

"How to Overcome any Disability in Life"

By Becky Curran

Twenty seven years ago, I was born an achondroplastic dwarf. This means that I have an average height torso but shorter arms and legs. I stand 4 feet tall. Every day I'm forced to adapt to the "average" height world that we live in. Whether it's using a stool or pedal extensions for driving, I figure out a way to make it work.

Dwarfism is a recognized condition under the Americans with Disabilities Act, but a large number of people with disabilities will tell you that they wouldn't change anything except for how the world reacts to their disability. What I've learned in life is that the real disability can only be found inside. Whether it's using a stool or pedal extensions for driving, I figure out a way to make it work. I've learned to accept that the world isn't going to adapt to me. Each day I choose to focus on everything I can do, even if it's a different way than everyone else. Many people without any type of disability still focus on what they can't do and constantly compare themselves to others. Growing up I was extremely active on the local followed by the high school swim team. It took me a lot longer than my "average" height peers to finish the laps required at practice; however I stayed at practice until I completed what was required of everyone.

Junior year in high school was the hardest year for me. The girls in my group of friends since preschool started dating guys and some of them indirectly stated that they would be embarrassed having me around their newfound guy friends or love interests. This was a very difficult time for me. However, this was a time when I discovered that I needed to rise above it and disability can also be found in one's insecurities. Insecurity comes from discomfort inside oneself and their only solution is to project their feelings by treating others poorly. Being made fun of comes from the victim's insecurities and that's why I can't let every laugh, point and stare get to me.

There are an estimated 30,000 people in the United States living with one type of the 200 forms of dwarfism. Dwarfs only represent 0.02% of the U.S. population. This means that most little people see at least one person a day who has never seen one before. This causes people to often stare and occasionally laugh when they see a little person. I feel responsible for educating everyone who I come across in my everyday life, in order to teach them that we really are no different. Luckily now that there's a stronger presence in the media than ever before, some people have now at least seen one little person on television or in a movie.

Both of my parents and older sister are "average" height. People can choose to make the best of what they have or find every possible fault and think about what they don't have. My parents always taught me to stay positive no matter how harsh the outside world may be.

We were all brought to this earth for a reason and have the ability to do whatever we want with our lives. The truth is that everyone struggles in their everyday life in one way or another. It's about staying positive and making the best of what you have. Just because somebody may look different, it doesn't mean that they're not enjoying their life and by no means should people stare or laugh at them. The real disability comes from inside.

Here are my tips for you:

1. Stay focused on the positives instead of the negatives. No matter what obstacles have come my way, staying positive has allowed me to overcome them. When I was in tenth grade, I had to miss 29 days of school in order to have major back surgery, where seven vertebrae were removed due to spinal cord compression. I knew that the back surgery was crucial and I found a way to make up the school work that I had missed. Staying positive allowed me to keep up with my classmates and graduate on time.

2. Don't ever give up. When I first moved out to Los Angeles after growing up in Boston, I went on one hundred job interviews before starting my current position. If I wasn't right for those one hundred positions, I knew there still had to be an opportunity out there for me.

3. Challenge yourself and try new things every day. As soon as I wake up in the morning, I find a new challenge; whether it's trying to reach something high in the kitchen or participating in an optional pitch lunch at work. As for trying new things, as long as you try, that's all that matters in the end.

4. Each day you should ask yourself if you're happy. If there's something that's making you unhappy, you should find a way to make change. I find myself unhappy whenever I'm surrounded by negative people. Now I'm more cautious of the people who I surround myself with.

5. Smile. A smile goes a long way. Whenever people are staring or laughing at me for whatever reason, keeping a smile on my face causes them to wonder why I don't react.

6. Don't compare yourself to others and find time to celebrate your little accomplishments. I always set my own goals. Although we all wish we could get there as fast as it seems others have, I've found ways to enjoy the journey and celebrate each little success on the way. After missing almost a whole season on the youth soccer team, due to my back surgery during the spring of my sophomore year in college, I found a way to play in the last game of the season. I never scored a goal but participating was just as important to me. After long recovery, this was a huge accomplishment for me.

Next time you're out and about, try to find someone to smile and say hello to. If they look like they're struggling, try to help them out. Take the chance to learn from them. Disability can only be found in the way you think and life is only as hard as you make it.

Bio

Becky Curran currently works at a talent agency in Los Angeles, CA. As an aspiring motivational speaker, she's determined to find a way to change the way little people and all people with disabilities are perceived in the media which ultimately influences the opinions of society as a whole.

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