

THE

Documentary film by Marie-Magdalena Kochová
"Dedicated to all glass children who grew up as the other ones."



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Special Screenings

DOC Leipzig
Panorama:
Central and
Eastern Europe
2024

29th BUSAN
International Film Festival
2-11 October 2024



OTHER ONE

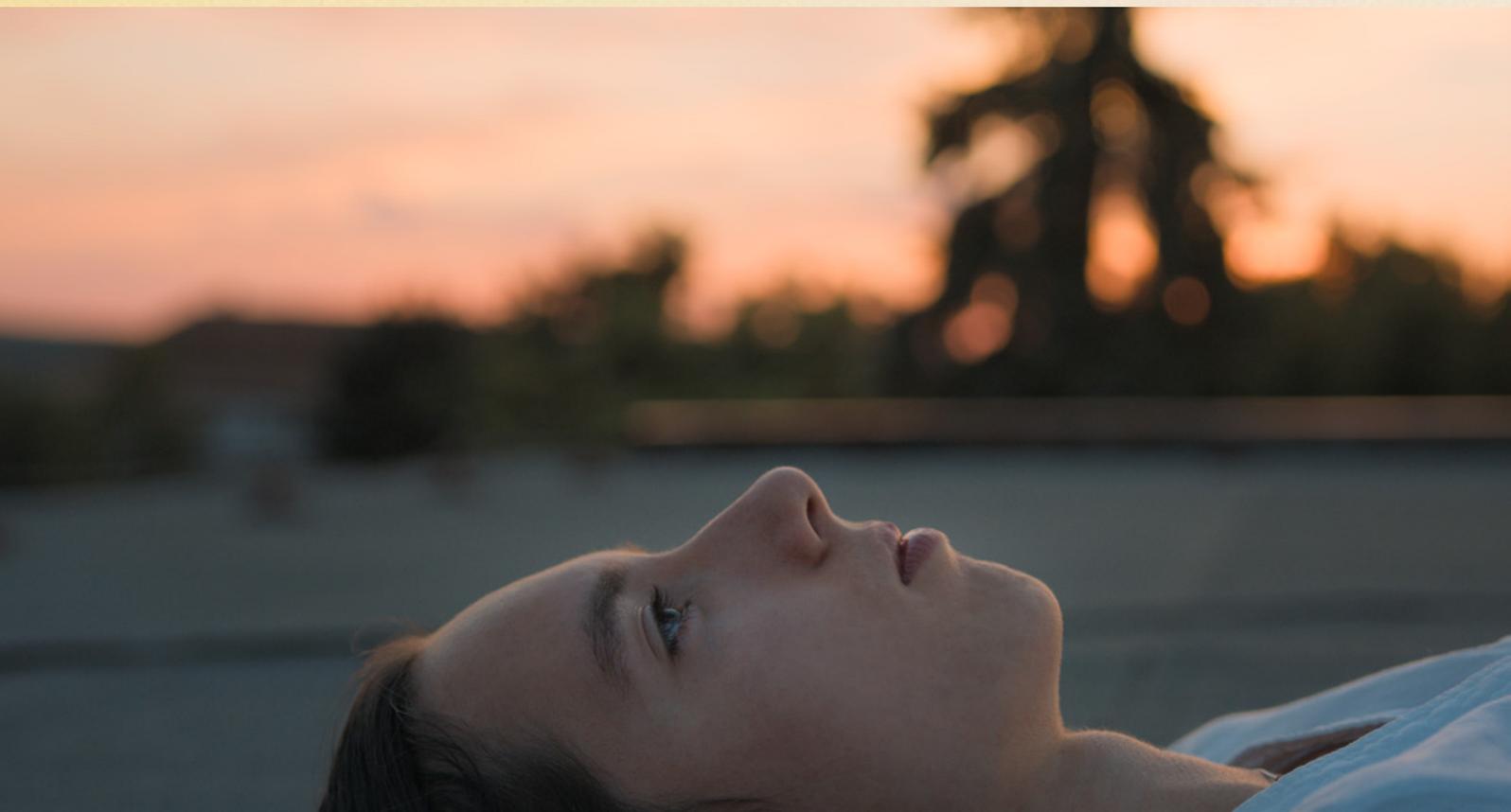
Eighteen-year-old Johana wants to go to university, but her hardest test isn't graduating or passing her entrance exams. She plays an irreplaceable role in her family, helping to take care of her sister with a disability every day. Johana has yet another challenge ahead of her - to put herself first for the first time in her life.

