

A Gift of Love to the Autism Community

From Visitors to
About.com
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Dear Friends,

As the About.com Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders, I have the privilege of reaching out to members of the autism community with a regular blog and website. Beginning in December, 2006, I began to ask visitors to autism.about.com to describe what they love best about the autistic person in their lives.

Their response is not only heartwarming: it's a testament to the extraordinary qualities of individuals on the autism spectrum. Whether they are at the "high" or "low" end of the spectrum, each has brought joy and love to the lives of their families and friends.

Please enjoy this wonderful collection of notes, poems, photos and tributes-- and please pass it along to the loved ones in your life. I hope that you, like me, are truly moved by the stories you read. Here's hoping it will serve to show the larger community that people on the autism spectrum are as loving, caring and deserving of respect as anyone could possibly be.

Sincerely,

Lisa Jo Rudy
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This collection is just a beginning! To add your note, or to submit a photo or image, just contact me at autism.guide@about.com.



Thomas Rudy Cook (Tommy), aged 10, poses with his clarinet at Philadelphia's Kimmel Center. Tommy has changed his family's lives in a thousand ways -- almost entirely for the better! He's a dedicated musician, a loving brother, an awesome storyteller and a keen observer of the natural world. Tommy is diagnosed with PDD-NOS (high functioning autism).

What Do You Love Best About the Autistic Person in Your Life?

Answers from Parents, Grandparents, Siblings and Significant Others

1. My son, 9, is so charming! We bought him a t-shirt that says, "Chicks Dig Me" because the girls at school, the women in his life, and teenaged babysitters are disarmed by the special way he has with females! As his mother, I absolutely melt when he touches my face and says he loves me.

Comment by Julie — December 6, 2006 @ 12:11 pm

2. Everyone loves Jalen's smile. It is so beautiful, and it can make you temporarily forget all that's wrong in the world! He also is very earnest in his art projects — he's now 13, and they are pretty much preschool/young elementary school type projects — but I appreciate how good he feels about doing them. I also like the way he's developed — over the years, he's becoming much more caring.

Comment by Cynthia Whitfield — December 7, 2006 @ 11:29 am

3. My son, Kyle, is 6 years old with high functioning autism. He is just the cutest little guy and says the funniest things. He just adores me and always lets me know it; whether it's in the morning, after school or in the middle of the night. I might get upset with him for something and he'll just melt my heart by kissing my cheek and telling me how sorry he is. He has taught me something I never knew before I had him and that's "patience". For that and many other reasons I love him unconditionally and feel so blessed to have him...

Comment by Sue — December 8, 2006 @ 10:30 am

4. Our son Michael will unexpectedly start laughing, from the pit of his stomach about something funny he saw on the television or a dvd

earlier. To him that's all that matters at that moment. It reminds us to also live more abundantly.

Comment by Louise — December 8, 2006 @ 10:43 am

5. My son is 8 and has higher functioning Autism and ADHD. He too melts my heart - he is the most hilarious person I have ever had the pleasure of having in my life and has given my life a purpose. Of course life can be exceptionally tough and heart breaking at times with him, as all parents know who have a child on the spectrum, but he's the only child who rushes out of his classroom and throws his arms around me and gives me a kiss (I told him years ago this is what children do when they see their mums and years later he still follows the rule without faulting!) - the other kids are all too cool to do this to their mums. He cracks us up almost constantly and he is just so funny - without knowing it.

He speaks in perfect OTT english and sounds like an old professor yet is the tiniest boy in his class. He has no friends other than adults who are our friends but the quality of those friendships he does have are fantastic as it seperates out the decent people right away... as we had plenty of people drop us when they realised how much hard work he was! He has little idea of social situations and will happily tell off drivers in car parks etc with phrases such as "God damn you woman, curse you!" we have to apologise and quickly scurry away with him to where ever we are going but his lack of understanding is often just so quirky we can't stay cross for long! He thinks its absolutely normal to scould other adults he doesn't know! His favourite colour is pink and he wants to be a girl so happily walks round the house in high heels and pink fairy wings etc bless him! He's like stewie from family guy! I'm sure they must have based that character on my son! 😊 I am blessed to have him in my life.

Comment by Deborah — December 8, 2006 @ 10:52 am

6. We love how Noah (4) wakes up every single morning with a smile on his face, ready to play and learn. He is a happy and sweet soul with a laugh that comes from his toes. It is a joy to hear his voice as he learns to speak. He has **always" been a joy to us- our baby, youngest of 4, special- as they all are!

Comment by Ali and Pete — December 8, 2006 @ 11:10 am

7. I have a 21 year old son, Andrew who is seriously challenged by his Autism in so many ways, but he is the light of my life.

I love that even after all he has been through, he still loves people so much. I love that he loves his friends and teachers and cares very deeply about them.

I love his absolutely beautiful smile and the way he'll slide up to me, batt his eye lashes and say "hi Mom."

I love that he has discovered painting and that it fills him with a calmness, pride and joy that nothing else ever has.

I love his heart, his sweetness and the light that seems to shine straight from the center of his being.

The Autism makes his life hell in so many many ways but he keeps trying, every day. He amazes me and he humbles me, and I love him with all of my heart.



omment by Jan — December 8, 2006 @ 11:13 am

8. I am the "Proud Grandma" of a beautiful little guy named Mark, who will be 6 years old next week. I love that little guy with all my heart and pray that a cure for autism will be found. I hear parents telling their children to shut up and I think to myself...If Mark could say a word just how wonderful it would be. The hugs and kisses he gives me just fill my heart with Love and my eyes with tears because I cannot change his

world. Please pray for the families and children that deal with this spectrum.

Comment by Grandma Mary — December 8, 2006 @ 1:02 pm

9. Shortly after my father passed away, my son, Charlie, then 12, said "Whenever I miss Grampa, I just look for his love in my heart. I can always find him there."

Comment by Barb — December 8, 2006 @ 1:02 pm

10. Julian is just 4 years old. Just like many of the other mothers who have commented on this - we share a special bond as mother and son. Yesterday, we attended his second Christmas program at his preschool for special needs. The gym was dark and it was time for his class to enter the stage. In the middle of all the fake snow being thrown, the singing and room full of parents - he panned the room and found my face. At that moment, I wasn't paying attention to any other cute thing going on but that beautiful smile that emerged when he focused only on me. I guess if there was an emergency evacuation, we would still be sitting there in both of our spots! I walked out of that building being the luckiest mom in the whole world!

Comment by Donna Keith — December 8, 2006 @ 1:07 pm
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11. What I love about having two autistic sons? Well, plenty. When our kiddo rode his tricycle for the first time, we went nuts. His first words at 2 and a half were the best sounds ever. When my youngest pointed for the first time at 14 months, I went out of my mind! See, for me, all those little "normal" things, things other parents take for granted every single day, are the highlights of my life. Would I trade that for a child who wouldn't have to face the challenges mine face every day (making eye contact, holding conversations, staying regulated) well, maybe. But, I wasn't given that choice. I was given the two most wonderful people I can imagine and I was given the gift of time with an early diagnosis to help them pull their way out of the rabbit hole. That's what I love about my autistic kids, they make me realize the joy in every single little moment, in every single little action in their life... and mine.



Comment by Kari — December 8, 2006 @ 1:10 pm

12. What I love the most about Ryland—and this is challenging—may be the unexpected connections he makes between the life of his books, the comments he hears, and his inner thoughts. After the death of a beloved teacher in his school—not his—there was much talk about death. On the way home from school, his twin told a story of his friend, who had that day swallowed his tooth. My oldest launched into a funny story about the tooth fairy’s chagrin, but Ryland was more absolute.

“He died,” he told Gray. Then he said, distressed, “I don’t want my soul to go away!” When we asked why, he told us: “the soul is connected to the teeth!”

So I found myself, in the midst of a tricky onramp, with a car full of eager children, trying to explain what a “soul” is. It’s undeniably leavening of mundane life.

There is something so true, so immediate, so essential about Ryland: he grounds me. Slow down! he says. I’m right here and I want to understand.

Comment by Lyde Cullen Sizer — December 8, 2006 @ [1:21 pm](#)

13. Our son Victor is now almost six. We have learned so much from him ... how to enjoy the simple things in life. We celebrate each simple task as if it were a monumental milestone. For him, it is. We are so very proud of his progress. He has brought so much joy and laughter to our whole family, with his precocious smile and infectious giggle. Although he lacks the vocabulary to tell us, he shows us in so many little ways that he loves us as much as we love him.

