



## I See You

Shannon Dingle

I see you, mama warrior.

I see your tears, even as you quickly blink them away. I see your exhaustion, even as you try to hide the yawns. I see your plodding steps, one after another to do whatever it takes for your child.

You're wondering if you're doing enough. You're wondering if you should look into one more therapy or one more device or one more specialist. You're wondering if all your pushing toward the next goal is unintentionally communicating that your child isn't enough as he is now.

You win some. Oh, do you win! Your passion and love and knowledge of your child comes across in every bit of advocacy, rubbing off on those around you so they can't help but join the team. You champion your child so well that you're usually too tired to celebrate those wins, though I see your smile.

You cheer on other kids too. Maybe they're yours, maybe they're your bestie's, maybe they're in the same Sunday school class... no matter whose they are, you delight in all those typical milestones, even the ones your child may never meet. You love well. And sometimes you go home in tears, because the dream you had for your child isn't the reality.

So you dream new dreams. You learn IEP lingo and educational strategies and spellings of diagnoses and doctors you never thought you'd need to know. You learn to stand up to doctors and educators and others, even when they think they know more than you do. Why? Because you know your child, and that expertise is the most important credential you could hold.

After bedtime, you Google everything you can learn to serve your child well, while bingeing on The West Wing or Friends in the background because you know the episodes so well you don't really need to pay attention. By now, you could probably ace certification tests in several areas of education, nursing, and therapy. Sometimes you struggle with small talk because you don't feel fluent in the typical parenting lingo anymore.

But?

You wouldn't trade it for the world. Your deepest stretch marks are the figurative ones, from being stretched in endurance and faith and trials and trust beyond anything you ever imagined. You vaguely remember your college answers to where will I be in X years, and your life today is better but oh so very different from what you hoped for back then. You have no answers now to what life will be like for you or your child in a decade or more, but you know today is beautiful and hard and messy and grace-full.

## Texas Parent to Parent

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I see you look at your child, and your eyes say it's all worth it. Through your precious one, you have front row seats to the works of God displayed through disability. I see you shrug off the suggestion that your child is lucky to have you, because you consider yourself to be the lucky one.

Carry on, mama warrior. I see you, and so does God. Today may be a hard day or a good day or a good hard day. Whatever kind it is, know this: you are enough, and you are not alone.

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