



Im legally blind!

Not something I normally open a conversation with but let's get the medicals out of the way first. I was born with a rare condition called Occulo Facial Cardio Dental Syndrome. It affected my face shape, the way my teeth developed (hello braces and jaw surgery at 28 yrs old), my heart and my eyes. Nobody in my family has ever had it. I was born 'legally blind' and it's all i've known.

I was diagnosed pretty much from birth. My mum was actually the first to notice my condition as she noticed a hole in the back of my mouth where my tonsils should be! That was only the first of many medical issues ahead. The hole in the back of my mouth was classed as a soft cleft palate, and they went on to discover a small hole in my heart, and as I got older my teeth development and my vision impairment.

When I was young and in school my mum did everything she could to get me the right tools and assistance to help me, and I did everything I could to decline them because I just wanted to be a 'normal kid'. She has spent my whole life advocating for me, making sure she did everything possible so I could succeed. I never appreciated her more than I do now, and now all I want to do is embrace my disability and advocate for others!

I didn't want to stand out or be different from everyone else as a kid, this caused me to be quite shy and I spent a lot of time reading books and playing games. Pretty much all sports were either too hard or too dangerous for me to play so I used to dread school PE.

After most of my condition was corrected it's really only been my eyesight that has impaired me during everyday life. I've always been about 60% vision from my left eye and roughly 19% vision from my right. If you come up to me or try to hand me something on my right side chances are I won't see unless you make a commotion! I do wear glasses, but due to the nature of my vision they don't change much, mostly they just make reading a little clearer.

All my life the most annoying thing I get when I say I can't see something is "but you wear glasses?" Or "maybe you need a new script?". Nope! It won't help me with seeing distance, recognizing faces, depth perception, uneven ground, bright lights or any of the other issues I face every day.

I've spent a lot of my life (I'm currently 29) dulling down my condition and attempting to pretend I can see as well as others. It's only been within the last year that I've finally learned to accept and embrace my differences and use them to my advantage to create the life I want to live.

I LOVE all things creative. I have a degree in design studies (graphic design, photography, advertising, publications) and started a certificate in interior design. My fiancé and I are renovating a caravan which I've thoroughly enjoyed doing. (Visually impaired and power tools!)

I completed 3 years of uni. I did have a lot of times where I struggled with assignments and a lot of my tutors didn't know about my vision because I wanted to do it all on my own. It's only now that I look back and wish that I had been more vocal about it and maybe gotten a lot more out of my studies and my degree. Sadly, my degree didn't get me far as I found it very difficult to find work so I ended up in retail. This taught me how to handle difficult situations, customer service, merchandising, and refined my time management and organisational skills.

If it's not obvious by my title, I love social media. I run 3 of my own Instagram accounts (personal, home styling and a caravan reno one!) And I interned for a year with a startup company as their social media manager.

I'm really passionate about what we are trying to achieve here at Blind Grit and look forward to watching the company grow!