

Brother's Battle of the Book

I remember the good old days when I lived in the Wild West. Being a cowgirl was never easy, but I had a partner, my gun-slinging brother, who faced any challenge like he would a showdown. We were outlaws with crooked cowboy hats, prowling the towns with our pistols. I paved the way on the dirt roads we traveled. My brother has my back with everything, even if our actions made us wanted outlaws. One thing my brother liked about being a cowboy was that he didn't have to read, but when we weren't daydreaming, turning pages in a book was a showdown that he couldn't win by himself.

My brother has dyslexia and autism. I've never treated him any different; in fact, he's the only person I can be myself around. As his older sister it has been my goal to teach him how to read confidently. Achieving this goal has been a struggle because I have to help him find his motivation to overcome his reading difficulties. When he opens a book and sets his finger on the page, he takes in a deep breath. He drags his finger over the first word, and glares disdainfully at the page trying to make out the syllables. "Reading is like trying to break through a brick wall with your bare hands," my brother confesses with his head down. He put his challenges into perspective and makes me realize that I must see him eye to eye to help him break through. I push him to move his eyes across the page and to not be intimidated by the words. We break each word down into syllables, as if we were breaking through that brick wall, and slowly pronounce the words. Every time he shrugs his shoulders, my heart weighs down and I feel discouraged, but the compassion I've gained from working with my brother fuels me to lighten his spirits and pave the dirt roads of the sentences we travel on the page. My brother is my partner, just like when we would pretend to be outlaws when we were little kids. Despite his challenges, he finds reasons to be happy, and that is what keeps me balanced when I am stressed

or anxious. Reading with him has taught me to be empathetic and understanding of others, which spurs me to offer my help to those in need.

My brother's reading has greatly improved from me reading with him through the years. Reading is now a showdown that he can win. Face to face, my brother versus the book. He goes to draw his pistol, but I put my hand over his and instead of firing we put the gun down. I take his hand and we open the book because embracing your biggest challenges is what partners do together.