Comment by Judy — December 8, 2006 @ [1:22 pm](#)

14. My son is 18 y.o. and is such a sweet heart. He has such a wit about him that everyone who meets him often has such gracious things to say about him. One day we were working around the house and I asked him to get something for me. He decided he had enough and started complaining he was tired. Next thing you know we were fussing. I just turned around and told him never mind I would do it myself. As I was walking away from him he informed me “I have your transportation to go to work”. I turned around and there he was smiling his million dollar

smile and was holding a broom. I busted up laughing. Needless to say, we stopped working.

Comment by Bobbie — December 8, 2006 @ 1:36 pm

15. My son is 10 y.o and the light of my life. He has improved so much in the past 6 years. What I love most about him is when we buy a new tv,vcr,etc. he programs them for us while we are reading the instruction manual. He is so smart!

Comment by Helen — December 8, 2006 @ 2:07 pm

16. I have an 8 year old daughter Noelle who has Autism along with two children who are typical. Noelle is the backbone of this family she brings so much laughter to our lives. I think God has truly blessed our family with this little Angel. Its not always been an easy road, but non the less I would walk this road all over again knowing what I know about Noelle today I think families that do not have an Autistic child are not as blessed as the ones that do we should all consider ourselves blessed!!!

Comment by Danielle Bates — December 8, 2006 @ 2:20 pm

17. My 8 year old son can talk, he is exceptionally verbal - this doesn't mean he is not badly affected as he struggles badly and self harms terribly...still wears nappies at night and so on. He was diagnosed as being severely affected with Autism - but very verbal with it. BUT he did say to me not so long ago that if there was a cure for Autism he would not want it as he likes being special. This is from a little boy who was diagnosed at 3, takes alot of medication, has been to special schools... and from a verbal child with Autism he wouldn't want to be any other way...he's happy the way he is and I wouldn't want him to be cured either as he's my little guy as a package. Of course its often, as I said, a painful journey and its natural to want them to be ok... but who's not to say they are the normal ones and its all us who aren't 😊

Comment by Deborah — December 8, 2006 @ 2:34 pm

18. My son, Matt is 17 years old and is truly a 'gentle giant'. He has an infectious laugh, unshakeable self confidence, and strong self esteem. He is a pearl in our family oyster.

Comment by Yvette Cenac — December 8, 2006 @ 2:42 pm

19. I am the mother of a 7 year old autistic girl who has suddenly began to act like she is a teenager. This is a huge difference from the behavior she was displaying just two years ago when I couldn't get her to sit down in a restaurant. Now she chooses her own clothes, hair accessories and she even tells me in her own way when she doesn't like my hair and shoes. And to think all this time I thought I would never have these moments with my daughter because of the autism. So, this message is to all the parents "don't ever believe they will not change, they will, and it'll be overnite." I am overjoyed to have an argument over what leggings she should wear!

Comment by Sharon — December 8, 2006 @ 2:54 pm

20. I am blessed with lots of neices and nephews. No grandchildren yet. I have an eleven year old neice and a fifteen year old nephew both autistic in the same generation of the family.

I love these children because they cannot be bought. All the other kids want me to buy them toys and take them out. All I have to do with the girl is give her paper to draw on and the boy will dance with me anywhere and is not affraid to look stupid dancing with his old Aunt. They are fun, sweet as can be. Now that they can both talk and read it has made it more pleasureable to be around them.

It was very hard when they were real young. My heart goes out to the extremely patient parents that work with them endlessly just to get them to respond or to say one word. I wouldn't say they are lonely, they are just absorbed in their own world. I do wonder what it is like in their world. I think it must be frustrating.

They are very dear people and they do have their own lives and interests. They are like little robots. They get in their routine and just go like the ever ready bunny.

Comment by Jo Ann Keeney — December 8, 2006 @ 3:20 pm

21. My son Matthew is now 9 years old and is still the light of my life. He brings joy to everything we do. He teaches me how to be a kid again, how to laugh at the simple things and how to be proud at the slightest accomplishment. Our children are considered special and they are.

Special little angels who see the world in ways we could learn to. Enjoy every minute and not worry about tomorrow.

Comment by Karen McIntosh — December 8, 2006 @ [3:25 pm](#)

22. My brother Matthew is 9 years old. What I love the most about my brother is that he is different and unique but has the biggest heart. He is not shy, he loves to hug people and he always has a smile. When he comes home, the first thing that comes to his mind is 'Meagan, where are you??' and that makes me feel like he will never forget his big sister. The smile on his face reminds me that he is no different and I just love him the way he is!

Comment by Meagan McIntosh — December 8, 2006 @ [3:33 pm](#)

23. Two of my kids have asd as part of something bigger (posibly 22q deletion or fragile x we awaiting the results)jack (9) is the most warm and placid child you'll ever meet every body falls in love with him he just has trouble showing he loves them back, he comes across as the sensitive good child in his class and he has this shine to him that he spreads where ever he goes, maddison 3 is totally different from jack (as are all of my 5 kids) she has little speech but is a right little miss , she likes to do her own thing but we have our very special moments and i wouldnt swap any of my kids for the world, jack and maddy dont notice when things are hard they bring me soooo much joy and i admit they make me look at life sometimes in a different view that is full of happiness and sunshine loooooovvve all my kids sooo much our family would not be complete without Jack and Maddy xxxx

Comment by natasha wright — December 8, 2006 @ [4:31 pm](#)

24. My son Waldo is my only child he is now 16 yrs old, I work everyday from 8 to 8, and when I get home tired the first thing he does is give me a big hug and kiss and say hi cooky, he has never said mom to me except for one day he fell and i had to take him to get stiches to the emergency room and there crying he said ay ay mommy, I really dont know what would be of my life if I didnt have Waldo, he is the one who makes me be stronger and alive, he has made me a better person in so many ways I dont even have the words to express. I to sometimes worry of what will be of his life when Im gone or whether he will find someone to share his life with, but I just dont think of that now, only time will tell,

in the mean while, I have the most caring, wonderful, happy child in my life who will always be my angel. Merry Christmas to all!

Comment by Wanda Rodriguez — December 8, 2006 @ 4:39 pm

25. My son is 9 and has high functioning Autism. I call him my little angel from above. He is so intelligent and blows my mind of his knowledge. He sets everyday on a to the minute time schedule. For example.... School at 8:30 and don't be late, pick up at 3:15 and not a minute after. Supper at 7:00 right in the dot, bath at 8:00 and will watch the clock to the minute, and bed time at 8:30.

I can't even stop at the store after school because he's afraid we gonna be late for home. As humans we all run behind on our schedule at times, but being a mom of my autistic son, I'm never late for nothing. Lol

I find humor in this because I know he can't help himself and he's the love of my life. If you have or know an autistic child, please be patience and have understanding.

Comment by Delana — December 8, 2006 @ 5:37 pm

26. I am the proud mother of a autistic boy who just turned 7 last week. My son ALJ has been through so much and he has thought be to be more patient and to beleive that he will be fine. He has come a long way and I have seen so many progress in him. Though, he only says a few words like mom, dad, no. I love u which he just said the other day I cried and could not contain my self. But what gets to me the most is when he smiles and just burst out laughing even if I do not want to laugh. How could I not when he is so happy. My son is a very friendly person and will hug and hold your hand even if he does not know u. Which sometimes scares some people but then I have to explain to them that he is Autistic and means no harm. He is the joys of my life and I would not trade him in for the world without him life would be meaningless.

Like many have said the things other parents take for granted is what we cherish. And we would not want that moment or what they did to ever go away. I just want to let each and every one of you know that we are blessed and we have special children and until other people walk in our shoes they have no right to judge us.

Comment by Ardetta Proud Autistic MomGermany) — December 9, 2006

27. As a teacher of 22 students with autism, I have to say I dearly love them all, and all the specialness that goes along with that. In raising my own 11&9 year old typical boys, I include them in summer class and parties. The other day I was on the CAN website, and my youngest come in and looks at the screen. He worriedly asked me if people are trying to cure autism. I explain to him about research and funding. He looks at me with tears in his eyes and says "but mommy if your kids are cured they will be like everyone else and they will be ruined. I love them just the way they are." He is wise beyond his peers.

Comment by melinda — December 9, 2006 @ [1:32 pm](#)

28. My son, Alex, is 6. He is an intelligent and cuddly guy with blond hair and blue eyes. What I love most about him are the hugs he gives me "out of the blue." Whether I'm standing or sitting, Alex will suddenly just come up behind me and give me a great big bear hug. Mind you, his hands usually wind up on my boobs, which my husband thinks is just absolutely funny.

