

Victoria

10 lei



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I was in my sixth month of pregnancy. I had lost weight and my belly was quite evident. One day, I went with my son Evelin to buy some dairy. The shop was next to a bar, and the entrance doors were both located in a corner, one near the other. There was a line. While I was standing in line, I was careful not to be hit in the back by the bar door. There was a man behind us with 10 lei in his hand. Evelin has a kind of hobby—he likes to tear paper into strips: pictures, newspapers, magazines, or just any paper. So Evelin took the man's money, but couldn't tear it, so he dropped it to the ground. At that moment, I heard the bar door open and turned my head, watching so it wouldn't hit me.

That's when I felt Evelin, who was holding my hand, start to pull me away. I turned my head and saw Evelin hit his head against the shop door. I felt myself falling down and him falling over me. I fell down in the corner between the doors, unable to get up from the position I was in. And I heard the man who had been standing behind us yell: "He stole my money! He's going to pick pockets! You're breeding idiots!" He was yelling and kicking us, hitting both Evelin and me.

I guess I was screaming. I don't remember. I couldn't breathe the way I was laying. I felt my arms and legs get cold. I couldn't explain to him that Evelin had a mental problem.

I was screaming, probably very loudly. So was Evelin. In a while, the bar door opened and a guard came out and started to yell, too. "What is it with you lying down [he also told me who I resembled lying down like that] and yelling?! You're scaring away our customers!"

I didn't know what to do. I realized I had to get up somehow and leave. I don't know how I found the strength, but I got up, took Evelin, and went home. I can't remember how I got home and managed to open the door. I didn't have my cell phone so I could call someone to help me.

Back home, I found my phone and tried to call my husband, but my hands failed me and I couldn't dial the number. I was shaking. I couldn't speak either, just yelled. My facial muscles were numb, so I couldn't pronounce words.

My husband, scared by my yelling over the phone, came home. When he came, he saw me dressed in my coat and shoes, the way I came in from outside. "You're all black and blue. Maybe I should call an ambulance?" he said. I don't know where Evelin was all that time and what he did until his dad came home. It took at least half an hour. I told my husband everything, so he went to the bar and asked the guard: "You saw her down and that guy screaming at her and kicking her, so why didn't you help?"

The guard said: "What was I supposed to do about it? I yelled at her to shut up."

Victoria

Siblings



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My son Evelin is subject to regular check-ups at the Costiujeni psychiatric hospital. I also have a girl. The doctors from Costiujeni kept telling me to leave Evelin at a children's asylum because he would strangle his sister. They told me he would no doubt murder her. And I always took care not to leave them alone together. I would lock them in different rooms when I needed to go to the bathroom.

One day, Evelin was sitting on the toilet. He spends a lot of time on the toilet due to a renal disorder – sometimes it's half an hour and sometimes it's an hour. And I know he won't come out of there until he is finished.

My daughter was one year old then. We lived on the first floor and the only place I could hang laundry was outside. Every time I went to hang laundry, my baby girl would stay at the door and cry until I came back. It hurt me to hear her cry, but at least as long as she was screaming, I knew she was alive.

That day, I stepped outside. She stayed at the door, crying. I was hanging the laundry and she was screaming at the top of her lungs. Suddenly, I realized I no longer heard her. The first thought that came into my mind was that Evelin had strangled her, grabbed her by the neck so she would stop screaming.

I dropped the clothes pins down and rushed into the house. I lost my slippers as I ran. I felt like I was running in place. I went inside – she was not at the door. I went into the room – she was not there in the other room, either. Then I went into the bathroom—and found the two hugging.

Tamara

Race



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One day I sent Nicolae to buy bread and some sweets and asked him to take Sergiu with him. Nicolae is an orphan that we took into guardianship, and Sergiu was taken in care from a boarding house. He had motor disabilities and moved in a wheelchair. They were both 10 years old at that time.

The boys joyfully sat in wheelchairs and raced down to the shop. At the shop door they stopped, ready to resume the race.

We live up the road, 30 yards away from the shop. Suddenly, I heard some noise and went out to the gate to see what was going on. Two old men came out of the shop and began swinging their hands, gesturing and yelling. I went there and they started to yell at me: “You took these crippled kids and let them ride around the village! Keep them home and don’t let them out in the village, going and begging at the shop door!”

