

An Open Letter to a Child with Autism

By the Therapist/Teacher



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Dear _____,

You may not know it, but you are on my mind more than you may think, and not just during report card season. I think about you all the time. I see you. I want to help. I try to honor your inner landscape and intervene, not overpower. I try to talk with you, not at you. That's why I do what I do; for you, with you, and with the others who care so much about you. Just like I do.

What do I do with you? I work to create a breadcrumb trail for you to follow, each and every day. Even if it seems unnecessary or confusing. Even if the intervention is "repetitive" or "not working". I eagerly count each success and fiercely guard each disappointment I feel, so that you don't get discouraged when things are hard. I'm aware of your attempts to reach out, to learn, to understand, and to make sense of the world around you. I'm aware that it can be a fun yet

scary place, and that it's hard sometimes to "fit in". I try to watch out for you and cater to your strengths and preferences, while being mindful of your challenges and dislikes. I cherish our time together and each triumph, each smile, laugh, and word. I relish the unique mindset and skill set you demonstrate, and each opportunity to help you expand your horizons.

That's why I use a combination of toys and technology, of free play and structured activities, and spontaneous conversation and elicited question and answer sessions, at different times, to help you learn to:



- Better orient to person/place/time so you can stay "grounded" longer and more frequently and learn to sequence events and anticipate outcomes
- Develop a sense of humor so that you can take constructive criticism and transition better, and "bounce back" more easily when things don't go as planned
- Categorize and group like/unlike objects and pictures and explain why? so that you get "organized in your head" and understand what "a place for everything and everything in its place" really means
- Manage your stress levels and sensitivity to things like texture, sound, light, changes in routine etc. so that you can communicate your wants/needs and displeasure in a way we can understand and

accept, and you can better problem solve how to “talk yourself away from the ledge” and let others know how you feel

So I make seemingly random comments and suggestions to you and your family. I suggest that you do things you may want or not want to, like (under supervision!)

- Spending time playing with other children outside in a playground
- Spending time reading books/stories about others and their feelings
- Spending time learning to use specific iPad Apps
- Spending time completing chores at home
- Spending time with animals and/or caring for a pet
- Spending time taking mini-road trips and outings around the neighborhood



I know, I know, you may think I’m pushy. I admit that I’m trying to teach you lots and lots. But I have a secret to share.....you have already taught me so much more than I could ever teach you! Each and every encounter I have with you enriches my life, and makes me realize things about myself, about the world, that I never knew! I also never knew how much patience and love my heart could hold, or how creative I can get with my lesson and daily planner!

Thank you for being you, and for giving me the opportunity to see who you really are. Thank you for trying so hard and for not giving up

on me. I won't give up on you. We're in this together, and I can't wait to see what you do next!

Love,



* This first appeared in The Friendship Circle Blog

<http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2014/05/07/an-open-letter-to-a-child-with-autism-by-the-therapistteacher/>

Join the Journey for Change!

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