Synopsis

Eighteen-year-old Johana wants to leave her hometown. She wants to graduate from high school and go to university. However, her final year of school is more challenging for her than for her classmates. She plays an irreplaceable role in her family - helping to take care of her younger sister, who has a disability. Despite all the love, she has to break free from everyone's expectations, find her own space, and escape her sister's shadow. Johana is what is known as a glass child, unintentionally overlooked by her overburdened parents and the rest of the world. Can she overcome her doubts and feelings of guilt and dare to put herself first? This observational documentary film explores the long-neglected issue of healthy siblings in families caring for children with special needs. This intimate film gives a voice to everyone who has ever felt like the other one.

Film Stills Link

Teaser Link



Filmographic data

Original title	<i>Ta druhá</i>
English title	<i>The Other One</i>
Year of production	2024
Country of production	Czech Republic, Slovakia
Length	87 min.
Genre	Documentary
Screening format	DCP
Resolution	4K
Frame rate	25 fps
Aspect ratio	16:9
Sound	5.1
Language	Czech (English subtitles)

Direction, script	Marie-Magdalena Kochová
Director of photography	Ludvík Otevřel, Kristina Kůlová, Marie-Magdalena Kochová
Sound	Alexandra Strapková
Editing	Simona Donovalová
Music	Jonatan Pastirčák
Dramaturgy	Josef Kokta, Martin Mareček, Viera Čákanyová
Performers	Johana, her family and others
Producers	Vít Poláček, Petr Kubica, Aleš Hudský (m3 films), Barbora Drtílková
Co-producers	Guča films (Matej Sotník), Česká televize (Veronika Slámová), FAMU (Tomáš Šimon, Lenka Medová)

The production of the film was supported by the Czech Film Fund, the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, the Moravian-Silesian Region, and Avast's Abakus Foundation.

The film was presented at the IDF - East Doc Forum 2022 (Institute of Documentary Film of the Czech Republic), Dok.incubator 2023, Move It On workshop 2022, American Film Showcase Documentary Workshop 2023, KVIFF - Work in Progress Eastern Promises 2023, and Ji.hlava New Vision Co-Production Market 2023.

Official Selection	Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2024
	BUSAN International Film Festival 2024
	DOK.Leipzig 2024

