

STAY STANDING

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Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.” Perseverance is an extremely important aspect of growing up and improving oneself, which is why it is my law of life. As a student my teachers have always encouraged and expected me to persevere when I failed at something, but the person who has taught me most about perseverance is my younger sister, Amy.

Before Amy was born, she suffered a severe left cerebral artery infarct (commonly called a stroke), which caused paralysis to the right side of her body. This has made everyday tasks difficult for her to complete. Amy has trouble holding objects in her right hand, and walks with a slight limp. Despite these difficulties, Amy has played softball, and now is a member of the tennis and swim team at school. There’s no doubt that Amy has failed at things in her life due to her condition, but her perseverance and bravery to try new things has made her a strong person and a role model to myself.

I remember once when we were younger, Amy was told to make her bed and clean her room before my mom got home from the store. When she refused, I thought it was the I’m-a-kid-I-hate-to-clean phase, but under her breath I softly heard, “I can’t make my bed.” As I scrambled to help Amy clean her room before my mom made it home, I realized that things that came easily to other kids wouldn’t come easily to her. When my parents would spend extra time with Amy to help her with her schoolwork or take her to therapy appointments, I would get jealous and I was angry that Amy was getting so much attention. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized that Amy has faced so many challenges in her life-and has overcome them. She’s an inspiration to me because of her will to persevere, to never look back.

As an older sister, worrying about Amy comes naturally. I worried about her on her first day of high school, about her big science test, and I was deathly afraid when Amy was a few minutes late coming home from her first date. When Amy told me that she wanted to join the swim team, I worried. Would she keep up with the other swimmers? Would anyone laugh at her when she swam? Being a member of the swim team myself, I decided I would protect her. I would be the role model, and she would learn from me. I’m not sure if Amy learned anything from me that season, but she taught me more than I could have imagined. I watched her swim the one hundred yard freestyle for the first time-and it was painful. On the last lap, when her kicks slowed, and her breaths became more rapid, I wanted to jump in the pool and drag her to the wall. But she never gave up. As I helped her out of the pool, her tears flowing, I realized that Amy had more guts than anyone else on the team. She swam a race that she knew would be extremely hard for her, and she finished. It was obviously not easy for her, but she persevered in

the water and accomplished something great, if only in her own mind.

Perseverance is one of my laws of life because of the wonderful things that can be accomplished when one demonstrates it. Amy has taught me to not let anything stand in my way of accomplishing something. She is brave, persistent and does nothing without first putting a smile on her face. Amy has made me a better person-and now when I'm swimming the five hundred yard freestyle race or stressing over my AP Chemistry test, I think of Amy's perseverance and I keep trying. Like the Japanese proverb says, "Fall seven times, stand up eight." Amy and I are still standing.