



SINK OR SWIM – A JOURNEY OF ACCEPTANCE

By Heather Burns

If you've spent time in the ocean before, have you ever found yourself struggling to escape the big waves that can pull you under the water before they crash against the shoreline? You're moving away from those waves as fast as you can even though it's inevitable that they'll catch up to you. How can they not? They are an inseparable part of the ocean – something we simply accept as we wade deeper into the blue water. In my own life, these waves represent disability.

When I was growing up, I spent so much time trying to separate myself from having Cerebral Palsy. I rarely talked about it. I'm 29 years old now and I'm still working through my internalized ableism. I expect it to be a lifelong journey because of how deeply it ran through my veins as a teenager. I was in constant conflict with my mind – a mind that found it hard to accept the truth because of how disability is viewed in the world. Would people treat me differently? Or would I be my biggest enemy?