

Candidate C evidence

I have seen how disabilities affect the people that I love. I have seen them break down when people mock them, but on the other hand, I have seen them filled with elation when they overcome the hurdles caused by their disability. When they come face to face with their hurdle, they don't just give up and walk away, their sheer amount of resilience allows them to work tirelessly so that what limits them no longer does.

Take my cousin, James, for example. James was born with Spina Bifida alongside other conditions. His shunt, means he has to be careful not to bang his head, and his Spina Bifida makes walking long distances a struggle. Imagine having 34 operations in 17 years, or not being able to walk until you were 3. It's these factors that have helped shape James into the person he is today. What about my Auntie Catherine? She was born with Down Syndrome, and wasn't able to talk until she was 7. But that hasn't stopped her, and she won't let it stop her. James and Catherine don't let their disabilities stop them. James loves going to football matches and meeting up with his friends, and Catherine attends college and has had multiple part-time jobs over the years.

With James and Catherine being very close family members, I have seen first-hand the troubles that they face on a daily basis. Catherine's condition makes it difficult to understand what she is saying, but she doesn't let this stop her having conversations with people. I have also seen James feeling rather disheartened when someone makes a comment about his disability, but despite this, he puts it to the back of his mind and carries on being the positive person that he is. When I think of the issues that I have had to put up with over the years, like studying for prelims or even the occasional fall out with friends, it always amazes me how both James and Catherine are able to take the issues they face on the chin. This is a quality that I have always admired, and it is something that is changing the way that I deal with the problems I face.

Usually when I come across something that I can't do, my first response is to give up and move onto something else. This creates problems, especially when it comes to schoolwork and exams. I would look at a question in an exam for example, look at it and get really stressed out because I wasn't sure how to do it and this would affect my performance in the other questions. This is all just part and parcel of the overall pessimistic person that I am, but I am working on changing this. In the case of schoolwork, when I come across a question that I cannot do, I give it as good a go as I can and I spend time working on other examples like that so I can really get to grips with how that specific type of question works, but most importantly, I don't get as frustrated as I used to.

I was never really a fan of trying new things either, but James helped me to get over that as well. Because of James' Spina Bifida, he can't walk long distances, so

when we were in Florida 2 years ago, we hired a mobility scooter for when we were walking about the theme parks. I will never forget James' hatred for the idea, and for the duration of the flight he was determined not to use the scooter. That was, of course, until he gave it a try. I have never seen anymore more attached to anything in my life. Trying to get him off this scooter was nigh on impossible, but this is what really resonated with me. The whole idea of trying something new and different, even if you seriously don't want to, is now something that appeals to me. Because of this, I decided to attempt public speaking, so that I could better the way in which I present. When I was picked to represent the school, I couldn't think of anything I didn't want to do more than this, but just thinking about James falling madly in love with the scooter allowed me to give it my all, and to my surprise my team ended up advancing in the competition.

This change in the way that I think and do things has been fundamental to my development. I haven't really thought about it much before, however, now that I have taken the time to analyse the events that I have witnessed in my life, I have realised just how much seeing the development of James and Catherine has affected my life for the better. Being able to see anyone overcome a barrier of any kind is something that makes me appreciate just how incredible the human body and mind truly is. Even when there is a physical boundary stopping someone from doing something, like James' Spina Bifida or Catherine's Down Syndrome, if a person is truly determined, our resilience, courage and effort will allow us to break down these barriers and develop into a stronger person.