Author's statement

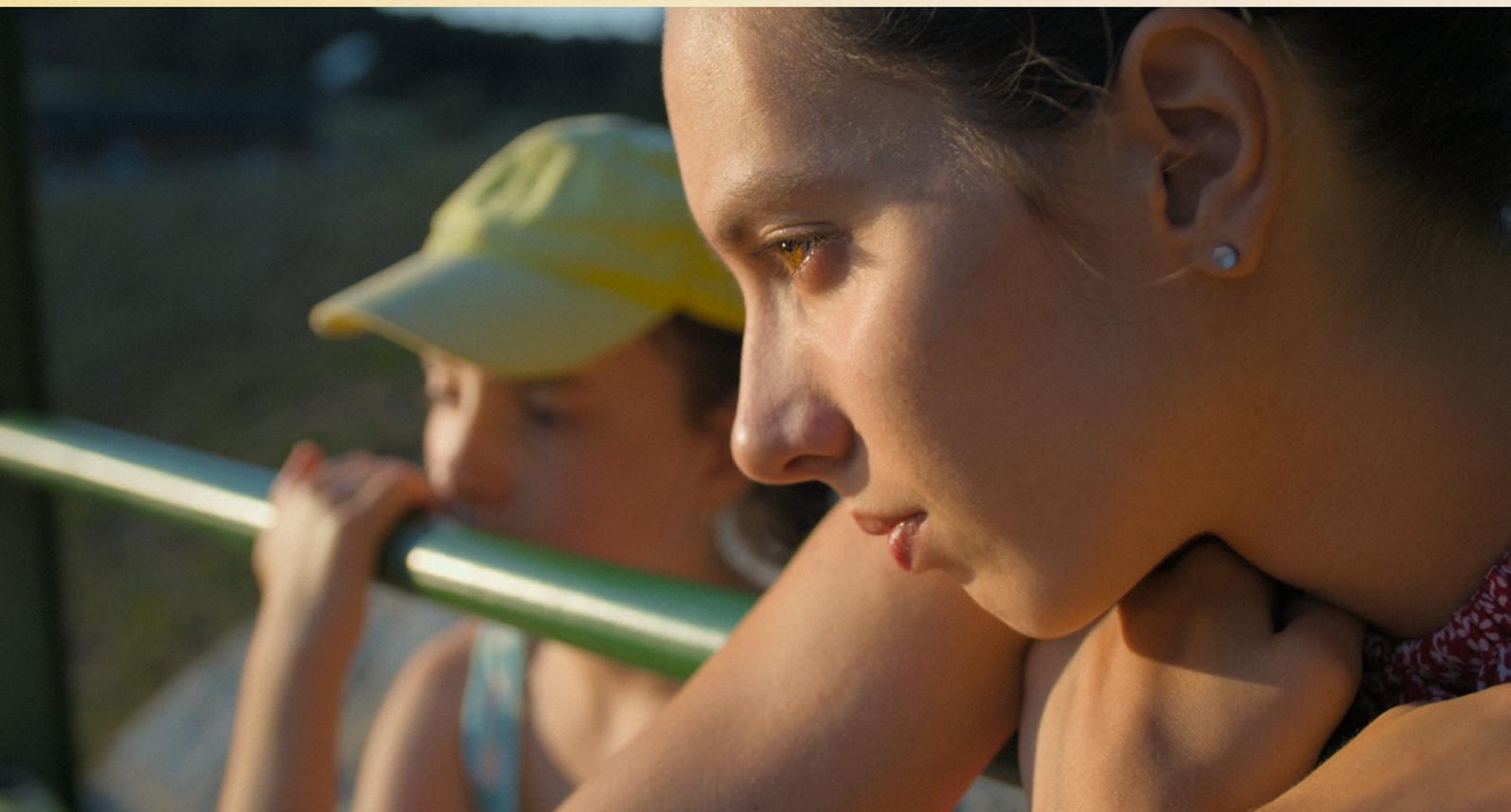
We've heard many stories about children with disabilities and their parents. But the parents are not the only ones who are strongly affected by their children's special needs. Often there are also siblings, brothers and sisters, forced by circumstances to grow up too fast to help with a challenging family situation. That's why I chose Johana as my protagonist and decided to make a film that conveys the perspective of these siblings, the glass children, the other ones. Her story is also my story and the story of millions of other people around the world living in a similar situation.

I am also the sister of a little girl with a disability. I grew up alongside her in a loving family, and the situation wasn't easy for anyone. I know that everyone did their best. But I also know what it's like to crave the attention of my overwhelmed parents while understanding that my sister needs it much, much more. In research, and in my own experience, sib-

lings of children with disabilities generally keep their anxiety, loneliness and the weight of expectations to themselves so as not to further burden those around them. It took me a long time to realize that my dreams, goals and wishes were just as important as my love and responsibility to my sister and my parents.

When I met Johana, I realized how her life mirrored mine. Through her, I decided to capture the fragile coming-of-age period and tell an intimate story of growing up and finding freedom and responsibility for others, but also for oneself. I would like to dedicate this story, which I perceive as my inner duty to tell, to all the glass children who are growing up and living as the other ones.

Marie-Magdalena Kochová
Director and sister



Biography

Marie-Magdalena Kochová is a Czech director living in Prague. She studied New Media at the University of Pilsen and Documentary Directing at Prague's FAMU. She has made several short films that have been screened at various international festivals. Her hybrid short film *Shells* (2022) premiered at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2022, competed at the Canadian Documentary Film Festival Hot Docs 2023, was selected for The Hottest Shorts of Hot Docs 2023 and won numerous awards. Her short feature *3 MWh* (2024) premiered at the Rotterdam International Film Festival 2024 in the Ammodo Tiger Short Competition. Her work focuses on personal and social themes through documentary and fiction forms. *The Other One* (2024) is her feature documentary debut.



Filmography

<i>3 MWh</i>	2024	fiction short film
<i>Shells</i>	2022	hybrid short film
<i>Apparatgeist</i>	2019	experimental short film
<i>OK2PAY</i>	2019	documentary short film
<i>Will the World Remember Your Name?</i>	2017	documentary short film
<i>A Stack 1.</i>	2017	documentary short film



Glass Children as a phenomenon

Sand turns to glass when heated to 3090°. The sand is so stressed that it morphs into something different and fragile, yet beautiful. A glass child is a term used to refer to a healthy sibling of children with special needs or children who need constant care and attention from their parents. The glass brother or sister may not just be a sibling of a child living with a mental or physical disability. Their special needs can arise from mental disorders, autism and other chronic illnesses, as well as addiction, behavioral disorders, or involvement in illegal activities.

