

PARENTING AUTISM & ASPERGERS NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 7
MAY 2006

Hi [[name]],

This is Dave Angel and Welcome to the seventh edition
of "The Parenting Autism & Aspergers Newsletter"

Inside this edition you will find:

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Best Wishes

Dave Angel

True Life Family account of Autism

Later on in this edition there is an article about a recent research
study into moms with autistic children.

And I thought it would be useful to share a highly recommended book
by a mom written on the subject of parenting autistic children with
you, as it's obviously very much related.

The book is called "Making Peace with Autism: One Family's Story of
Struggle, Discovery, and Unexpected Gifts" by Susan Senator.

In this book Susan Senator writes all about the ups and downs of life
and how she copes with parenting her autistic son.

I checked out a number of reviews of the book and they were all very
positive and one review that stuck out was the following by a
mom in Colorado, USA:

"After reading countless books on autism, mostly about theories

and treatments, this book is a breath of fresh air! It was so encouraging to read an honest, open life story of a family living with autism on a daily basis. It doesn't give false hope, nor do the family members act like little stoics. They're just real people who are dealing with life every day, and who try to find real happiness in just taking life one day at a time. I admire Susan Senator's positive attitude. She admits that she has a tough time, but picks up the pieces and goes on from there. I thank her for sharing such a personal story; it will help countless families."

If you want to learn more about this book just click the link below:

http://www.mcssl.com/app/aftrack.asp?AFID=559699&u=www.asperger.net/bookstore_M111.htm

Kids with Aspergers Syndrome: Bullied on a daily basis

This shocking headline grabbed my attention this week as I was looking over the website of ABC news.

The article looks at the life of several young people with Aspergers in New Jersey and in particular how they are treated at school.

One young person called Noel talked about his bullying experiences:

"I was just merely called 'Game Boy freak' or stuff. There was one kid that was the worst. He just called me names and he was not nice. He was mean - mean to the bone. I was so mad that I couldn't let out my anger. I was just like hiding it. I just didn't feel like being at that school anymore."

A local psychologist in that area (Jed Baker) who specializes in working with children who are diagnosed with Aspergers estimates that as high as 90% of children with Aspergers are being bullied on a daily basis.

Now at first that seems like a very high statistic but when I think back to my own school days there were always several kids regularly bullied at school (both verbally and physically).

That was in the UK but to be honest this is probably applicable at schools all over the Western world.

These children tended to be the ones who had some apparent vulnerability such as being physically small, from a poor background, socially awkward etc.

So thinking about it like this the child with Aspergers has a number of huge vulnerability factors such as not fully understanding situations, communication skills that may well differ from the "norm", strange and obsessive interests etc.

Suddenly 90% seems a lot more realistic sadly.

On a more positive note though Mr. Baker is instigating programs in the schools to help children with Aspergers.

He is pairing up Aspergers children with volunteers from the student body.

He says that now "Working with what were once called the "uncool kids" has become a cool thing to do, and kids like Noah don't get picked on."

He is also working hard on social skills groups and better peer acceptance.

Now this won't be the first time I have banged this particular drum in the newsletter but EDUCATION is the key to this.

Children are not inherently bad and bullying often comes for all sorts of reasons.

But if they are educated about Aspergers, given the opportunity to have some responsibility in helping other children and encouraged to do so results like Mr. Baker talks about can happen.

Certainly in my experience of mainstream schools in the 21st Century children tend to know more about disability and special needs than we did when I was at school in the 1970's and 1980's.

So for those of you who want to help improve this situation for children with Aspergers try to raise these points with your local school and see what actions can be taken.

And if any of you have examples of schools where this is already happening I would love to hear about them - so as ever drop me an email.

If you want to read the whole ABC news story go to <http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/Story?id=3006889&page=2>

Supermoms of autistic children

Recent research was carried out by Guillermo Montes, PhD, of the Children's Institute in Rochester, N.Y. into the impact that having a child with autism has on mothers.

The study looked at 62,000 mothers with children of school age of which 362 were mothers with an autistic child.

And the study had plenty of good things to say about these "super moms".

One of the key findings was that mothers with autistic children have just as close a relationship with their autistic children as mothers of children who did not have autism.

Which is really nice to hear and helps to blow smoke over the often considered view of autistic children by many people that they are simply "too detached for any signs of emotional closeness or love".

Interestingly too the study showed that there was little difference in the amount that mothers with autistic children got angry with their child in comparison to mothers who did not have autistic children.

As you all know raising any child is very hard work but the extra challenges of an autistic child can be immense.

So for moms with autistic child to be so calm shows the amazing strength so many of you have and that's where the "supermom" role really comes in.

The one downside that is shown by the study was that moms with autistic children were more likely to have lower emotional and mental health than their counterparts.

But when you think of their almost complete dedication to the autistic child this is really unsurprising.

As when you spend your time caring for your child, worrying about your child, fighting with the local education or health board, trying to care for siblings too - it is no surprise that there is no time left for most moms for themselves.

And such a long and hard schedule every day will only take its toll.

The actual phrase "autism supermoms" comes from Christina Adams (a writer who has a son with autism).

She describes it as "You take on all these roles. You become an expert on diet, on treatments, on all kinds of things, and you end up fighting battles all the time on your child's behalf because the support

systems, which are supposed to be in place to help, aren't there.”