Then I smiled and said: “Why do you come out of the house? You want to say hi to someone, to go around and see some people, don’t you? Well, they’re children and they need to go out, too – to play around, to say hi to someone, to see other people, to see the shop, to communicate... and to play, mostly.”



Rodica

The Road to Knowledge

These stories have been developed by an initiative group consisting of parents who have children with disabilities with the support of Keystone Moldova and funded by the Open Society Foundations / Health Media Initiative. All these stories are real and have been shared by parents.

It happened in 2009. My son Iulian was 11 years old. We finally took him back home from the boarding house of Orhei after he had stayed there from time to time, for about 4 years in all. We wanted him to join the community, but there was still groundwork to be prepared. We looked for opportunities. There were not so many: either to go to the local secondary school, take home-based education, or go to a day care center for children with disabilities in the district capital.

I am a school teacher. At that time I was on vacation. That whole month I was overwhelmed with anxiety. I couldn't sleep and was very excited and concerned. I knew the school year would start on September 1, so I had to go to work and Iulian's undecided fate worried me a lot. Then my husband came with the proposal that we should try and go to school. I was afraid because Iulian is a very special child, and very energetic – to the limit even. I feared he might interfere with my work.

Still, we went to school to talk to the principal. We had a discussion that was just as strange, as it was decisive for me. I told him why we came, and he said: "Don't you think you will spoil our school's image?" I was speechless and felt a lump in my throat. It shocked me so much I felt blocked. Then I was flooded by emotions and out of spite or, maybe, fury – because they refused to admit my child – I made a firm, absolute decision my son would go to school. I brought up so many reasons why my son should be admitted. I laid down conditions, although I was not in a position to do it; it was the school principal's prerogative. I convinced him we should try, at least for a week.

So, with our minds set on going to school, we met the first day of September. It was a holiday – a day when our three sons, all dressed up and with flowers in their hands, went to school together with their mom and dad. But I was trembling with fear.

We arrived at school. Iulian mingled with the children; he knew where he was supposed to go. He spent the whole day there. When he came home, I asked him: "Did you like it at school today?" He had a smile on his face, so sweet I can't even describe it. There was so much happiness in his eyes and on his face. I asked: "What did you learn at school today?" He said: "Moldova" and drew the tricolored flag.

That's what made me really make up my mind that my child would go to school!



Rodica:

*“My Child is
Not a Monkey!”*

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It was in summer 2012. My husband managed to get two tickets to a children's summer camp from his employer – for Iulian and our younger son. I was a bit worried, but since the two brothers were going there together, I thought they would be fine. For two weeks, our home was filled with excitement. The younger brother was instructed on how to behave and what to do. Each of them had a bag where they put their clothes, toys, colored markers – everything they thought they would need at the camp.

Finally, the big day came. Early in the morning we arrived at the camp. There was a great line, and the heat was unbearable. It was almost afternoon when our turn came. We approached the lady at the reception and she said: "I'm sorry, Ma'am, but we can only accept one of your sons. You'll have to take the other one home. Children come here for recreation, and your child will cause problems."

I was shocked and didn't know what to say. I said: "Ma'am, my son has been going to school for three years now; his academic performance is average. He's with his younger brother, so he will be all right. You have nothing to worry about. Besides, we live in the nearby village, so you can call us anytime and we'll come and help in any situation." I was very calm and thought everything could be settled.

"No way!" she answered coldly.

I asked her: "Do you have a doctor here? Maybe we should talk to the doctor and hear what he has to say." I thought the doctor's opinion would be in our favor.

The doctor came. In the same cool tone he said: "It can't be done. Your son has a disorder that requires isolation in a special facility." Once again, I told them Iulian was included in a normal school with other children. The doctor said we should go to the camp manager.

We went to see the manager, and he said: "The next shift will be for children from Bender boarding house. Then we can give you a special room for your child to rest."

"Thank you," I answered, "but my child is not a monkey and doesn't need a special room or something."

It was very hard for me to explain it all to Iulian. He couldn't understand it. I failed to explain it to him. His brother stayed at the camp, while the rest of us returned home with sadness.

I still don't know if Iulian realized what had happened. Instead, we, the parents, were left with a deep emotional trauma.



Tamara

At the Doctor

These stories have been developed by an initiative group consisting of parents who have children with disabilities with the support of Keystone Moldova and funded by the Open Society Foundations / Health Media Initiative. All these stories are real and have been shared by parents.