When Alex was diagnosed at 2, I cried the whole ride home from the doctor's appointment and I thought it was the end of the world. Autism, however, has given our family more patience, strength, empathy and understanding than we ever had before. On the flip side, autism also has opened our eyes to ignorance, narrow-mindedness, pity, criticism, intolerance, and insensitivity. We pay no mind to people of those mindsets and instead appreciate the little things in life and celebrate all of Alex's achievements - things, which the day he was diagnosed, I must admit I never thought would ever happen...things such as his smile, eye contact, riding a bike with training wheels), being potty trained, drawing, writing, attending regular Kindergarten and having academic skills (some of which are at the first grade level), playing on the computer, speaking and being to answer questions and follow directions.

I feel very blessed to have my son in my life. I couldn't picture my life without him. 😊

Comment by Linda — December 9, 2006 @ [6:57 pm](#)

29. Our family never has to assess a person's character. The rule is, quality of character always turns out to correlate with how nice someone is to our 10-year-old son and brother with autism, Shai.

Comment by Ellen Mackler — December 9, 2006 @ 9:16 pm

30. My son, David, is four years old and is a nonverbal autistic. What I love most about him is his capacity for affection, and the way his face lights up when he looks at someone he loves (even the cat!) I also love his laughter, which is not only infectious, but seems to bubble up from absolutely nowhere. Moments when he reaches out to engage others in play are all the more special for their rarity, sincerity, and unabashed awkwardness. Things have been tough this winter, with a layoff, a new job, an impending cross-continental move (to a place where his Dad already has a job, and where there are more resources for autism than there are here), and a dissolving marriage, but...David remains my strength and inspiration through it all. I love watching him adapt to the challenges of the ever-changing, neurotypically run world, all the while remaining his true, special self. All the best of joy and hope to all who read, and have a peaceful holiday.

Comment by Monica — December 9, 2006 @ 11:11 pm

31. My daughter Auzha is Autistic & ADHD and is 11 years old. What I love about her is that she is so sweet and giving. And the world's best artist. When she helps me to look for an apartment, she has to have these color ink pens and will except no other. I love how she helps.

Comment by renee buter — December 10, 2006 @ 2:35 am

32. I think that our comments could be a very good source of information for specialists who deal with this problem! My son Tom (28) was diagnosed as an Aspie (Asperger's Syndrome) 2 years ago. I love his permanent effort to fight with his weird behaviour (strange sounds, talking to himself, making strange faces, meltdowns, etc.). He is still very childish, but his knowledge of some fields is incredible (politics, anti-terrorism, history, and many others). His memory is "photographical". But most of all I love his naive and good nature. He trusts everybody 😊, although he was taught many lessons that the world is cruel...for

people like him.

Greetings for everybody here and special thanks for Lisa.

Comment by Iwona — December 10, 2006 @ 5:08 am

33. There are many things I love about Adam. He's now 12 years old and still doesn't talk and he gets aggressive sometimes and has bruised me terribly. BUT, when he's happy he has the most beautiful smile and he's able to look deep in my eyes. He likes deep and soft touch and when he reaches up and touches my cheek and kisses me, my heart melts. He is the center of our world and I cannot imagine having a closer bond had we been given a typical child. He is a blessing and I'm thankful God sent him to us.

Comment by Julie — December 10, 2006 @ 9:12 am

34. My son Jeffrey is 14 and is autistic (fairly high functioning). He definitely gives us some challenging moments with his anxiety and perseveration, but there is so much to love about him! He has attended our home district schools since 2nd grade and has really "blossomed" in the last 3 years at Middle School. He has become quite popular with students and teachers. I believe Jeffrey is educating a few of his teachers on the benefits of inclusion! I've seen some of his teachers transition from being scared and unsure of what to do with Jeffrey in their class to total acceptance and amazement of Jeffrey's ability.

One of the things I love most about Jeffrey is his way of surprising us with "bursts" of developments. Last year, he signed himself up for the school track team! What could I do, but support his desire to participate with his peers. He went to practices and wanted to try hurdles! I was scared to death - Jeffrey is not a very athletic kid! But he did the hurdles with his own unique style and brought the crowd to their feet (and tears to my eye!) If that wasn't enough, Jeffrey wanted to do the school talent show; Jeffrey has been taking piano lessons for almost 2 years. He had to audition and was accepted. He attended the rehearsals and did a wonderful job at the actual talent show - he played "Edelweiss". When he finished playing, he was grinning ear to ear, the audience gave a grand round of applause and you could just see how proud Jeffrey was of himself!

Jeffrey has touched so many people with his friendly personality. Yes, he is quite childish in many ways; yet there are times when he seems so mature.

People say he is doing so well because he has such loving parents who help him so much. But I believe Jeffrey is showing us the way! I think of him as my shining star - leading me through the confusing maze of autism!

Comment by Nancy West — December 10, 2006

35. My son is 8 years old and was diagnosed with atypical autism. I love his pride over getting the mail everyday, and the way he sobs "nobody needs my help..." when his little brother prefers to struggle with the computer on his own.

I love the way he is filled with glee from head to toe when I answer his favorite type of question: "what would Kim Possible say if...". And the way he is filled with glee when he sees me come to pick him up at school each day.

I love the way he tells his aunt, "I love you for all the reasons" — that is, not just for the candy she brings him.

I won't deny that it's very demanding to be his mom, and that I wish he didn't have to struggle with sensory overload, inability to concentrate, and trouble picking up social cues. But, to use his own words, I love my boy "for all the reasons."

Comment by Norway Mom — December 11, 2006 @ 5:51 am

36. Wow there are so many things that are jumping thru my mind. My son Noah see's life thru pure innocence and a happy heart. Regardless of what our children are labeled he is person first disability second and what more could a mom want than a child who has a happy heart. I love that his smile lights up a room. I love that everytime we have an IEP or sit together as a team that he is ALWAYS rising to the occassion. If we challenge him which I push for he ALWAYS exceeds what we are asking. He went from language to losing all language and relearning to talk and have communication. I love that what we felt would work for him IS working for him. Even though I would never wish Autism on any parent

Im no longer afraid of the "A" word. And because of my special angel I am a better person.

Comment by Melissa R — December 12, 2006 @ 10:23 am

37. Like many of the parents on here, I can truly say this child is the light of my life. Taylor is 10 and is moderately autistic. Our favorite phrase is "This is Taylor's world and we are Taylor's girls." At 10, he is past the age of being just "cute" and growing into such a beautiful young man. He NEVER lies (says he's no good at it, why try), is honest and forthright in everything he does and has a close, personal relationship with God. On that end, I must say I admire him most. He does not have faith. He has something so much more. He KNOWS and finds comfort in his relationship with God. God sits in the room with him. Jesus is by his side when he sleeps. They are not something read about in a Bible. They are here every day. Don't get me wrong, we're not Bible thumpers by any means. But he has strengthened my faith by his own.

I guess I can sum up Taylor this way. It's sometimes more important to like someone than to love them. We LOVE our family. But do we really LIKE them? Want to spend time with them? If they weren't related to you, would you want them to be part of your life. I can honestly say I LIKE this little human being and even if I were not his mother, I would be his friend!

Comment by Lesa Crowe — December 12, 2006 @ 3:41 pm

38. All the entries I've read on here are great. I have found a little bit of my son in almost every one. Austin is 14 and he is high functioning. I think that being his mother has made me a better person. I don't take little things for granted like I used to. When you have to work so hard for the little things, you seem to appreciate them more. He is the most honest person I know, and he too has a faith in the Lord like I have never seen. He's just so pure and innocent, I've never met anyone like him. He has made our whole family more humble and more compassionate for others, whether they are disabled or not. He has brought joy to almost all who know him and I feel very blessed to be called his mother. I hope everyone has a great holiday season!

Comment by angie moffitt — December 13, 2006 @ 7:16 pm

39. My son, John is 15 and has a PDD. He is honest and funny and a true automotive expert! He is very intelligent in an IQ-test sort of way, but struggles with the mechanics of even the most basic social interactions. One of the things I love best about him is his passionate commitment to justice. He has so much to offer the world, including the realization that opening our hearts to those who seem “different” can enlarge and expand all of us.