In an effort to “protect” their parents, these glass children often respond by trying to reduce their own needs and stay quiet to prevent additional stress for their parents. Parents are therefore often unaware of their healthy child’s needs or difficulties. This silence of glass child can lead to isolation, stress, anxieties, depression, eating disorders and unfortunately also to attempts for suicide.¹ They are almost three times more likely to have significant levels of problems in interpersonal relationships, their psychological wellbeing or school performance compared to other siblings.² They are often targets of bullying or another types of violence, they have worries about their future and they are longing for attention from their parents and support from their surroundings.

According to research made in The Netherlands, the number of them is 8 % of all children in advanced industrialized societies.³ But in other countries the numbers are similar and show hundred thousands of Glass children all over the world. “Glass child syndrome” was popularized by the TEDx speech by Alicia Maples, who shared her own experience in 2010 for the audience in San Antonio, Texas.⁴ In 2023 TikTokkers started a new trend, calling out the “glass child syndrome”. Hordes of videos have appeared on the social media platform. Many not only young people shared their own experiences with this position in the family and the topic quickly became viral as a global phenomenon.⁵

The Other One directed by Marie-Magdalena Kochová is the very first feature documentary film dealing with the topic of glass children. The director is also one of them and through this film and the story of an 18-year-old girl, the audience can experience what it means to be a glass child in everyday life and what joys and challenges it brings with it. The film gives a voice to these overlooked people and a feeling that they are not alone.

1 HAVELKA, David a BARTOŠOVÁ, Kateřina. Speciální sourozenci: Život se sourozencem s postižením. Praha: Portál, 2019. ISBN 978-80-262-1475-5.

2 <https://www.sibs.org.uk/supporting-young-siblings/professionals/needs-of-young-siblings/>

3 <https://bmcpublikealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-7834-6>

4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSwqo-g2Tbk>

5 For example: <https://www.tiktok.com/@ipsarty/video/7382818533064887559> or <https://www.tiktok.com/@melissallgall/video/7226768120357145898?lang=cs-CZ>

Statement of the film's expert consultant

Siblings of people with disabilities are a group that still receives insufficient attention both in scientific research and social services. While programs and services for the parents of these individuals are developing and improving, there are few organizations and not enough support for the siblings in the Czech Republic. Yet this is a vulnerable and large group of people. According to international research, up to 31% of the population lives with some kind of disadvantage, and most of them have siblings. 70% of them experience difficulties and bullying related to their brother or sister's disability.¹

