



"Mother and Child," Naomi Janine © 2009*

My Very Special Brother

by Kala Grant

May 6, 2010 • Hall of Flags, Augusta, ME

Thank you for inviting me to speak today for Children's Mental Health Matters. My name is Kala Grant. I am 12 years old. I am very excited to be here talking about a very important subject to me. I would like to talk a little bit about why this matters to me and why I would like to bring awareness to others.

I have a very special brother. His name is Kyle. Kyle had his first testing when he was 2 years old. He was not like me. He did not talk and was very active. I did not understand then what was going on. Every couple of years he gets to take a day off from school and have more testing. His latest test gave him diagnoses of Mild MR, ADHD, PDD-NOS, Adjustment Disorder with mixed disturbance of emotions and conduct and Sensory Integration Disorder. That is a lot of letters.

I started doing some research on the PDD-NOS which is on the Autism Spectrum. I have a lot of friends that have met my brother. They will ask me "What is autism?" I tell them what I know, which is that autism is invisible and kids with autism need special help. I am always trying to learn more to better understand Kyle. Statistics show that every 1 in 100 children are diagnosed with autism.

My brother has been picked on and bullied because he is different. When someone makes fun of my brother I will step in and stop them because when my brother gets too upset he has meltdowns. A meltdown is when he can not express his feelings of being upset. Instead he becomes aggressive and angry. And even though he bugs me I still love him!

We have a saying in our house... "Kyle has autism; autism does not have him." Since he was 3 years old he has been attending some type of therapy and receiving special help in school. I have seen a change in my brother because of these services.

I have watched my family advocate and help Kyle for the last seven years. Which is why, when my Girl Scout troop started working towards our Silver Award, I decided to make mine about mental health. I am currently working towards educating elementary school kids about mental health. My hope is that this will help prevent bullying in school for all children. I would also like to bring an autism fair to my community. I would like this to be a place where adults and children could come and find out more about autism and ways to help people affected by autism.

The other thing I would like to bring to my community is a sibling support group. I know I am not the only kid who has a sibling affected by mental health. Thank you for listening.