Comment by Denise Gribbin — December 14, 2006

40. My son Ben is in preschool. He goes a full day; though he gets off his bus smiling every day. He has hours of therapies, yet loves his therapists. He may not want to talk very much, but he always welcomes a hug and a smile. My youngest child is special, and not because of his limitations, but because of his heart. He is kind and loving. He never judges or criticizes. He takes his time and enjoys every precious moment. There is a lot to be learned from my son, we only need to slow down and give him our time and patience.

Comment by Marlene — December 14, 2006

41. We love how trusting and loving our son Kyle is with all of us. He knows we're all a team. The holidays with Kyle are special because he always dances to the Charlie Brown Christmas CD in our living room with his brother and sister. He likes to be silly. He looks around the house in amazement at all the decorations. Just for one day I wish I could see things the way he sees them. He can't handle the overwhelming hustle and bustle of Center City Philly (like a lot of adults) so he gets upset if we go to see the John Wanamaker Light Show. I took a beautiful picture of the Light Show and we have it hanging in our living room, so he looks at that instead. He tells me everyday what he wants Santa to bring and we say how many more days til Christmas. I love his innocence. He loves his brother and sister sooo much and knows he can count on any of us to help tie his shoes, zip his coat, or fix buttons. He loves to cuddle, hug, high five, and roughhouse. Kyle is very special to us and to the world!!!

Comment by JENNIFER JACKSON — December 14, 2006

42. Hello Everyone and Happy Holidays ,

This year I am so pleased and overwhelmed by my 4 year old daughter Hannah. She is so excited and really in the spirit , this is the 1st year I have been so excited in a very long time , Hannah even sat and took a picture with Santa twice lol , she knows it is Jesus birthday so she suggested we sing happy birthday and get a cake for Jesus so we shall do so.

She has found her imagination and I am so pleased , she is going to get the best dollhouse in the world this Christmas and she even has a part in her School play that she has memorized 6 whole lines lol ...yesssssssssss I am thrilled I am bursting at the seams I tell you. So much has changed with the help of you Lisa Jo and with T.S.S. and B.S.C. support as well as a great support system I found through Hannah's evening classes at stepping stones. She is playing interacting and just coming around so much better than ever. Merry Christmas all and Blessings to Our special Autistic Angels and there Families and Supporters.

Lisa Jones Pa.

43. I love how my nephew Chase can light a room up with his smile and when he decides he wants to hug you he does it with all the love in his heart.

Comment by Nick — December 15, 2006

44. Sam, my 11 year old grandson, has opened so many eyes and hearts with his quick smile and insatiable desire to know more....more about his ever expanding world. He has taught us about snakes, trains, airplanes, sit-coms, Avatar, and what a family is. To Sam a family is never too busy to talk or come over. To Sam a family is always a breath away from planning another celebration...no holiday or event needed...just celebrate being!

His 'firsts' have become milestones for all of us, and he wants to know all about what is going on with us and around and us and why, and for how long, and how is he involved. He made all the guacamole for our Thanksgiving dinner and we discovered how good it was with the traditional foods. He never misses any details we often miss like expiration dates on foods and what color a bird was. Sam's being high

functioning on the spectrum has made all of his family a 'high functioning ' family. As his 'Granny Person' (his name for me) I treasure every hug, every visit, every time he says...."I need to more about that" and I know I can actually tell him more or direct him to sources. Sam uses different eyes to see this world and has made me a better Granny person for it! Amazement fills my world filtered thru Sam's eyes.....Thanks Buddy for being you!

Comment by Janet Hoover — December 15, 2006

45. My 12-year-old daughter Darbie never ceases to amaze us. When we watched her become a Black Belt at TaeKwonDo, then teach a group of 100 Girl Scouts aged 5-14 basic self-defense as part of a Bronze Award (the highest for her age group), it was, to us, a miracle. She sees the good in everyone, and yet is totally aware that there are times when others are not so nice. We worry that when she finally grows up she won't be able to take care of herself, but then she goes and proves us wrong by showing incredible clarity and maturity! It's that ability to surprise us with her unique, and often unusually clear, insights that we love the most. That and her ability to show her love for you when you least expect it, but most need it.

Comment by DarBecca — December 15, 2006

46. My son Aaron, 5 years old, is, to me, the true meaning of unconditional love. He expects nothing and tells me so much without uttering one word. His eyes are his voice. He has the most beautiful smile with the cutest dimples right around the corners of his nose. The best part of my day is when I pick him up from school and I walk into his class and he looks at me and tells me he loves me with his eyes and his smile. He holds my hand all the way to the car and gives me a kiss once I put him in his carseat. He is my whole world. I can't imagine what my life would be like if he were not in it.

Comment by Melissa Perez — December 15, 2006 @ 1:23 pm

47. Ryan is my firstborn and he is beautiful inside and out. He has a smile that could melt Mount Everest. He loves to sing to me, along with hugs and kisses. He never gets tired of saying "I love you mommy". Ten years ago, I was crushed when I got his diagnosis. It was more devastating because I was recovering from toxemia and my youngest

had just come home from the hospital barely 5lbs.

I cried many nights, but then I decided I was going to give him the best life that I can give him and I've never stopped. I was recently diagnosed with breast cancer and I am determined to win that battle because of my sons. Ryan is one of the best things that ever happened to me. No matter how bad I am feeling, Ryan brightens my day when he walks into the room. He loves his Grandma and constantly hugs her. Although we have difficulties at times my family and I feel blessed to have Ryan in our lives.

Comment by Maggie Lauture — December 15, 2006

48. What do I love most about my 9-year old son Danny? He's my son. . .what's not to love? I wish he could talk, but I love how well he communicates without words. I love how he brings me his Disney books and wants me to sing all of the songs to him. And even though I'm a horrible singer, its the times I sing to him that his face lights up and he really looks at me. I can never be annoyed at getting stuck at a train track when he's with me, as he takes such pleasure in watching the train go by. I even love the fact that we have to be one step ahead of him, as his intelligence and problem-solving skills usually lead to trouble. I love how much my other two kids watch over their brother, and take it upon themselves to keep him safe and out of trouble.

Comment by Elona Winsow — December 15, 2006

49. I have two children on the spectrum. Sean is 8 and has Aspergers and Cole is 7 and has autism. I love that life is never boring. I wasn't meant to have a normal life...but really who wants normal. I have two wonderful children who force their Dad and I to view the world in a way that we might never have viewed it if they were not in our lives.

So Thank You Sean and Cole for being who you are. My wonderful, never boring, exciting little boys who keep me on my toes every moment.

Comment by Cari Herber — December 15, 2006

50. I love what the one mom said about a "normal life". To me, my son Elijah is normal. He is high-functioning PDD and just made the honor roll in a regular 2nd grade class. He is the most beautiful person on God's green earth and I cannot imagine life w/out him. I feel blessed and honored that God trusted me enough to raise a child like Elijah. He never ceases to amaze me or humble me or make me laugh. We all have some great kids. Thanks to all of you for reminding me of that

Comment by Heather — December 15, 2006

51. What I love best about my son, now 28, is who he makes me.

Comment by Lee — December 15, 2006

52. The thing I love most about my son, Alex is his ability to see the good in everything. I had dreaded the day when I had to tell Alex about Santa. Well, last summer he asked me if Santa was real. He wanted to know and since he was nine years old I felt it was the right time (no where near the holidays and he was old enough) So I told him that Santa was real and the history of Santa but that Santa was a man and not like Jesus and that he died and went to heaven. In Santa's wonderful memory every Christmas Eve Parents around the world remember him and his loving and giving spirit and that is how we keep Santa alive forever.

At first he got slightly teary eyed and then he got a huge smile on his face. I said, "What are you smiling about?" He said, "You know I think that means that Santa is more special than ever before." I didn't understand so I asked him what he meant and why. He said, "Santa used to mean to me a man who flew around on a sleigh dropping off presents to everyone everywhere. Now I know I have my very own personal Santa and that I'm loved so very much by MY Santa that makes it even more special to me. I am the luckiest child alive"

I had always known how special Alex was but at that moment I knew how wonderful the world is in his eyes. Wouldn't the world be a more beautiful place if we all saw with those kind of eyes. How lucky I am to be his mother! I'd not trade him for the world!

God Bless everyone this Christmas!

