



## **Georgia Vine (she/her), Graduate Teaching Assistant in Occupational Therapy**

### **Letter to My Younger Self**

Dear Georgia,

Being a disabled child is very hard, the world of disability doesn't come with any instructions it's just left for you and your family to navigate its ableist structures. I know this was hard for your parents at the beginning, their world had turned upside down when you got your diagnosis of cerebral palsy without any warning. Now, you're coming into later childhood and teenage years you're starting to recognise these flaws for yourself. Yet, you possibly have little understanding of these flaws, as I said these flaws are due to ableist structures and they don't just affect you but affect every disabled person in the world in some areas more than others.

These flaws are frustrating and when you get older you do a lot of work around ableism which I'll get onto in a minute but for now I'd encourage you to be young and live in the moment. Cliché I know, but we often find that as disabled individuals we rarely have chance to live in the moment and find our spirituality because we must think ahead and plan for our future. You know the feeling I know and even telling this I'm choosing my words carefully, as on the other hand, I know that if it wasn't all the hard work and planning put in by yourself and most importantly your parents then you wouldn't be where you are today. But my job writing this letter right now is to tell you not, not to worry and plan but to tell you that all that hard work is worth it.

I am currently aged 23 writing this letter and I am never where you would have predicted yourself to be aged 23. You are currently working at the University of Huddersfield as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in Occupational Therapy. Yes, occupational therapy, you probably are just contemplating the idea of occupational therapy and I would strongly advise you to continue down the path. There will be barriers and you will even get told that you won't be able to do it by occupational health when getting everything set up for university, but I would still persevere.

These ableist experiences become a huge part of your life and career in occupational therapy. You have knock backs during university on placement and a major wobble once finishing university and trying to land a job. Yet, you learn something from each one and you can use your experiences as part of your disabled advocacy. Yes, you get quite into disabled advocacy and have your own blog which leads you onto many opportunities and the work you did being a disabled activist in some parts contributed to you landing your current role at Huddersfield University.

Now, you are doing things that you never envisaged yet, on the other hand you couldn't see yourself anywhere else. In a few months' time your debut book ['Occupational Therapy, Disability Activism and Me: Challenging Ableism in Healthcare'](#) now I'm still having trouble getting my head around this never mind you, but it is happening!

You're living a great life at aged 23 Georgia, and a large part of this is because of the hard work yourself and your parents have put in so keep working hard. Yet also, you're living a great life, because you allowed yourself to be your authentic self. I know, living with a disability is frustrating, I still get frustrated at times! But embracing the tools your disability gives you is the best thing you have ever done. You're probably starting to feel a bit undermined by those around you in school, both peers and teachers, yet everything will work out and if you start embracing your disability which is your sharpest tool in the box, then you will thrive!

Sincerely,

Georgia