

Hi, my name is Jake, I'm 19 and have autism, Tourette's syndrome, adhd, O.C.D and dyspraxia...my family often joke and say that I'm like a professor with so many letters after my name!

On June 27th 2014, I was asked to speak at 'The Autism Show' at Eventcity in Manchester. I was asked to discuss the book that I have written 'The Zirisian Princess and the Shrine of the Serpent' and what it has been like growing up and going to mainstream school with disabilities. This is the second time I have been given this opportunity and it was amazing!

Before the show I was quite nervous as I could hear lots of people already in the hall waiting for the show, 'Autisms Got Talent' to start. I had to wait until after my friends had sung before I could go onto the stage. They were being received really well, with the audience clapping and cheering at the end of each song...no pressure there then!

I showed the packed audience of over 200 people a slideshow presentation of pictures of characters from my book and explained some of the storylines and what the characters get up to during the adventure...not too much though, can't have plot spoilers! Everyone seemed to be enjoying hearing about the adventures of Ezekiel, Princess Tashna, Lukas and Fleelik the dragon, some people even bought my book and asked for my autograph like I was a real famous author and had photos taken with me...awesome!

I also spoke about my time in high school and how I had struggled to get along with the other pupils as I often misunderstood situations. I spoke about how I was bullied and that it had made me feel so depressed that I'd made plans to burn the school down or throw myself off the bridge. Luckily, my parents found out what I was up to and I was able to speak to them about how bad things had become for me and that I just wanted it all to end. My writing was the 'thing' that got me through these really dark days. I was able to spend time focusing on something else, I created a fantasy world where the creatures had adventures to save their perfect world. It was then that I realised that I had a talent for writing and I have since written many creative stories, some can be found online.

My parents spoke to the school about the bullies though not a lot seemed to happen. Eventually I moved schools for a fresh start. I found the new school to be far more understanding about my needs and I felt like I belonged here, as I made some really good friends that took the time to get to know me and understand me. It wasn't always easy but problems were dealt with sympathetically and efficiently.

I took all my GCSE & A level exams and I am now at Staffordshire University studying Film, TV & Radio...which I LOVE! Since writing my book, I have begun to feel much happier about my life with disabilities; I realise that there are some things that I will always struggle to do, some things that I may never do, some things that I need to learn to ask for help to be able to do but there are also loads of things that I can do and loads more that I want to experience. There are some things that only I can do! I never thought I would finish school, never mind be a uni student, publish a book and be asked to a guest speaker... I suppose you just have to keep on trying, as you never know what you might be good at or what opportunities might present themselves to you.