

## The Story of "D" - A story of growing up different

Once upon a time, not so long ago, a beautiful child was born.

There was nothing exceptional about this birth, except the same things that make every birth exceptional. Her parents loved her very much, and gave her a name which reflected how they felt about their beautiful, perfect daughter.

Like all beautiful, perfect newborns, this child could not say her name. As she grew from infant to toddler, the name was still difficult for her to pronounce. This was OK- none of her little toddler friends could pronounce it either. In fact, they mutilated the name in all kinds of creative ways.

Her parents, reasoning that the child should have a name by which her friends could call her, decided to call her by her initial. So, at age 2 and a half, this beautiful, perfect child with a name so aptly chosen for her at birth was essentially renamed for the convenience of those around her.

Her new name was simply "D".

D grew and was soon ready to go to school. Her parents hugged her, told her that they loved her, and put her on the bus.

When she got to school, her teacher asked what her name was. The little girl, assuming that her teacher was probably no more articulate than her little friends, simply said "My name is D", and she smiled, remembering the name her parents had told her the D stood for and how special it was.

The teacher didn't ask why she smiled, or what the D stood for, or what the girl would like to be called. She simply repeated, parrot-like, the single letter given by the child - D - and thought nothing more about the possible background of this unusual name.

After just a few days of being compared to all the other children in first grade, and all the children in last year's first grade, and all the children in the 20 or so years of first graders in this teacher's career, D was found to be unique. She didn't color in the lines as she should. She didn't behave as she should. Though she seemed to be bright enough, very bright in fact, she seldom gave the expected, and therefore the "right" responses.

Her teacher decided that the D must have stood for "Different". And so, rather than thinking of the girl in a way that showed love, as her parents had intended when they named their beautiful, perfect daughter, the teacher began to treat her according to the name she had chosen for the girl:

Different

By the end of first grade, D suspected that she had somehow been "renamed", although she certainly couldn't verbalize such a concept and she certainly would not have chosen the same D word for herself that her teacher had. In fact, by this time, her parents and even the little girl herself had begun to forget what the initial D had stood for in the first place. So, when she went to second grade and the teacher asked her name, the little girl, without smiling or remembering anything more than just the information required to answer the immediate question, simply said "My name is D".

"Ahhhh..." the teacher thought. "This is D. This is 'Different'". And she treated the girl accordingly.

After a few weeks, this new teacher had her own interpretation of the initial: Dummy. Of course, in the calls to the child's parents, or in the conferences with the school psychologists, she still referred to the little girl as D, but she began to treat D in a manner that was consistent with this new, unspoken, name.

And so it went...year after year, teacher after teacher, each renaming the child according to their own expectations:

Different

Dummy

Distracted

Distant...

Finally, one teacher looked into the eyes of this child and saw an even deeper meaning of the single letter name. He had no idea of the original meaning; he saw only what it had come to mean: Destroyed.

Parents were called in. Psychologists were summoned. Forms were filled out, signed and put in the proper files.

Nothing changed.

There were more meetings... more plans...more frustration .... more nothing.

All of the educational professionals agreed. All of the psych people agreed. The Department of Social Services agreed. This child was obviously the victim of emotional abuse. "Bad Parents" the professionals said, as if they were scolding a puppy for soiling the rug. (Although, to their credit, they never said those hurtful words out loud, just as they had never used any of the hurtful names for D out loud.) "Bad Parents" they said silently, a loud, deafening, silent name calling. When they finally did speak, they began to "explore" this abuse.

"The girl doesn't even have a decent name. No wonder her self esteem is so low."

Then, as if they hadn't already decided, each in their own mind, exactly what the D stood for

-- Different, Dummy, Distracted, Distant, Damaged, Disappointment, Depressed, Defeated...Destroyed --

they asked the parents what kind of name was "D" for a little girl.

D's parents looked at the floor. They looked at each other. Together, silently, they remembered the birth of their beautiful, perfect little girl- the little girl they had loved, the daughter they had named, and the child they had apparently failed. Her Dad spoke as he wiped away a tear.

"Her name is Delightful."

Story from: <http://add.about.com/health/add/library/weekly/aa032497.htm>