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I honestly do not remember the first time I saw someone with a disability exactly. My older cousin Kelsey has a mild intellectual disability. She was there when I was born so I suppose that's around the first time I saw a person with a disability. She is 21 years old and holds a job at a restaurant in Indianapolis. I remember the first time they told me she was different, I honestly did not know until that point.

I was probably 8 years old when I was told that my cousin was different from me. I assumed they meant she was older, but that was not the case. All my life, at family get togethers and holidays, Kelsey and I had always played together while my little sister and her little sister played together. It was the unspoken code of the cousins. She seemed just like me, although she was scared of certain things that I did not understand, and sometimes she would have little meltdowns. I always attributed that to us just being raised differently. We would play dolls and house, normal kid stuff. Her mom was always around and watching. It never bothered me until one time she took me aside and had a little talk. She said, "You know your cousin is different than you, right?" I told her how I did know because we were all different. She then went on to explain the disability and how it made Kelsey different. I said okay and ran back to play, hoping I hadn't missed much of the game.

When we entered our teenaged years, she was developing differently than I, and it never bothered me. Now that we are adults, she is in a high school frame of mind. I do not treat her like a baby or anything like that, but I try to tell her things in a way that she will understand. Communicating and teaching her things about my life, such as explaining my college routine is harder, she learns best by pictures, so I usually send a picture to explain a situation. She also remembers things better if she can see them. I just have many memories of that being true throughout our lives. I did not realize it until I began studying those with exceptional needs.

As I have gained more experience in my life, I realized how out of all the memories I have of Kelsey and me, the disability is never first and foremost in my mind. So maybe I don't have the typical story of the first time I saw someone with a disability, but I have always been around it and most of my

life I never even knew. Those memories with Kelsey are what drives me to help other kids just like her. I know I want to give them the education they deserve, especially for Kelsey.