I am sure that many of you can relate to Christina's words.

So thanks to Guillermo for this great study which highlights what many of us already know about the moms of autistic children.

But even bigger THANKS to all the tireless hard work and dedication that all you SUPERMOMS who read this newsletter put in every single day on behalf of your children.

If you want to read more about this study go to:

http://www.webmd.com/news/20070507/moms-of-autistic-kids-cope-well?src=RSS_PUBLIC

Question from a worried mom

We recently received this question from the worried mom of a boy with Aspergers from Florida, USA.

QUESTION:

I have an 8 years old son who is diagnosed with Aspergers.

He was diagnosed with it about 3 years ago.

It is so difficult sometimes to work with him, to get through to him.

I have to remind him over and over again to do things or to finish what he has started ex: to finish his homework or to get ready for school.

He stays in his room and just reads books.

One thing bothers me: being judged from people who have no concepts what we as parents with children with autism or asperger syndrome have to go through.

I teach my children how to behave and how to treat others with respect.

I follow up at home with them if they haven't listened to the teachers in school.

They have time out or if this happened again they lose things they like.

Is this wrong? Does this make me a bad mother?

The school is ok with me and I work closely with the school to make sure

we are on to same page working with my son.

Does this make me a strict mom?

OUR ANSWER:

It sounds to me like you are doing all you can to bring up your children in a really positive manner.

You have my utmost respect for the sacrifices and dedication you have put in for your children.

For this you should congratulate yourself.

There will always be people who have no idea about parenting an ASD child and you should try to waste as little energy on them as possible - they just don't understand.

As for using sanctions - this is perfectly acceptable when done correctly.

The key is to be consistent and explain clearly what you are doing and why.

Also to do it as soon after the event as possible so that your child can link up the 2 things and learn from it.

Equally in reverse using treats and praise for particularly good behavior is also good when consistent and clearly explained.

I hope this helps - and keep up the good work.

Dave Angel

Satoshi Tajiri

Satoshi Tajiri is the 41 year old Japanese creator of the incredibly popular cartoon Pokemon that has gone on to worldwide success and has films, computer games and much more too.

Satoshi is diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome and has been described by his employers at Nintendo as "reclusive" and "eccentric" which would certainly seem consistent with Aspergers.

Interestingly he had a huge collection and fascination with collecting insects as a child - to the extent that he was

nicknamed “Dr Bug” at school!

He says that he never liked school and when the local ponds were paved over to build apartments, he went from insect collecting to video games.

In the 1990’s he began making his first computer games after winning a competition to make a video game sponsored by Sega.

This led to the worldwide phenomenon that is Pokemon being made.

He says that “Pokémon is a way for children of a new generation to have a chance to collect insects and other creatures the way I did.”

Such a sweet and noble aim has propelled him a long way in the world and is further prove that children with Aspergers can go on to achieve great things in life.

And this does not need to be world famous cartoons and riches - many children with hard work and support go on to have exactly the kind of lives that their parents hoped for (e.g. employment, their own housing, friendship, family etc.)

To read Satoshi’s MySpace profile go to:

<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendID=1000433509>

Appeal for more parent tips

Lately we have had no parents emailing us in with tips or techniques that they have developed to help their child on the Autistic Spectrum.

I know that a number of parents benefit immensely from these kind of “on the ground floor” tips we share in the newsletter.

I know that often the challenge for so many of you is that you are so busy – but if you do get 5 minutes and have a helpful parenting tip to share with others; please email me at info@parentingaspergers.com

Well that's all for this edition and I hope you

enjoyed it.

And the next edition of the newsletter should be due in mid-June.

And as ever.....please send in any inspirational stories that you know of, any questions that you would like our team of experts to answer, any topics that you wish to be discussed and news stories that you want to share.

We will publish as many as we can.

Until next month.....

Best Wishes

Dave Angel

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P.S. Please feel free to forward this newsletter to your friends.

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The write of the material present in the “The Parenting Autism & Aspergers Newsletter” believes that a multi-disciplinary approach to parenting aspergers children is of extreme importance. This means combining the approaches of a wide variety of disciplines involved with aspergers children and their parents such as social workers, nurses, teachers, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, speech therapists. Also it involves using the knowledge and information of parents them selves. The author recognizes that within scientific, educational, social and medical fields there are widely divergent viewpoints and opinions. This material is written for the express purpose of sharing educational information gathered from the experiences of the author and other people in the areas mentioned above. None of the information contained in this email is intended to diagnose, prevent, treat, or cure aspergers, nor is it

intended to prescribe any of the techniques, materials or concepts presented as a form of treatment for aspergers. Before beginning any practice relating to aspergers it is highly recommended that you first obtain the consent and advice of a qualified health, education or social care professional. Should you choose to make use of the information contained herein without first consulting a health, education or social care professional, you are prescribing for yourself, which is your inalienable right. However, the author assumes no responsibility for the choices you make after your review of the information contained herein and your consultation with a qualified health, education or social care professional. None of the statements in this article or in the book have been evaluated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), or the American Medical Association (AMA). This material is not warranted for any particular or general purpose whatsoever. Viewers of this material assume any and all risks for any use of this material. This material may not be reproduced in any way.

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