

# Letter From Jessie

Dear Friends,

I am writing this letter because sometimes people don't get me.

I have learning differences, and my speech is hard to understand, and yeah, I admit it, sometimes I act younger than my age. But I want to make one thing clear right now: I can't help it. (If you think about it, nobody would choose to stand out like this.)

My brain's wired differently. I was born like this, so it's part of who I am. But believe me, I'm working on *fitting in* all the time. I'm trying really hard.

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, I'd like to tell you more about what I'd like from you.

Much of it is basic. Be friendly and say "hi" to me when you see me at school. It makes my day. Or better yet, stop for a couple of minutes, and ask me how my weekend was, or whether I like our new art teacher. I love talking about myself (who doesn't?), and it will make me smile to know you cared enough to stop and talk.

Longer conversations will require a little more work and patience on your part. Let's say, for example, you invite me to sit with you at lunch. That would be awesome, and there are some things you can do to make it easier for me to be a good friend:

- Say my name to get my attention before you tell me something;
- Use several small sentences instead of one big one, so I don't tune out;
- Repeat if I need help catching up on the conversation;
- Point to things so I know what you're talking about.

Okay, now that we're getting to know each other better in school, maybe we could hang out sometimes at recess. Since I'm not always good at joining in what the group is already doing, if you're playing



*"Self-portrait" by Jessie, when in 4th grade.*

catch, and you know I like to do that, too, you could invite me. I also like to play and hang out after school—anything to avoid homework—even if it's only for an hour. We could go on a bike ride or to the movies.

I don't get invited to do things as often as you, so you'd be making a big difference in how I feel about myself. And actually, I think you'll find I'm pretty nice to hang out with. I like to talk, listen to music, dance, do puzzles, draw and read magazines, just like you. I have a kind heart, and I never judge other people. I have a lot of enthusiasm and a good sense of humor, too. Come to think of it, we're not so different after all.

See you at school!

**Jessie**

—Ann Searle Horowitz, writer & mother of three, New York.