

Emily O'Shei

This I Believe

2/10/14

I believe that you're attitude towards others is a reflection of how and what you are exposed to early in your life. At a young age I was raised to understand the importance of having a positive attitude towards individuals with disabilities. I thank my mom for raising me to believe that everyone should have equal opportunities to learn, participate and live to the best quality available.

My mother has been a special education teacher and speech therapist for almost thirty years. She loves her job and takes pride in having the opportunity to help her students everyday. I grew up hearing stories about her kids at work, when one of them did or said something funny, inspirational or caring. My mother truly takes pride in her students and knows how special and amazing each day she spends with them is. I was fortunate enough that she made sure to instill these values within me.

When I was younger, I never thought there was another way to think about or treat individuals with disabilities. I was given a little reality check in elementary school. My friend Billy was in my classes from kindergarten all the way up to sixth grade. Billy happened to be deaf but, to be honest we had all known him since we were five so he wasn't really ever treated any different. I remember one recess we were all playing football outside and there was an argument on weather Billy scored or not and we had argued and yelled with one another until it was eventually

worked out. This wasn't an unusual occurrence and there wasn't really a second thought between us kids. But later that day my teacher pulled me aside and we got to talking about what happened. She said, " I think it's really cool the way you guys treat Billy" I didn't know what she was talking about. I asked her what she meant and she explained " You treat him like everyone else you don't let him slide on anything or pity him because he is deaf, and you guys always include him without question and I'm just really proud of all of you". I guess I'd never thought that someone would treat him that way, he may have needed help hearing but that doesn't change who he is as a person.

I suppose I was in such shock after this conversation because my mother raised me to understand other people's conditions and I didn't know there was a different way to view them. I believe that my positive attitude and understanding about individuals with disabilities was shaped by my mother's attitude, values and willingness to teach me about disability awareness so early in my life. Due to my experiences I feel that I am better prepared for my profession and will be a great teacher one day. I will always look at my students abilities and encourage them to not allow others ignorance limit them. More importantly, I think it is important for more people to share my understanding and views on the subject. Therefore, I will expose my students to disability awareness and create a positive experience between them and an individual with a disability.

I believe that you're attitude towards others is a reflection of how and what you are exposed to early in your life.

This I believe.