

A Sibling's Perspective

By: Rachel Goldstein

I would not be the person I am today if I did not have my brother, Josh. He has an extensive movie collection, loves going bowling and doing arts and crafts and has a very busy social life. He works bagging groceries at a grocery store and also volunteers at a nearby hospital. From my earliest memories of childhood, it was always Josh and I, side by side. To this day, we talk on the phone daily and spend a lot of time together. Josh also has an intellectual disability.

Experiencing life with an intellectually disabled sibling impacted me from a very young age as it exposed me to the sometimes harsh reality individuals with disabilities face. I witnessed the insensitivity and lack of understanding by non-disabled individuals when interacting with my brother. In grade school I would hear the whispers and snickers of other children and would witness the never-ending struggle for inclusion and acceptance. I observed issues with access to education and the lack of community inclusion. I saw the limited employment opportunities and the attitudinal barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

While I am an outsider looking in on the experiences Josh has had, experiencing life as Josh's sister was a formative part of my decision to pursue a career as an attorney and ignited a passion in me to focus my legal career on promoting and advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities. As Senior Staff Attorney at DIG, I bring forward my experiences and unique perspective as a sibling of a brother with an intellectual disability. As part of our newsletters, we would like to feature a story each month from siblings of individuals with disabilities as a place to share their experiences, increase support to one another and promote the issues important to them and their families. If you are a sibling of an individual with a disability and would like to share your story, please feel free to contact us at debbie@justdigit.org.