

My name is Camelia Oprea, I am the mother of a person with Down syndrome. My daughter Mara is 20 years old and I am the president of the INTEGRA association for people with mental disabilities - a parents' association that was established in Arad 12 years ago to support people with intellectual disabilities of all ages, as well as their family.

As we know, intellectual disability, at least in the case of people with Down syndrome, is associated with the condition that they carry throughout their lives. But it is also associated with disorders of the autism spectrum in which many of the children and young people who attend our association are included.

What does intellectual disability consist of - in speech difficulties, cognition difficulties, difficulties in adapting to new spaces, in various other types of difficulties that we work together in our association and not only. We work together with parents, therapists, teachers, and medical staff, in order for each young person, child or adult to reach the maximum potential that he could develop.

The difficulties we have in our struggle or in our walk alongside these people, are not necessarily related to them but to the perception with which society approaches them. In the sense that it happens that even now some children are not accepted in groups or classes in mainstream schools and kindergartens. It still happens now that adults with intellectual disabilities cannot find jobs - more NO than yes.

It happened that their difficulties are like a barrier in the communication relationship between them and society.

BUT the good part is that they are the ones who teach us what things are precious in life, what love means, attention; what friendship means and with their help and these attributes of theirs we manage to find precious people next to us who give them special attention, who train them, who teach them to do theater, to paint, who want to be around them ; who accompany them on trips, in the activities of our association, but also who offer them a dash of normality on their way to independence, as much as it can be registered at the level of a person with intellectual disabilities.