Comment by Sharon — December 15, 2006

53. Our Carolyne. Born on the prairies on the coldest winter day. Born when the sun came up. She is always the brightest sunshine in our lives. She doesn't speak a word but her eyes are like a little window into heaven. She can smile the brightest smile and voice her displeasure with the loudest of voices. For the first time in her seven years she tried to kiss her little brother good-bye as the driver arrived to pick her up for school. I cried as I watched her drive away down the lane and I knew that Christmas had come early. A part of heart is always with her in a way I cannot explain. She has taught me more than I will ever realize- patience, perseverance, confidence and strength when I thought I couldn't find it. But most of all inspiration. Especially today. Thank you for putting this together , what a great idea for all of us to read about our stories and shared experiences. Lisa Prasuhn

Comment by Lisa — December 15, 2006

54. What I love about my grandson Alec, who is 7 years old, would fill a book, but his attention to detail amazes me. When I asked him recently what he wanted for Christmas. He quickly replied, "an elf, so he can make me toys all year long!"

Comment by Karen — December 15, 2006

55. My son, Christopher, 15 with autism is a very caring and concerned son. I have been battling cancer for about 3 years now. Since I have had surgeries and chemo I am away from home a lot for doctor visits, chemo etc. Of the 3 sons I have he is the most concerned, the one who will ask me says "you ok mom?" he helps me get in & out of bed, covers me and simply asks for me when I am not there. He is limited in speech but he gets his point across to others at home in asking about me. For all the heartache this is a great compensation.

Comment by Ines M — December 16, 2006

56. Our son, Adam, is 13. He is in a residential school in New Jersey that provides care for his severe autism and behavioral problems. He is a wonderful boy. When I call him to say goodnite he begins to sing a song with me - the same song we have been singing since he went to live away from home almost 4 years ago..."life without Jesus is like a donut and there's a whole in the middle of your heart." And over the years his voice has changed from a sweet little sound to deeper tones of a little boy who is twice as big, twice as strong, hitting the walls twice as hard, and still singing when he takes the phone saying, "Hi Mommy," singing, "life without Jesus is like a donut.." What a precious gift it is to hear his voice and know the comfort that for today, he is safe in Jesus's arms.

Comment by Debbie and Rich Auerbach — December 16, 2006

57. Our daughter is 14 going on 21!

I love to hear her sing.
 I love to see her in the North High School choir.
 I love the way she tells me I need to relax!
 I don't like the teenage attitude, but I love the way she's learned to imitate and assimilate so well.
 I don't like her messy bedroom, but I love the way she tries to TALK her way out of having to clean it up.
 Since she was by "Buddha" baby (and I didn't know that was a red flag to be scared of) I have always said,
 "Thank you, God, for the serenity of Mary."

Comment by Rachel — December 16, 2006

58. alex, 14, loves his family. he loves me, his mother, even though i suffer from chronic depression i can't be the happy go lucky that i was when he was younger. i am amazed that he loves me still. i try to remember to thank god for this blessing as much as i can.

Comment by Leslie — December 16, 2006

59. I have two autistic ones and two typically developing ones. A 'list' would be too limiting. But from a selfish perspective, I love how they challenge every thought and deed in my life. A force for change for the good of one [me] and all [everyone else]

Compliments of the Season to you all
<http://whitterer-autism.blogspot.com>

Comment by [mcewen](#) — December 16, 2006

60. My boyfriend is 28 and has Asperger's. We have been dating for a year, and he recently asked me to exchange promise rings with him, so in time, we both expect that we will marry each other.

I'd never known anyone on the autistic spectrum before, but his friendship was worth every bit of effort I've made learning the ropes. What do I love about him? I don't know where to begin...

He has the greatest integrity of any man I've ever met. I know I can trust him to speak truth to me. He didn't profess his love for me until he was absolutely certain of it, so when he tells me he loves me now, it's not just empty words because I know it's from his heart. He is strong-willed and not at all intimidated by me as an intelligent woman and occasional spitfire.

Thanks to his mother's hard work, he is a polite and chivalrous gentleman. He calms me, he grounds me, he reminds me to slow down and appreciate what is truly important in life. He is never boring, as life with him always presents some new quirky way of approaching a task that I never would have thought of. He has an endearing innocence about him at times, and when he sleeps, he looks so beautiful in his childlike peace that I feel my stress melt away by just lying next to him.

Every day I wonder, after all the disappointing relationships I've had with neurotypicals, what on earth did I do to deserve this wonderful man who has become the love of my life?

Comment by Karen — December 16, 2006

61. My son Connor has taught me to view the world with an innocence that I thought I lost. Instead of clouds, we see "sky pictures". He is a very literal young man. He has taught me compassion, patience and opened my eyes to see that people have ABILITIES and challenges(because everyone has some sort of challenge) rather than

handicaps and disabilities. If I am having a bad day, he has the ability with just a smile and those big chocolate brown eyes of his (even though he doesn't look at me in the eye) to let me know..all is right in his world. I believe that Cj chose me to be his "Mama-the-mouse"(his pet name for me) before he came to be a guiding light on earth. I thank the HIGHER POWER every day for blessing me with this wonderous human being.

Comment by Kimberly — December 16, 2006

62. Our son William is 6 years old, and he has high functioning autism. We love him very much. He is so sweet, and completely innocent. He would never tell a lie. If I ask him, "did you do that?" He will say, "yes, I did," admitting responsibility for the latest household disaster. He's very funny, loves to be with people and plays jokes on us. His 1 year old brother Sean adores him and follows him everywhere. Life is difficult with William due to his behavior, but he is very intelligent, talks very well, and does pretty well taking care of himself. There is so much to love about William, it's impossible to say it all. We just love William!

Comment by Jane — December 16, 2006

63. My son is the best thing that has come into my life .He has taught me how very special all people can be. He is 11 years old and was diagnosed with aspergers. Unfortunately the world doesn't always see just how unique these kids can be. He makes me laugh and look at things in a different way. Without him I would not see the world as big and beautiful as it is. I love him so much.

Comment by Cathy McCord — December 16, 2006

64. my three year old marc has this smile that is so bright it almost outshines the sun, and the way his dimple pops underneath his right eye when he smiles is totally charming.

Comment by Donna — December 16, 2006

65. I am the lucky Mom of a 20 Y/O awesome son with Asperger Syndrome. The thing I love most about him is his great musical talent and the great joy he has in it. I gave him an accoustic bass fiddle for Christmas when he was 10 years old, and he has been playing it ever since!

He is a great performer, and because of his obvious love of the music, the audience has a great time watching him! The gift of music has opened up many doors for him, and i have loved being a part of it. He has become a very important of the musical community in our ozark town and I am very proud that he is my son.

Merry Christmas to everyone!

Comment by Robyn — December 16, 2006

66. The following verses I have written about my autistic 10 year old daughter Sara (non verbal) describes what I love most about her:

"A smile sometimes a glance,
Or a fit of giggles,
At times even a dance,
Little arms hugging me
As if joined by angels!
So, I kiss you briskly,
I call you, you leave me,
You don't listen to me
And you do as you please
You, my nicest surprise,
My eternal sunrise
Melting all my worries."

Comment by zahida chebchoub — December 16, 2006

67. I am the father of a 7 year old boy with moderate to severe autism. Every father has dreams of playing catch or fishing off the dock with their son. My son, Ethan, has given me a new outlook on life and what it holds. Each child we receive is a gift from God. I could be bitter about my son's Autism but that benefit's neither him or me. My son helps me with my desire to learn something new everyday. The enchantment a "normal" boy would have seeing a rocket launched at Cape Kennedy, I see in my son's eyes when he looks at the bubbles he made on our

patio or driving around looking at the Christmas lights in town. He is the most beautiful child I have ever seen and I am blessed to be his father.
Roger

Comment by Roger — December 17, 2006

68. One of the things I love about my 14-year-old autistic son Nathaniel is the way that he cares so deeply for his mother. She sometimes has to stay in quarantine in the radiology unit of the hospital after receiving her radiation treatments. Whenever this is the case, Nathaniel is unable to attend school do to overwhelming concern for his mom. Instead, he remains at home with me and makes sure that I keep the house perfectly picked up and clean for her arrival home.

