



## **From a Sibling's Perspective, by Luisa Rinaudo**

My 12 year old brother, Sal, has Down syndrome. I watch and learn from him everyday as he comes and sits next to me at night holding a book, or a deck of cards maybe even a calculator. He has a thirst for knowledge, he watches me as I do my homework in excitement that maybe he will live up to the same expectations. I watch him as he tries to play basketball, write and speak. He looks up at me with his endearing brown eyes and freckled face every time he accomplishes a goal only showing me his unconditional love. He demonstrates that he is eager to learn something new everyday. I see as he struggles to do something as tedious as to write his full name or tie his shoes, but he persisted, and now he can. He has as much potential as anyone in this world, just like any other person who is mentally or physically challenged, that is just it, everyone has potential even the developmentally disabled they can grow up to be anything they wish. My family and I seem to understand Sal when he speaks, it is not exactly words that come out of his mouth, but whatever it is he explains it in a more than willing way to make it clear. He tells me if he's hungry, thirsty, happy or sad. He has feelings; all people have feelings, even those who have a disability.

People with developmental disabilities do not choose to be this way; they are born or develop these afflictions. Just like my brother, at two months old he had open heart surgery, and without the assiduous care of the doctors, nurses and family he would not be here today, he would not be here to teach me that everyone in this world matters.

So much can be learned from the developmentally disabled, they teach us trust, respect, loyalty and so much more that will enhance the way the future generations will think and act. The "R" word the most disrespectful word that can change the way we look at a person with a blink of an eye. Whatever you want to call this detrimental word, it should be clear that people with disabilities should not be addressed as a "R". Everyone deserves a chance to be there own person, have their own dreams and expectations. Every time you look into a person's eyes you see their emotions their inner self, you can evaluate the person they really are, and that words affect everyone. As you can see a single word can make the difference in someone's perspective.

When we use this word we don't stop to think of the people who are important. Just think of my brother, all of the suffering he had gone through to reach where he is now and at a young age his enthusiasm is still strong. Think of how my brother would never blame you for anything; think of how I would do anything for him because I love him. Just think of the innocent person you are offending by using the derogatory term. You have the ability to change billions of lives. To change a life around is like getting a new present. On the outside is wrapping that beholds the mystery inside, but when it is open the true gift releases itself. Think of all the mentally disabled people and how much better off they are if we just eliminated ONE single word. Just one word is all we need to stop THE WORD.