAD parents and they help me in so many ways. They are the most important part of my life and I will continue to need their love and support as I get older. I don't know where I would be without them.

Help us in ways not to make us different from other kids, don't put us in front of the class to humiliate and embarrass us into getting something you want us to do. It doesn't make us get our work done or not to lose things. As a matter of fact it makes it worse. Ask instead what might be helpful and be open minded enough to try even if you don't think it will work.

Don't tell doctors to increase medication without talking to us or our parents. Just because we may be having more problems with schoolwork or our classmates doesn't mean we need more medication. Understand that our medications do help but, they don't cure us! Teachers need to take the time to understand the side effects of medications before jumping to conclusions and saying that we are doing things on purpose. If we are on a new medicine, take the time to find out the side effects.

You also need to work and communicate with our doctors, parents, therapists, and most importantly “us” on what is the best way to help. This includes taking their recommendations even though it might be something you are unsure of or don't agree with. Ask questions if you aren't sure. Set a good example for us.

I can't stress enough how important it is to just LISTEN. You may not think being teased or bullied is a big thing to you. Or that it is just kids being kids. But I tell you from my experience it is! Sometimes it is hard for kids like me to ask for help. If teachers would take the time just to listen and watch out for bullies, we wouldn't hate going to school or feel no one cares. We need someone to listen to our concerns, be our friend and to help us to understand why we are being treated badly. If you don't have the time, then find someone who we can talk with and they just listen and help us figure out what to do instead of blaming us or saying it was all our fault. Show us that you really care about us. Remember that what we want most of all is to be just like “normal” kids. We want to be treated with respect and to be SUCCESSFUL!

I hope that you will leave here today taking some of my advice back with you when working with your students like me.

Thank you.

Brandon, Age 19
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