

Erin

My name is Erin. I'm 16 years old and go to school at a High School in eastern Nebraska. I have an older brother who is in college and an older sister, a brother-in-law and a nephew. My sister is a speech teacher at a different school. My mom works for the school system and she is a boss of special education. My dad works for the Homeland Security and he retired from the army in August. He was a long time in the army. I am the youngest child in the family.

The problems I have are Cerebral Palsy (CP) and I also have Trichotillomania. My DSM Diagnosis is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Anxiety and Depression. The Cerebral Palsy caused my back to curve and my knees are bad. I have had a spinal surgery to put a rod and some screws in my back. I had pneumonia several times one year because my spine was growing into my lungs making me sick. I missed so much school that year. My surgery was the summer before 9th grade, so I missed school in 8th grade. My knees have early arthritis, I have calcium buildup and I have pain if I have to use a lot of stairs or else walk a long way.

Because I have CP, I don't have good balance, and I can't do things other kids my age get to do, like ride a bike. I also don't talk very well. It's hard for other people to understand me, but I talk better now than when I was young. I also have ear problems. I had to have lots of ear surgeries, tubes many times and one time my eardrum blew out and they put in a new one.

In case you don't know what trichotillomania is, it's an obsessive compulsive disorder. Actually, I pull out my hair on my head and my eyebrows. I usually wear a wig or a scarf. I have a psychiatrist and a therapist. I go to ear doctors and bone doctors, plus my family doctor, so many times, more than most kids. I take a lot of medicine to help me but I will continue all these problems through my life.

My strengths are horse-back riding, my writing, and my imagination. Also, I have a good sense of humor. I'm open to talking about myself. I go to my IEP meetings. I have been riding horses since before I was 8, and I have shown in both 4-H and special Olympics. I have two purple ribbons and 3 gold, a silver and a bronze medal. Also a plaque. I love horses, I ride either English or western.

I have an IEP. My identified disability is Health Impaired. I first entered Special Education in preschool, when I first started school. I have been in Special Education



since Preschool. I have an IEP manager, and a speech teacher, and I also work with a PT and an OT (to help my handwriting and get strong hands). I have to do exercises every day to help my knees. The speech teachers I have helped me be able to talk better. My IEP manager has helped me with school work. Sometimes I get mad at school and sometimes I yell, my resource teacher helps me cool down and apologize. In high school I also have resource teachers. Some have helped me, some haven't been helping to me at all.

One year I nominated my resource teacher as a teacher of the year because she helped me feel so good about myself and she did not let other kids make fun of me. She won and we got to have breakfast with the Governor- my whole family and her whole family. Her name was Miss T. We were in the newspaper too.

One resource teacher I had didn't help me at all. We just showed up. She didn't know what my homework was and she couldn't help me in math, so I didn't get a C+ in algebra and I had to take it over. I think I have improved in school because I wrote my own fantasy story, and I made a cookbook on own. I can read very well. I read all the time, I especially love fantasy stories, like Lord of the Rings.

My favorite teachers are those who understand me for who I am, not what I am expected to be. I'm not a typical teenager and my favorite teachers accept that. I hate rock and roll, I'm a country person. I don't like to go to dances and football games and stuff like that. I don't talk on the phone very well, but I love to IM my friends around the country and role play.

My least favorite teachers are those who won't help me to do better in school. They don't understand me and they don't listen to me. One time my meds were building up bad and I was very sleepy and the teacher would not help me stay awake. I got in trouble for falling asleep but I did not get detention because my mom talked to her. Also, I don't like the secretary who doesn't listen to me either.

I get support at my school from teachers, the principals, and my friends. One things I would change at my school is to help other students get special needs knowledge, most people don't have that. I would like people to know there are special needs kids out there and not everyone is like they are.

These experiences affect my life because I can inform other people about my disability. If someone asks me about my disability or why I wear a wig, I tell them and teach them about cerebral palsy and OCD. Some people think that all cerebral palsy is the same, but it is very not. I have a friend who also is cerebral palsy and she is in a wheelchair. I don't need that. Other people talk good with cerebral palsy and I don't talk very good. My goals are to quit pulling my hair and I'd like to become a large animal Veterinarian. My plans for the future are to go to college and become a large animal vet.

Erin, Age 16
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Nebraska