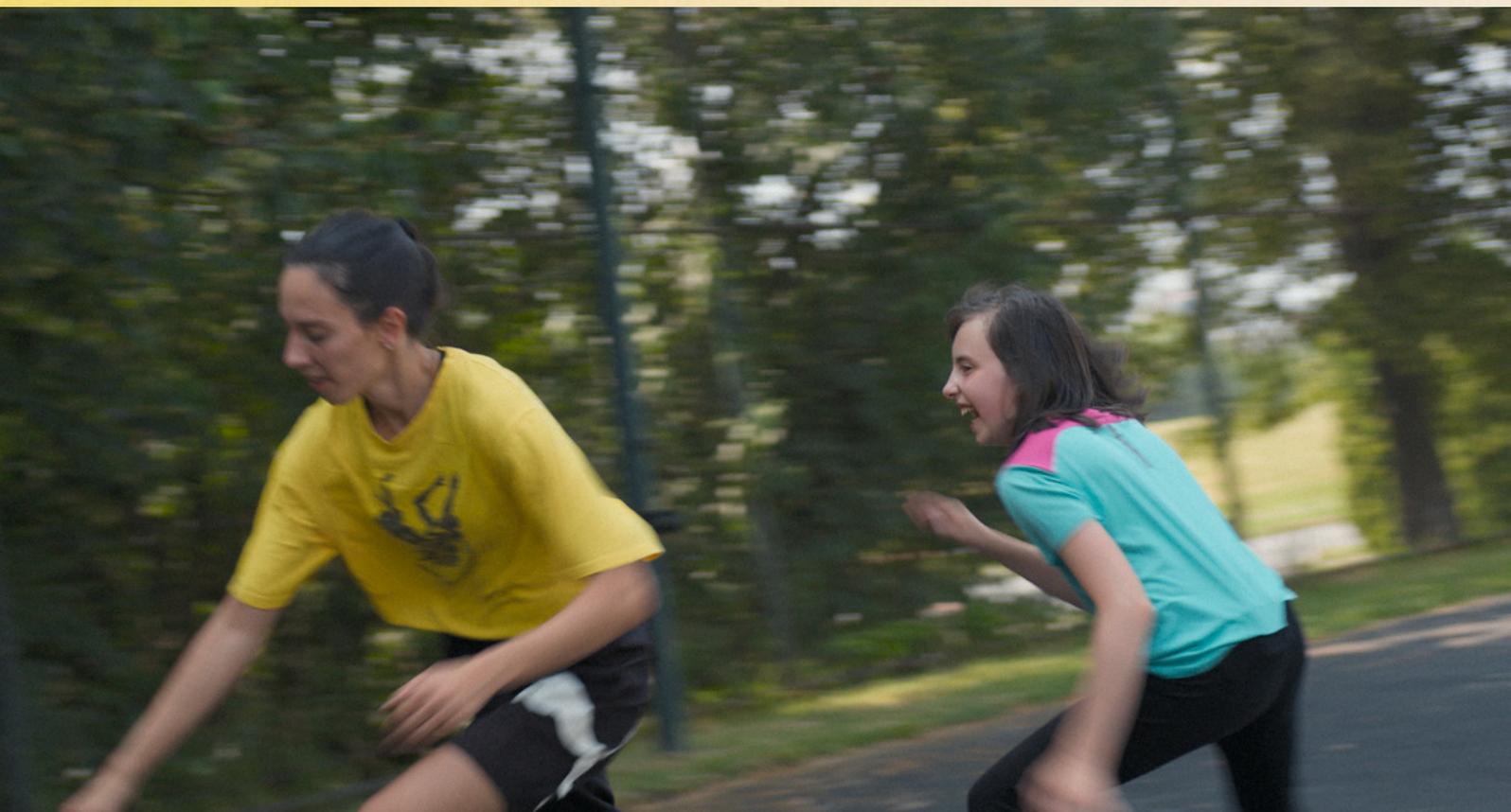
1 <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/youthsociety/assets/docs/briefs/siblings-youth-disabilities-research-brief.pdf>

In our experience, these people face problems and obstacles from an early age that have a major impact on their lives. In English-speaking countries, the term glass child syndrome is used to refer to the siblings of people with disabilities. Glass children are fragile and often feel transparent, almost invisible. They suffer from a lack of attention from their parents, extended family members and professionals. If their sibling's behaviour is challenging, they are often witnesses to or even victims of aggressive, abusive or destructive behavior. From an early age, high demands, expectations and responsibilities are placed on them. They are afraid to talk about their emotions and feel that they must always be tolerant and understanding. Many of them grow up knowing that in the future they will have to take care of their sister or brother, adjusting the course of their lives and their own family to their needs.

Some adolescents don't want to pursue fields of study or job opportunities they are interested in if it means leaving their family. They have lifelong regrets that they haven't been supportive enough of their parents. Unfortunately, our experience confirms the sad findings of international research² that they are more likely to experience emotional problems and have difficulties in establishing friendships and relationships as a result.

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7598646/>

Mgr. Lenka Bittmannová
SPC Deputy Director
Special educator, therapist, author of the book *And nobody has time for me*



Interviews with the protagonists



Interview with Johana the main protagonist of the film, Rosa's sister

Was it important to you that Marie-Magdalena has a similar life story to yours? That she's also the sibling of a sister with a disability?

That definitely influenced my decision a lot, because it's not just some random person who decided to make a film on this topic. I was hoping that she'd understand me and I also thought it would be nice to have someone to talk to about my own experience.

How is your family situation specific compared to, say, that of your peers who have healthy siblings?

Almost every day brings a lot of not-so-simple situations that standard families don't experience. That's where it's very different. Rosa has a lot of seizures that we have to manage. Sometimes I'm alone with her and I have to calm her down and help her. But I would say that as a sibling of a child with a disability, I have a greater sense of responsibility.

The film follows your senior year of high school. In what ways was this year challenging for you?

Rosa needs constant supervision and care. We divide the tasks between mom, dad and me. So, for example, I pick her up from the after-school club, do her homework and play with her. The hard part is that Rosa can't quite understand that I have to study and that I need my quiet time. What's important to her is that she wants to play. So, I have to plan my studying for when Rosa isn't at home. It's generally a very stressful environment and not always ideal for studying. And when you add graduation to that, it becomes a real challenge.

