

I-narrative essayAn Incident that changed my life

I vividly remember an incident with all its details. It was in 2014, that my family and I had gone to a nearby mall where I saw a child with special needs. I was only seven and this was my first encounter with a child who looked and behaved different. I got terribly scared and I was running away from him. On the way home, I asked my parents why that child looked abnormal. To this, my parents elucidated that few children have some disorders at birth due to which they have certain physical disabilities and/or intellectual challenges.

Next year in April 2015, God gifted me a cute, little brother. A wave of joy ran through the family; But soon, in infancy my brother Hridaan got diagnosed with a chromosomal disorder "Down syndrome" followed by innumerable health issues. I remember my brother was hospitalized for a month where he underwent an abdominal surgery. Frequent hospital visits and different therapy sessions followed. It was a tough time for my family especially my mother who faced an emotional roller coaster of love, anger, anxiety and worry to name few.

But I loved Hridaan from day one. He was a cute little baby to play with. Hridaan would spread love and joy with his angelic smile. For me, he was just like my little brother. I would run to help him for his needs. I was always on my toes and was willingly ready to help my family "in whichever way I could". As Hridaan needed more attention because of his health issues. The journey was not a cake walk for my family. Hridaan has brought a huge transformation in me. Now I'm more loving, caring, patient, empathetic and compassionate towards everyone around me.

My parents are connected to other parents who have children

special needs across the globe. We are now a well-informed family and have accepted Hinduism wholeheartedly. Now I don't run away from kids who have special needs instead I'm curious to know the 'how' and 'why' about it. I want to spread awareness in the world about special needs. People should accept children people with special needs as "individuals". They are just a part of the creation of the God, as we are. I have heard of few individuals and couples adopting special kids. I want to educate everyone that kids with special needs are not disabled but differently abled.

So let's extend a warm welcome to special people around us and accept them as a part of our society. Let's not judge them from their looks and behaviours but help them in whatever way we can.