

My Child

by Marla DeBruin

There is a child I want you to know. The child is my child.

My child looks like your child, normal and perfect in every way.

My child, however, has an invisible disability.

I'm sure you've seen my child. My child is the one who is never invited to birthday parties.

My child is the child who has never been over to your house to play with your child.

My child is the one who sits alone on the swing at the playground.

My child is the one who watches other children play together.

My child wants to play with your child, but is told "no" because my child acts differently than your child.

My child's disability makes my child extremely naive, something you don't find in children my child's age.

My child doesn't make fun of others and likes everyone.

Small children are attracted to my child because of my child's patience with them.

Adults find my child charming and polite because that is the only way my child knows how to behave with others. For some reason, children the same age as my child find these characteristics unsettling. Your child avoids my child because of this.

Many adults work towards helping my child try to fit in.

My child is told social stories to help make my child more like yours. The problem is that my child needs your child to help learn social skills. Unfortunately this can't happen because your child wants nothing to do with my child.

Your child, I'm sure, was taught at an early age to be kind to physically disabled people. With a certain amount of sympathy and good manners, they accept those who are afflicted. I wish you could teach your child that some disabilities are not obvious.

My child does not want sympathy; my child just wants friends.

My child has autism.

My child could be your child.