What would help you the most in your life situation?

When I was a child and a teenager, I think what would have helped me the most would have been to spend more time with my parents - just me and them. Because Rosa required so much attention and care, I was very much alone and deprived of contact with my parents. It would be nice if more respite services were available. It would make things easier at home. Because at home it's always just the basic and important stuff, there's no room for fun and things that aren't just chores. Maybe that would give my parents and me more time to ourselves and make our relationship better. It might also help if there was a way for siblings like me to meet each other. That way I'd have someone to talk to about it all and know that someone understands me.

Do you feel like the whole process of filming has benefited you in any way?

I've become more aware of what's important. When I first saw the film, I realized that I cared a lot about my relationship with Rosa and my parents. In general, I feel that since we've all seen the film, we have a nicer relationship and that my parents are able to empathize more with my role and understand my experience more.

Do you think the film could help other siblings like you?

That was the idea. I wanted other siblings to see the film and know that they are not alone in this and that there are families like theirs. And just as I found someone who understands in Marie-Magdalena, I would like the other siblings to find someone in me who understands them too.

Interview with Pavlína Johana and Rosa's mother

How is your family situation specific? And why is it something that only very few people can understand?

The complexity of raising or living with a child with disability lies in the fact that the child has its own specific behavioral manifestations that place special demands on the family's lifestyle, the running and functioning of the family and on each family member. Rosa's needs affect our jobs friendships and relationships with other people, hobbies and leisure time - everything. I think the film captures very well the demanding nature of routines and situations that are repeated every day, and it's a merry-go-round that you can't get off. It's not something you can just close the door on. It is for life.

Rosa requires care 24 hours a day. What are all the things you need to help her with?

Pretty much everything. From hygiene to dressing, planning activities, getting ready for school, taking her to school. The worst thing is, after living in this for so many years, you see it as your daily routine. I myself don't even realize what's normal anymore and what is above-standard compared to other children.

It must be very tiring.

Rosa will be 14 now. And I have to say, after all these years of daily care, I'm feeling burnt out. We gave Johana similarly intensive care until she was around three. Then kids start to become independent in the basic things. Whereas Rosa is mentally stuck at the age of three or four, so she needs constant care. If we don't brush her teeth, she won't do it herself. It's like that with every activity.

What kind of support would help you in your situation?

Definitely a more cost-friendly assistance service available in smaller towns and villages, for example. There really are situations where we're trying to figure out how not to go crazy and financially manage everything.

What would you say to parents who, like you, have one healthy child and one with a disability?

I would tell them that the other child who is healthy is just as important as the child with a disability. We didn't realize it at the beginning because Rosa was taking up all of our attention and time. Unfortunately, we didn't realize until it was too late that our Johana needed that time too. That she missed it while growing up. But at the moment we were just doing our best and what we thought was right.



Interview with Tomáš

Johana and Rosa's father

Do you remember why you as a family decided to get involved in the filming of the movie?

I was glad that someone was interested in the topic of children with disabilities and their siblings, because it's not talked about very much and the film could shed some light on it.

How do you feel about the filming?

It made me realize a lot of things that I didn't have time to think about. What it's like for Johana, what it's like for Rosa, what it's like for Pavlína, what it's like for us as a family. It showed me more of our reality. You often make excuses and don't have time to stop. That's where the film has been a great help to us.

You can see in the film that you and Pavlína are trying to give Rosa and Johana the best care, but it's still very difficult. What measures or support would make it easier for you?

We mainly need to recharge our batteries. When you take care of a child with special needs, it's very

draining and your energy wanes over time. Any help that would allow just me and Pavlína to be together and go for a walk or a trip and switch off is very much needed. Because that's what recharges us and keeps us going. We need to refill the tank, use up the very last drop in it and then have somewhere to replenish that energy.

Do you feel like you're running out of energy?

I do. It's like we're just running on fumes.

Is there anything you'd like to say to parents in the same situation as Pavlína's and yours??

They shouldn't be afraid to talk about it, and they shouldn't forget about the healthy siblings and the fact that they have a world of their own, that they need their parents too. Despite all the exhaustion they feel and experience every day, they should at least take some time for the child that's being pushed away and give them some of their heart as well. They shouldn't be afraid to shout it out to the world and ask the immediate family to get involved.



Contact

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Socials



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