

Dear Parent,

I don't think anyone who has not experienced learning that their child had autism, can even begin to imagine what you are going through right now. When my wife and I first found out our son had autism, it devastated us. We didn't really know what autism was at first but as we researched further and realized what we were up against, we both reached what seemed to be the depths of despair. I for one, felt completely and utterly hopeless about the future of our beautiful child, all of a sudden our hopes and dreams had just been wiped out. I had never been the sort of person to seek support or help of any description, I was always able to sort it out and move on but this was different, this was crushing me, and I knew that I needed to speak with someone who had already been through what we were experiencing. I needed hope and I had none.

Anyway, not knowing anyone who had a child with autism, I looked around for groups, found the Lehigh Valley Autism Society of America and spoke with the President of the group. She was able to fill me in about all of the interventions available and about how much progress had been made in finding effective treatments that were actually working. She told me that her son would soon graduate high school and then he would be off to college and that there were many other examples of kids with autism whose lives are turned around. I found out that autism is not necessarily the lifelong sentence that I had thought. I discovered that people with autism had received PhD's and were actually taking a leading role in society. She gave me the greatest gift I could ever have wanted, she gave me hope and I will never, ever forget that day.

We recognized that our son had autism in October of 2000 and actually got the official diagnosis in February of 2001, he turned two years old in March 2001. Since then we have made much progress, not as much as we would have liked but never the less there are significant improvements and we are encouraged by what we see. It has not been an easy journey; in fact, it has been the most challenging thing I have ever encountered in my life. Sometimes it seems that we take one step forward and two back but we are getting somewhere with him and continue to see progress on a regular basis. We have real hope for our child and we love him more than anyone could ever know.

You have some very difficult decisions to make in the weeks and months that lie ahead, there are so many interventions to learn about and so much that you don't know. The most important thing for you to know right now is that there is hope for your child too and that there is a shoulder to cry on if you need it.

Sincerely,

Anonymous Parent