

A few years ago, I was given a difficult educational task. I found I was called upon to educate an entire school.

My daughter, Emma, whom many of you know, left her wonderful remedial school while she was still in primary school and began to mainstream. Her first two weeks were a nightmare. She couldn't keep up, she couldn't use a fountain pen, she had difficulty organising her books and she lost her way between classes.

The school was also disconcerted by her size. She couldn't carry the big bag around, and she needed a special desk in her classroom. All in all, I think they panicked.

"Well," said her class teacher. "We'll have to see. But I'm not sure she's going to cope here at all."

Well first I burst into tears, then I worried. Then I got mad. I called a meeting of her teachers, particularly the one who shouted at her for being slow and, when she tried to hurry, shouted at her for being untidy. Then I called in the help of staff from her previous school.

Once her new school understood that they had to be making room for her and not the other way around - photostating her notes instead of making her copy them at break, little things like that - she suddenly started doing better.

"You know," said her class teacher, "She's really very bright."

Hey, what a surprise.

And this is my point. Most of the "difficulties" and "problems" experienced by girls and women with TS are not their difficulties and problems at all. They're other people's problems. Sure, I'm afraid that means you all have to spend quite a lot of your time educating people. That's why many of the young women we have met overseas have tended to become quite militant and aggressive. And why shouldn't they?

Every single person in the world has something wrong with them. They might have quite severe emotional difficulties. It's just that the difficulties that girls with TS experience are perhaps more visible. These are the challenges they must deal with, but they are no more than this. Challenges. The rest consists of other people's problems.

I'm happy to say that Emma is now doing well in her grade 11 year, steaming ahead towards her matric year. And I'm also happy to tell you that a study in America showed that a greater percentage of Turner girls had post-graduate degrees than girls in the general population.

So, as parents or as women with TS, fight the challenges. You'll be stronger and more successful for it. As parents, be just tough enough to give your daughters the space to fight their challenges. Educate people. But when you've done that, be as militant and challenging as you please. It's time for it now.