A couple of weeks ago, my other kids bought tickets to see "Godsmack" in concert. They bought a ticket for me as well (they needed someone to go with them). I was unable to get time off from work, so mom had to take them instead. Nathaniel had a ticket too, but had expressed a desire not to go and was determined to stay home with his grandmother. I knew that he really wanted to go but was afraid of going to an unfamiliar place with thousands of people. I didn't want him to miss out on this opportunity, however, and quickly came up with a plan. "I'm really worried about your mom" I said to Nathaniel out of the blue. "What do you mean?" Nathaniel asked with peaked concern. "Well" I replied, "It makes me scared to think that she will be driving all the way back from the concert in Syracuse so late at night. She'll be so tired and I'm so worried that she might make a mistake driving." Nathaniel became silent, and I intuited a feeling of deep concern in him right then. "It's too bad you aren't going to the concert too" I went on, "I know that if were with your mother, that you would watch out for her and nothing bad could possibly happen to her. After all, there's no one who cares more for your mother than you do." Nathaniel thought quietly to himself for a moment and then asked "Not even you?" "No, not even me." I replied.

Nathaniel went to the concert with his mom and his brother, sister, and brother's friend. It was a magnificent time had by all. I went to work with peace of mind; knowing that my wife and children were in good hands.

Comment by Dave — December 17, 2006

69. I am the sister of a 16 year old boy with autism. He has taught me so much during the course of our lives together. I always spent time with him even when he drove me crazy. He has taught me the true meaning of patience.

Comment by Julie — December 17, 2006

70. My son is 10, and I love him. I love to watch him grow, I love how he relates to others, I love the little things he does and says, I love the minutes with him. I like to watch him ride his bike, he is so relaxed. He and his brother have challenged me to levels that have made me seek a deeper understanding, more tolerance and second and third chances are a given. I like who I've become most likely because of who he has made me, giving up is not an option because of him. Everyday is different with him, I am better for having known him and blessed to be given the chance to help him, but sometimes I wonder who is helping who?

Comment by Dawn Tollefson — December 17, 2006

71. I am a mom to a 3 year old boy, Tony, who has autism. One of the things that I love is how excited he gets over the smallest thing. We have dogs that LOVE to fetch . Whether it be a ball, frisbee, or pine cone. I enjoy watching him throw things for the dogs to fetch. Tony gets so excited when they get it. He laughs and jumps up & down. Another thing he gets real excited about is giving people "five". Its the little things like this that makes all the "bad" behavior tolerable.

Comment by Cristy Pritchett — December 17, 2006

72. being a mom of a special child teaches me alot of things. my son joshua is a intelligent child.it sometimes breaks my heart to see him cannot speak a single word, but with hand gestures he tries to say something. I love him and i'll support him even if I'm old.

Comment by raizza mateo — December 18, 2006

73. Matthew is 8 years old and autistic. There are so many things I love about my son.....the way his eyes shine, his laugh, his strength. He is unpredictable, unpretentious, and such a free spirit. I see the world differently because of him.

Comment by Carol — December 18, 2006

74. My son Joe is 41 and still as fun and light hearted as he was when he was a child. Only then we focused too much on what was wrong with him and now we finally see what it right! He has many endearing qualities but the very best is his ability to charm almost everyone who works with him because he is so reliable and determined. He has taught me and his Dad that you can have even a significant disability and still be a fully contributing member of the world.

Comment by Paula Taylor — December 18, 2006

75. My daughter, Trinity Brooke, is 7, and she is autistic. I have two other children, 2 boys, 11 and 5, who do not have disabilities. Trinity is the light of my life...she is probably one of the sweetest children I have ever met. She gives the best hugs in the world!!! She has taught me, and my whole family how important the "little things" are...because, it's the little things that you and I take for granted that she struggles with. I am at peace though, knowing that God gave her to us for a reason. Each day brings a new obstacle, but yet a new hope as well.

Comment by Elaine T. — December 18, 2006

76. Seth is a 16 year old man with a phenomenal temper and he can argue points that always make you say, 'hmmm...' (like, why do people always talk about girls and chocolate, because he likes chocolate and he's not a girl.) But, when he is happy, he is loving and funny and he has a smile that has earned him the name, 'Banana Eyes'. I am amazed at the beauty he holds inside for us lucky few who are special enough to be part of his inner circle. Everyday is a hard won victory when he kisses me good night, and tells me he loves me...but everyday is a victory. I love that about him!

Comment by Becky S. — December 19, 2006

77. My 4 year old son Noah is autistic, and I would not trade him for the world. He is the sweetest, most charming, loving little boy I have ever met. He has taught me and my 3 other children so much about life, and I have met so many wonderful people because of him.

I don't know what I would do without him, he is the light in our lives!

Comment by Rachel L. — December 19, 2006

78. I have lots of autistic friends, very different from each other except in their single-mindedness, determination and courage – and they are not contorted by the demands of social acceptance as neurotypical people are. Most of these friends had or have a 'low-functioning' label. But these are great lifelong learners. My beloved friend Wendy Lawson can do far more now than she could seven years ago when we first met. Wendy's lust for life, and her capacity for hard work, awe me. Her deep feeling for other living beings is the subject of Wendy Loves Birds and... which is one of the first videos in the Posautive Youtube group at www.youtube.com/group/posautive

This group is dedicated to promoting a positive view of autism and lots of you people who have posted here will like the videos in the group and hopefully will add to those?

Good luck all, and happy Christmas!

Comment by Dinah M — December 19, 2006

79. my unofficial aspie husband can think in flow-charts when he is programming. he is a natural at surrealistic poetry and abstract drawings. he makes lovely lists, and he invents sonorous words.

Comment by n. — December 19, 2006

80. I am so grateful for my son Sam, age 6. may not speak, but Sam can understand your thoughts and hearts and speak back to them in his own way. The quiet moments we spend together are the most peaceful part of my day. I know much of his day is a challenge with medications and school, but the minute I walk in the door Sam's face says "Today is just starting and I want to spend it with you." He's the most beautiful peaceful happy child I have ever seen.

Comment by Laura — December 19, 2006

81. My daughter (age 26) is such an incredible person. I think all the superlatives that describe her have been used already in the comments above, but I'll add that she is the sweetest person I know. She helps me in so many ways and is so patient with me. I have Asperger's and she has PDD,nos. She has the best attitude and the best smile. Many people love her.

Yes, she has serious disabilities and can be really stubborn, has a long list of foods she can't eat (not because of a special diet, she's just really picky). I can not imagine life without her. I've felt that way since she was born and we've had many scary times with medical problems and many frustrations and misunderstandings. Her normal, healthy brother came with his own problems. Nobody's perfect. Both of my now grown children are wonderful.

Comment by MM — December 20, 2006

82. This poem was written by my daughter Brittany for her brother Vincent with love.

Vinny Max

Blue Eyed

Dirty Blonde

Bird Chested Boy

What fills that mysterious mind of yours

When you slobber your gibberish words?

Happiness, sadness, fear all meshed together,

Struggling for their individuality

Millions of syllables that become lost in our meaning

Do you hate that we dont understand?

Do you know what hate is?

5 Years Old

A Twin

Sensory Challenged Boy

Do you know the strength of your own aggresiveness?

As you spin wildly across the living room floor reenacting everything

As your memory grows untamed

Stimulated by the mere images of Shrek and Fiona

What facinates you so?

Do you know what fascination is?

It appears that you live in another world

A world all to your own
 For a smile never leaves your face
 Bring us along to that world
 Let us feel what you feel
 Do you see us trying?
 Will you help us through?
 Blue Eyed
 Dirty Blonde
 Bird Chested Boy
 5 Years Old
 A Twin
 Autistic Boy
 My Brother
 Written by Brittany Purr
 Lafayette College

Comment by Brittany Purr — December 20, 2006

83. This is right up my alley. I have based our entire lives around The Joy of Autism. I always regarded my son as the purest joy of my life. I could never view him otherwise, even with the hard day when the word autism was first used.

Today, I don't separate his autism from the way he is. Yes, there are days when I know he is frustrated that he can't say what he wants to say, but I also have never known a child more gentle and loving and full of things to say, even if his communication goes beyond words.

Adam has made me see the world through more forgiving glasses, and that's the greatest blessing of all. Everything I believed was important before Adam became trite. Much that used to occupy my time just doesn't make sense any more. Acceptance, opening my eyes to diversity around me, coming to understand people with all kinds of differences has made me more aware of the gifts people bring to us, including the strange gift we often call challenge. In that, autism is a joy because despite all the challenges, despite bias in society towards people who are different, Adam still shines like a beacon. He is innocent, curious, as all children are. I think Adam will continue to teach me throughout my life.

Comment by Estee Klar-Wolfond — December 20, 2006

84. My daughter has taught me how to enjoy the simple things in life. She's three and for the first time she calls me momma. After waiting all this time, it's the sweetest sound of all time.