One day, I took my daughter Katea to the eye doctor at a Criuleni hospital. I wanted to know the percentage of her vision loss. At the age of nine months, Katea suffered a brain injury that caused her physical disorders. Her eyesight was also affected.

There were many people in line at the doctor's room. We have waited for three hours or so to go in. When we went in, the doctor looked at us and told us to get out—she said there was too much work for her with Katea, so we had to come in last. We went out and I started to cry. I was very hurt that she had not paid attention to my child.

At the same time, another doctor was passing by—she knew us because she lived in our village. When she saw me crying she told me: “Calm down, go to the head doctor and tell him everything.” So I did.

I went to the head doctor and complained. I didn't know he was the eye doctor's husband. He called her right away and asked: “Why did you treat these people like that?” He told us to go back so the eye doctor could see my daughter.

We went back. We actually went in last; there was no one else in line after us. I took out several beans and sunflower seeds that I had brought back from home, so the doctor could check Katea's vision, because she didn't recognize any objects or pictures. The doctor listened to us and checked my girl.

I was just about to close the door on my way out when I heard the doctor say: “All those from another bank of river Dniester are morons!”



Tamara:

*“Tamara, What
Have You Done
to Her?”*

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One day, when she was 9 months old, my daughter Katea was sitting on the fireplace, playing with her toys. She was near the edge. As she was playing, she turned to grab a toy, then wanted to sit down, but fell down from the stove. I was at a mere 10 inches from her and never managed to catch her, to stop her from falling. She fell on the floor and hit her head hard.

Scared, my husband went out on the road, stopped a car and they took us to the hospital. The doctors at the hospital knew she had never been ill in all those nine months, not even coughed, so they kept saying: "Tamara, what have you done to her? She was as healthy as can be, and now look what you did." But I never wanted this to happen.

They sent us to Chisinau where we spent about a week in intensive therapy. Doctors said she was barely alive. Thinking she would not make it they gave the case to an intern who had a diploma paper to defend. But the intern turned out to be a better doctor than anybody else, and he put all his effort into our case. In the morning he would come right to our room, putting his gown on as he walked. He would advise us, ask how Katusia had slept and what she had eaten. At noon, before going home, he would visit us again. In the evening he would call us from home. He prescribed her a lot of medication.

Katea started to walk only when she was 5, after so many treatments. I'm a brave and optimistic person – I went wherever I was told to and did whatever I could. I've been visiting academies, churches, monasteries and all the different places – have done everything, just to help my little girl. So, when I heard about the Cuselauca Monastery, I took her there. At that monastery I passed her over a holy grave. By wonder and to our great joy, nine months later Katea started to walk. And she has been walking since then.

Tamara

First Day at School



These stories have been developed by an initiative group consisting of parents who have children with disabilities with the support of Keystone Moldova and funded by the Open Society Foundations / Health Media Initiative. All these stories are real and have been shared by parents.

It was the year 2010. We took a boy from the boarding house into our care. His name was Sergiu and he had motor disabilities. At that time he was 10 years old.

That fall we took him to school. On the way Sergiu was very happy – he shrieked with joy, rubbed his hands and stroked his own head. When we arrived at school, he was looking around curiously, staring at pictures, saying hi to children and shaking their hands. I was watching him, feeling happy.

Then a few teachers from the school's management team appeared and asked me: "Why would you bring him to school?" They pointed their fingers at Sergiu. I was speechless. Everything became dark and my heart seemed to stop.

I had to lean against a wall and breathe deep to recover my senses. A few moments later I told them: "He also needs to communicate, to have friends and go to school."

They told me: "You should have left him where you got him!"

I said: "Back there they didn't teach him and didn't have such good care of him."

It was a year full of challenges.

Now our boy has many friends among both his own classmates and elder schoolchildren. And he has an especially beautiful relationship with the teaching staff.

Tamara

Hearts Changed



These stories have been developed by an initiative group consisting of parents who have children with disabilities with the support of Keystone Moldova and funded by the Open Society Foundations / Health Media Initiative. All these stories are real and have been shared by parents.

It happened in 2010. We'd had two girls in our care for two years now, and everybody judged us – they said we took them for money and so on. There was no way we could explain to them we did it because we wanted to help somebody. Not everybody understood us.

