



## Determination (Brooke Ellison) Backstory

In September of 1990, when Brooke Ellison was 11 years old, she was hit by a car while walking home from her first day of 7th grade. The accident left her paralyzed from the neck down and dependent on a ventilator to breathe.

Despite Brooke's physical limitations, she has overcome many challenges and excelled academically. After scoring 1510 out of a possible 1600 on the SAT, Brooke was accepted to Harvard University. With the tireless help of her mother, Jean, who lived with her in the dorms for 4 years, Brooke graduated magna cum laude in 2000.

Brooke said, "Life isn't always easy and we are never guaranteed that things will always go smoothly...It progresses with an almost constant series of challenges, but these obstacles are just detours that we have to take in order to meet our ultimate goals. No matter what sort of adversity or challenge you might face, you can always believe that, with hope, it can be conquered and, in the end, you will be stronger for it."

Brooke currently travels the country as a motivational speaker, has made numerous TV appearances, published an autobiography with her mother, and is the subject of a film for A&E, *The Brooke Ellison Story*, directed by Christopher Reeve. Brooke went back to the Kennedy School of Government for her Masters Degree in Public Policy and is now a Ph.D. candidate in political psychology at Stony Brook University. She is also a member of the board of directors of the National Organization on Disabilities.

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