Comment by Jen — December 20, 2006

85. My son is so brave in defending himself and others against bullies. And his little brother will tell you that he's the best big brother in the world. He'll spend hours playing with his little brother, including LEGOs and video games.

He loves learning, just absorbing knowledge and then being able to apply it. He's a great companion for going to any kind of museum.

He tells me he loves me every day. He thinks hugs are awesome. I think he's awesome and I would not change anything about him.

Comment by Persephone — December 20, 2006

86. I am the mother of a 6 year old autistic boy. What I love about my son is that he begins every new day with a smile on his face...it is like he wipes the slate clean from yesterday and starts today with the determination to find joy in the little things we over look. My son is so honest...he says what most of us are thinking but are too afraid to say it...For example, we are in church for over 2 hours and we all are tired and my son yells out..."No talking, time to go and eat Pizza....Mommy let's go...Walking feet". All I could do is laugh because I was thinking the same thing. He is a whiz at reading and computers and he challenges himself constantly. It is funny how when you are young we want you to have many friends but in the end you only keep around a few good ones. I love my son and he is so caring and he always looks out for his little sister. He won't go any where without her. Oh yeah...he always knows when to give me a hug when I am down and out.

Comment by Melika — December 21, 2006

87. His sense of humor. His logical arguments. His way of thinking.

Comment by Rose — December 21, 2006

88. How do you say what you love MOST, when that person is your child? My son, Jaycen, has Asperger's and I wouldn't change a thing about him! He is my son and the one I was meant to have. I guess I love the most that he has taught me more than I will ever be able to teach him.

Comment by Kristen — December 21, 2006

89. My autistic daughter is like a little fairy changeling. She's quirky and eccentric and terribly clever, and very affectionate. She's gentle with animals and babies, she's got a stunningly good imagination (I'm told this is unusual in an autistic child) and she builds the most amazing things from everyday objects. Everyone who knows her comes to love her.

Comment by bonni — December 22, 2006

90.. What do I love most? How can I limit myself to just one thing?! My daughter Caroline is 5 and will be 6 in February- I have literally watched her blossom before my eyes for the last two years since her diagnosis and it has been nothing short of miraculous. I cannot thank her doctors and therapists enough...but it has been mainly one SLP-a miracle worker- who has enabled Caroline to be the (little) person that she is today. If I had ten million dollars to give to this woman it would not be enough to thank her.



So here are the things that I love most, in no particular order:

I love the way Caroline absorbs information like a sponge; I love the way she immediately puts to use any new "tricks" she has learned from her SLP or teacher; I love her enthusiasm, drive, and determination; I love her tenacity; I love her inquisitive nature (now that she knows how to question!); I love her smile that lights up the world; I love her sense of humor and love of laughter; I love her boundless energy; I love her excitement at going somewhere new (as long as I can give her lots of info beforehand); I love her willingness to learn new things; I love her love of rules and rituals, as well as her flexibility when things have to be changed; I love that her bus driver told me that she has memorized the bus schedules; I love her enthusiasm at spending time with people she loves and doing things that she loves; I love her ability to make new friends; I love the look on her face when she is playing soccer and her foot makes contact with the ball; I love the look on her face when she realizes someone other than her own mother has cheered her after she kicks the ball; I love how she loves to eat (she is half Jewish and half Italian!), both at home and in restaurants; I love when she asks me questions that she overhears about herself like "Mommy- what does it mean that I have a sweet tooth?"; I love that she loves to cook and loves to help me cook; I love that she loves to be a "good helper" as she says; I love that she loves the zoo, and art, and digging for dinosaur bones on a class trip to a science museum; I love that she adores school; I love that she has an unbelievable teacher for kindergarten and Caroline is clearly thrilled with her; I love when she comes home from school and shares with me the "gossip of the day"; I love that she wanted to be a pirate for Halloween; I love her appreciation for any gift whether big or small, expensive or cheap, as long as it's something that she likes; I love our nighttime rituals, which end with my daughter buried in her fluffy bed with her comforter pulled up to her chin and her polar bear with attached baby toy next to her.

There are so many more things that I could write about but I don't want to be a space hog- I could go on forever! Not a day goes by where this child doesn't blow me away in some way...she is my dream come true.

Karin Fox, mother of Caroline Fox Borgia, 5
Narberth, PA

91. I wanted to share the Christmas card my daughter made from a photo of my 6 year old Grandson Colin who has autism with his dog Buddy. Colin is the light of my life with a smile that can melt your heart. I thank God everyday for giving him to us.



Pat Kilpatrick, December 19, 2006

92. Every day of our lives, Daniel gives us gifts that many people probably take for granted. Every night he wants to lay between us and snuggle before going to bed, he wakes up smiling every morning, giving us an awesome hug to start off our day, and he greets us and every else who comes to our door with a smile from ear to ear all from a little boy who in the past acted like we didn't even exist. We cherish every word he tries to say and every attempt he makes to communicate with us and others, it takes a lot of hard work and effort for him to reach out to us. His love is pure and his excitement is contagious. He amazes us with how hard he works, how much he has to give, and when you see that sparkle in his eye, it makes everything seem perfect and everything we have gone through to get here, worth it.

With Daniel turning five this year, we were thinking about how nice it would have been if he could understand the concept of Santa Claus like other children do, to have that excitement and anticipation about Santa Claus bringing toys. We realize that's just not an idea he's ready for yet. But then we began to think about the smile that is going to be on Daniel's face when he opens a presents finding a new book or train to add to his collections, and how happy he will be to find Swedish fish in his stocking, and how wonderful it will be to spend Christmas with our family who love him just as he is.... that's what makes Christmas and every day special... his spirit, his delight, and his innocence. I can only wish for others that they get to experience that kind of beautiful gift.

Diane and Michael McDade, December 20, 2006

93. What I love about my 4 daughters with autism is what they have taught me:

How special the word "mom" is when you have waited 4 years to hear it for the first time from your child when asked "Who am I?"

How flour clinging to a child's hair is as beautiful as a halo on an angel. We found this out at 6:00 am one morning when our daughters dumped my flour on the carpet and beat it with their hands to make "clouds" rise up from the floor.

How really special the color blue is, when it is the only color cup your child wants to drink from and you can't find one. Ah, my kingdom for a blue cup.

How to be truly grateful for friends who will stand by you, for a stranger's smile of understanding, for family members who can celebrate a successful potty break like a gold medal Olympic event.

How to appreciate a simple hug. How it can reduce you to tears, because it was the first time it was ever initiated from your child.

How looking into my eyes and really seeing me is better than any gift from a store.

from Kathleen Johnson

Mother of Aletha (14), Rachael(14), Deanna(13) and Kyleen(12)

94. My Daughter Hannah Patricia ,

What do I Love most about her?

Lets see could it be her kindness and true unconditional love she gives to me and everyone that has the pleasure of knowing and meeting her.

The way she lights up a room with her presence , her humor , or how animated and fun she is?

The way she sings a song that makes my heart melt , her courage and attitude of never giving up.

Her musical talent , or is that she has taught me so much and has made me grow as an individual , she has taught me to find my voice to speak out on her behalf when needed.

Or just the sweet bedtime rituals we share , I say to Hannah out of all the babies in the whole wide world how did mama get the best most special baby , she replies jesus gave me to you mama , and my reply is thank you jesus and she replies back I thank you too jesus for the best mama in the whole world. This question is so open ended and I can go on and on about my priceless daughter , she is my only child 4 years old and my hero.

God does not give us more than we can handle they say and you know I feel pretty honered he has trusted me with this most unique individual , her qualities never sease to amaze me.

She is loved and she will always be loved , I am honered to be her mother and would never trade this special child for anything in this world ever. Hannah is aspbergers - PDD - NOS - & ADHD and her speech and learning abilities are so strong. Hannah Patricia is the true love of my life now and forever !



Lisa Jones
Pennsylvania

95. My son Danny is almost 9 and has Autism. I love everything about this special little boy! I love that he gets so excited when he zips his coat, when his pull up is dry in the morning, and when his favourite show is on tv. I love that he fights with his sister about all the things siblings fight about. I love the way my heart melts when he gives me a rare hug or looks me in the eye with a sparkle in his eyes. I love that he has taught me patience and understanding and forgiveness and how to fight for him. I secretly love that he tells people off for smoking or for staring at him. I love that he sees the smallest detail in the biggest things. I love that he takes the world so literally. I love that when his nose is gushing blood from frequent winter nosebleeds he worries about the floor and his clothes and I especially love when he says to me during these episodes "you know mom, blood really is thicker than water". You know bud, you are absolutely right...