One of the girls had a brother Sergiu . He used a wheelchair and lived in the boarding house of Orhei. We had gone to see him many times. Every time we came, we felt a lump in our throats—a strange pressing feeling, a kind of darkness. And our only urge was to get out of there as soon as possible.

There were some preparations, participation in Keystone workshops. And when they called us and said the documents were ready and we could go and take Sergiu home, we were stunned. My husband and I looked at each other and he told me: “Tamara, we have to take him. Where there is room for two kids, there'll be room for one more.”

I gazed at him and said: “Gheorghe, what will people say? Why are we taking a child in a wheelchair? Is it for money again?”

“I don't care what people will say,” he said. “I know what my heart tells me and I know why I am doing it.”

So, there was Sergiu in the yard – he was pale, almost transparent, couldn't even get up from the wheelchair. His sister lifted him up. I was standing aside, still as a statue, my heart turned into stone. I didn't know what would follow, how we would make it. They got him off the wheelchair, and he was looking at me and my husband with a kind, warm and cheerful look. My husband was quiet, waiting for me to say something. Then I got over myself and asked him: “Sergiu, do you have a mom?”

“No, I don't.” “Do you have a dad?” “No.” “Do you want us to be your mom and dad?” “Yes, I do!” “Then I'm your mommy, and here's your daddy.”

It was almost September, time for school... Sergiu couldn't eat, couldn't hold a spoon with his hand, didn't know how to make his bed, and couldn't even get to his bed. We had to help him coordinate all his movements, and teach him every little thing. We had only one week to teach him how to eat, hold a fork and even talk, because he only used syllables.

The first day of school came and I was ashamed. I was embarrassed to take him there, so we stayed home. As sorry as I was, I didn't take him to school on September 1. Instead, I took him there the following day. The teachers, my colleagues, met me there saying: “Why would you bring him here?” There were many other things like that, and we got over everything.

One day, the ice of fear in my heart melted completely when I saw Sergiu standing on his knees and hammering some nails.



Iulita

End of Pain

These stories have been developed by an initiative group consisting of parents who have children with disabilities with the support of Keystone Moldova and funded by the Open Society Foundations / Health Media Initiative. All these stories are real and have been shared by parents.

Four years ago I was at the boarding house of Orhei. It was my last time. My son Dumitras had been transferred into a different group for children in a bad state of health. I saw his condition was the worst. He stayed curled up, with hands and knees close to his body, very weak. He wouldn't even open his mouth.

I decided to take him home. I had everything arranged for the following day. My husband was against it. He told me: "If you take him and he dies home, you'll go to jail."

I said: "Why should I go to jail? The child is ill." My husband was away when I brought Dumitras home. He had to earn money. Story of our life.

So I took my son home and thought—what will be, will be. After we came home, Dumitras had a fever for two days. I lit a candle and waited.

I called the ambulance. The doctor examined him, filled in the form and got up, ready to leave. I asked him: "Are you going to prescribe some treatment?"

He said: "He's going to be all right. Bedridden people usually have bilateral pneumonia. But it's no big deal. Give him some Amoxicillin syrup."

I felt a sting in my heart. How can it be? We treat cows because they give milk, and we treat pigs because they give meat, but we don't treat a human because he's no good to us.

I bought Amoxicillin. I guess it helped a little. But it wasn't enough. The illness progressed. After a while, Dumitras began to cough. I gave him some antibiotic, then another, then took him to the family doctor. The doctor checked him. The child's breath smelled a lot. He had caries and tartar, so I thought the smell was coming from his teeth.

The doctor examined him and didn't say anything. I asked her: "What's with the smell? Is it because of his throat?" — because he had a sore throat.

She said: "Yes, it's his throat." She prescribed some treatment and sent us home. But a neighbor of mine came in after me and the doctor told her: "That boy has a decaying lung, but I didn't want to tell her."

My son would cough for some time, the antibiotic would help a little and then the cough would start again. I kept hoping something would help him. But there were complications. They would have to take his lung out. They even set him up for an operation but we had to postpone it because he had epilepsy. And when we came again it was already too late...

We continued treatment. My husband would go to the doctor for prescriptions and the doctor would tell him: "Why would you waste money on all those diapers?" He would say it with indifference. Instead, when I came for prescriptions no one ever told me anything. The doctor just said: "Come to get the death certificate when you have to go to the morgue."

On December 31, the last day of the year 2011, my little boy passed away.