

Teen Born Without Nose or Eyes Inspires Masses

The news line on Drudge Report immediately got my attention: "Girl Born Without Eyes or Nose." But when I clicked on the link, expecting to read about a just-born, severely handicapped baby, I found a very different story—a story about a courageous teenager with an amazing attitude toward life. One simple quote from her said it all.

Before I share the quote, let me introduce you to 16-year-old Cassidy Hooper, born without eyes or a nose. A child like this would be the perfect candidate for abortion in today's society, especially since her condition is traced to "a rare birth defect that likely occurred during the first two weeks of gestation."

Yes, this is the age of designer babies and gender-selective abortions, and if it's OK to abort a baby because it isn't wanted or it's the wrong gender, why bring a child into the world who will suffer so much pain and hardship? Isn't the compassionate thing to put an end to her suffering before it even starts—in other words, to play God? Cassidy would answer with an emphatic "No!"

(Here's a chilling side note: Had Cassidy been born in Holland, there's the possibility a "compassionate," God-playing doctor would have euthanized her at birth. But that's another topic for another column.)

According to a March 5 report on , Cassidy "has high hopes for a career in radio broadcasting, despite her physical challenges. ... She attends the Governor Morehead School in Raleigh, N.C., a residential K-12 school for the blind, but no challenge is too big for her: She runs on the track team and recently qualified for a scholarship to the Charlotte Curling

Club.”

She runs on the track team and she’s blind? And she’s into curling, that odd-looking ice sport that most of us only know from the Winter Olympics?

According to her mom, “She’s very outgoing and never met a stranger. Whenever we go anywhere, she says, ‘Put me by the pool and I’ll go make friends.’ She loves to talk and is very, very self-confident.” And the first week she started attending the school for the blind in the fifth grade, she said to her mother, “Mom, everyone here is blind, so I’m normal.”

According to the news report, “Since the age of about 11, Cassidy has gone through a series of skin graft and facial reconstruction operations at Levine Children’s Hospital in Charlotte, N.C. In three final surgeries, done over two to three weeks, doctors will stretch skin flaps over a bone or cartilage graft from another part of her body.

“Cassidy said she is excited that for the first time, she will be able to smell and breathe through her nose. ‘I’ll have a real nose like everyone else’s,’ she said.”

But what about her other challenges? Even with a functioning nose, she’ll still be blind and will face a lifetime of obstacles and hurdles. This is how Cassidy looks at life, and this is the quote that so impressed me: “Things always may be hard,” Cassidy said, “But here’s what I think: I don’t need easy, I just need possible.”

What would the world look like if all of us lived like this? No eyes? No nose? No problem! She rides go-karts, has even tried playing baseball, and is curious, adventurous and independent.

With severe physical handicaps that almost none of us could ever relate to, not to mention her numerous surgeries, her spirit remains indomitable. And some of her inspiration comes

from the movie *Soul Surfer*, telling the story of another courageous young woman, Bethany Hamilton, who at 13-years-old, lost her arm to a shark while surfing, only to return to the waters as a champion surfer. (She actually went back to surfing just one month after losing her arm.)

And it is from the *Soul Surfer* story that Cassidy learned the line, "I don't need easy, I just need possible."

Yes, Cassidy (and Bethany) tell us, life may be hard, but that's nothing new. Life has never given anyone a free pass, and it has dealt some people absolutely crippling blows. But, as the saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, and if it doesn't break you it will make you.

And so, rather than having an endless pity party or living in hopeless despair, Cassidy is here to tell us to quit making excuses, to quit blaming others, to quit feeling sorry for ourselves, and to quit looking for an easy escape. Instead, she reminds us that "Things always may be hard. But here's what I think: I don't need easy, I just need possible."

Time for an attitude adjustment, anybody?