

Welcome by chairman Jo-Anne Richards to members at the last AGM and get-together of the Turner Group in March:

The thing with Turner Syndrome, it seems to me, is that hardly anyone takes your issues seriously.

People who are disabled become militant if concessions aren't made by society to make their lives easier. Access to buildings, access to education and leisure facilities. These things are recognised as progressive necessities in a community.

But supermarket shelves that are too high? School desks that leave the feet dangling in the air? Who the hell cares about these things. Adults or teens tormenting or ostracizing a disabled person draw shock and condemnation upon themselves. Yet those teasing or snubbing someone only subtly different from themselves is seen as making competitive social choices according to the "strongest survive best" principle.

It's difficult to grow self-esteem and feelings of self-worth in these circumstances. And since society minimises the difficulties of those with TS - after all, they hardly seem worth the fuss, do they? - it is harder yet to feel different.

So many problems. Each by itself wouldn't be a huge issue. But together, they represent an added burden for those with TS to bear - particularly for children and teens, who are just learning to accept and like themselves.

It is equally hard for parents, who would so much like to just take all those problems for themselves, to see their children struggling to mediate a difficult world for themselves.

Sometimes it's hard to remember, with a bit of guts, with some support and strength, that each difficulty can be by-passed and that it is possible to live a remarkably unremarkable life.

People tend to come to us when things feel unbearable. And that's really our task. We speak to people, and try to help where we can, during their hardest times. But we'd love young women to stay with us when they're feeling strong and going out into the world. We need role models, because most women with TS live full and successful lives.

At one international conference, I was told that American women with TS have more post-graduate degrees and more professional qualifications than the normal population. When they try, it seems, they really try hard.

I hope everyone has a full and successful year - and that we all remember Turner girls and women can be just like anyone else. But never ordinary. Because of the difficulties they've encountered, the TS community shows a depth of compassion and kindness that's hard to find.

I think we should celebrate those kind of differences because we are producing a special kind of person - the kind a society like ours really needs.