



Providing support and information for families of children with disabilities, chronic illness and other special health care needs

Family Story - Strength in Numbers

Gay Nowlin, Humble, TX

I just returned home from an ARD meeting. I always experience mixed emotions when I attend ARDs. On the one hand, I am glad to hear how my child has improved over the course of the semester. On the other hand, you can't help but feel overwhelmed with having to face (yet again) the truth that he will never be "like everyone else". We will make strides, and at times we will stall in his development. At other times we might regress before haltingly moving forward yet again.

As I am talking to others in the disability community, I ask them if they go through these cycles of joy and depression and the answer is almost always "Yes, I do." Of course, I wish no parent had to feel this way, but there is some relief in knowing that I am not the only one feeling this way. Our son, Sam, was diagnosed with autism at age 3. He will turn 8 late this summer. I sometimes lull myself into thinking there will be an end to this "cycle", but in truth, it never ends. Some days are just better than others. That is where I have decided to dwell. I am not in denial about the bad days, but if I continue to focus on those, I will freeze up and he will suffer in the long run.

At times, my husband has said, "This may be as good as it gets." I can't give in to that. I recently saw a video on HBO called Autism - The Musical. One mother on the video said that if her child takes one step today that they didn't take earlier, it is one step closer than we were. I have to keep looking for ways to teach my son. When no one else can offer suggestions, I must lie awake at night thinking of creative solutions for him to know the difference between a penny, nickel, dime and a quarter. I must think of a way for him to understand that eating with your mouth open or with food on your face is unacceptable to those around you.

Give up - never! Get down sometimes - sure! That's what we are all here for. To lift the other one up when they need it. It never seems like we are all down at the same time, and there is definitely strength in numbers - especially those who understand.

I am grateful for my parent to parent matches and for the Texas Parent to Parent organization. You're right there when I need it!

Texas Parent to Parent

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