Comment by Liz — December 22, 2006

96. My son Billy turns 7 on Christmas Day and is the best thing to ever happen to me. He always has been an extraordinary kid and is a blessing.

I am not the most religious of people, but I truly believe that God only gives you what you can handle.

Another father once told me never to look at his autism as being a disability but as a blessing.

Billy, you are the best thing to ever happen to me. Thank you God for giving him to me!

Happy Birthday and Happy Holidays!
Love Dad

Comment by Bill — December 22, 2006

97. My son is 7 years old and he lights up our lives. He loves to clean the house from top to bottom (dishes, vacuum, mops, etc).

Comment by Dale — December 22, 2006

98. There are a million reasons I could write why I love my autistic 3 year old daughter Angelina. For me though, I'd have to say among all, she has taught me the meaning of true love. Yes, I wish she could talk to me, I wish she didn't have to be looked at as "different", but she is beautiful and I wouldn't trade her for anything. When times are tough and you feel like breaking down, just remember God sent you this precious child for a reason, and the lessons you will learn, and the love you receive, makes every moment worthwhile.

Comment by Sueleda — December 22, 2006

99. I just wanted to say that I love my son. My goal in life is to get him to communicate with me. I think if we as parents and family of autistic children need to pull together and do our own study to find the cause of autism. It is tough but the love we have for these kids should be a good enough reason to fight for them. My son Vicente' is the light at the end of my dark tunnel. I love you baby.

Comment by Yolanda — December 22, 2006

100. My 14 year old son, Jake, walks past the paintings hanging on the wall in the living room every day like he has never seen them before. He smiles and stares and they are an endless source of fascination for him. He signs "I love you mom" every night as he goes to sleep at 9:00 on the dot. I don't know if he knows what it means but I love to see it just the same. He wakes up smiling every day & he loves his life.

Comment by Lisa — December 22, 2006

101. My son is a teenager living with autism. He is one of the kindest people I know. He loves to give to others and has the best manners a mother could ask for. He always gives his best and wants to please so badly. He goes to a training center three days a week and intends to work once he graduates in 2008. He has had some real difficulties and obstacles but he never gives up and he never quits. He has come a long way and I know with persistence, he will be successful in life. I am so blessed to have him as my son.

Comment by S. Mott — December 22, 2006 @ 10:40 pm

102. My Son's are Marcus age 6 1/2 and Ricky age 5 1/2. Marcus has Aspergers and Ricky has Childhood degenerative disorder . Both were also diagnosed with Bi-polar mood disorder. This past week my family was featured in the Kansas City Star for what its like to live with Disturbed children. They asked me too what are the good things about Marcus and Ricky. My only thought was thier happiness and smiles. When they smile it makes the room light up and you feel as if you hung the moon. I would do anything to see tht smile on my boys faces day in and day out. We are Exceptional parents Raising Exceptional Childen. We are blessed and we are cursed. You have to Live with a child on the autism spectrum to understand how truly blessed you are. My heart and prayers ot their with all of you this Holiday weekend. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Comment by Kym-Berly Barrera — December 23, 2006

102. My 17yr. old son, Stephen is my love! I will never be without a friend as long as Stephen is around! I could go outside to get the newspaper, come back in, and Stephen will kiss me and act as if he hasn't seen me in weeks. His love is unconditional. I love you Stephen!!

Comment by Mom — December 23, 2006

103. I never even knew what autism was until my 9-year-old nephew, Ben was diagnosed 7 years ago. My appreciation grows everyday for all that I've learned and continue to learn from him. Not only does he show me love, he tells me - something that I thought I would never hear. All of his teachers at school adore him as well as his classmates. Ben and his fraternal twin brother, Will are the loves of my life. They call me "M" and I love it everytime the phone rings and I hear Ben's voice on the other end saying "Hey M,...and how are you?...I'm doing just fine....talk to you later.....Bye-

Bye!", even if it is 4 or 5 times a day:) He has brought so much to our family. Don't know how we'd make it someday without Will, and especially Ben's smiling faces.

Comment by ~M~ — December 23, 2006

104. My daughter Jordan is 4 1/2 and autistic. Jordan's language is limited, but she speaks poetically (if that's a word). If she looks up to the sky and sees a moon. She doesn't just say, "moon". She says, "blue moon in the sky is very far away". She believes that all fish are "angel fish". She asks for juice, by saying, "apple juice in a big kid cup with a straw and ice." Jordan sees the WHOLE picture of things. What a gift that is. Jordan loves to look at books. She then elegantly makes up her own short sentence stories about the book.

Jordan blows kiss after kiss to my husband and I before she goes to sleep. She also blows me a kiss everytime before she goes to therapy or school. Jordan is my only child and my world. She is unique & beautiful!

Comment by Lisa Leicht — December 23, 2006

105. Hi! My name is Gian Vincenzo. I am autistic. Don't worry. I'm happy."



Gian Vincenzo was born 6 summers ago, a robust, APGAR trouncing 7 pound baby. Up to his 18th month, he exhibited the progression of any

normal kid - voracious appetite, geometric growth, rudimentary speech (dada, mama), facial recognition, in short, the works.

All of these went downhill and faded to oblivion when he went past 18 months. He withdrew, literally, from the world.

Words disappeared. He could not distinguish his parents from anybody else. He held his hands in his ears for the faintest of sounds, but totally ignored the Parokya ni Edgar ear-splitters blaring from his big brother's mini-compo. Instead of the bright eyes that we have known before, now he stares with empty glances at nowhere - not focusing on anything yet focusing on everything all at once. He would cry at the slightest touch of cotton buds on his ears. He would cry when he wants ice cream and he cannot, for the world, say these 2 words. He would be sickly- a regular patron of pediatricians and hospitals suites semi-annually.

At first, there was denial and rationalization. People we know, even doctors, gave Gian the benefit of the doubt that, because of his gender, he might have a slight delay in speech, and gave him 6 months. Then another 6 months. Then another 6 months. This slight delay is not slight anymore.

At 3 years of age, we could not wait any longer for Gian to speak "Mommy" and "Daddy". Off we went to a garden variety of specialists, you name them, Gian has gone through them. Pedia-neuros, Neuro developmentals, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Special Schools (3 of them), Occupational therapists, Speech therapists. Gian has gone through in 6 years what I haven't gone through in my 39.

We then found "Intervention Partners", a Pasig based center led by experienced Sped specialists, on July 2006. At this point, Gian has still to say a single word - at 5 1/2 years old, and we were in "desperate" mode. The center is a practitioner in Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA).

From July to December, in a short span of child-time, Gian went from zero vocabulary, to single words, to identifying words with pictures, to constructing simple subject-predicate sentences. He can now verbalize what he wants, what he feels. He can listen and follow simple directions. He can sing the whole "Lupang Hinirang" and "Ave Maria" in his American accented diction. He can discern Caltex from Shell, spell all the colors of the rainbow, count from 1 to 10,000 (in increments of 1,000) forward and backward. On his own, he is now learning a few Tagalog words. Truly an accomplishment. At this point in time.

The road ahead is still paved with gravel, thorns and IEDs. Gian has a life ahead of him, and though we did not let the dice of Fate get a chance in his first 6 years, we still wonder if they will play their cards in his next 6 and beyond.

Gian will turn from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood. At some point out there, we will be called to meet our Maker, and the mere thought of leaving him behind to the Fates, the Elements, and God forbid, The Philippine Government and the BIR, makes us shudder.

As a continuing legacy, I have inaugurated as simple website for Gian, www.myautisticson.com. Contained in it is Gian's Weblog , which I would fill with his journals - from Gian's perspective. Also included is Gian's Autism Forum , which I hope to be a source of online interaction for parents, teachers, practitioners, in their common quest to know and overcome this mystery called Autism. Again, Merry Christmas and a blessed 2007!

Johann and Mary Ann Vincenzo

106. My 8 year old boy Zachary has been diagnosed with Aspergers since Kindergarten. The first 4 years of his precious life I didn't know any different. I thought the little flapping and exciting dancing was just Zachary being happy when he would see the Trains, Planes or Bus's go by. He never spoke much, always doing something with a book or writing his letters or numbers. He loved to make train tracks in his room for hours and hours... years rolled on and not much has changed. Except... Now he doesn't stop talking and about the same thing over and over again.... 😊
Zachary loves Trains, Trains and Trains. The positive note he is great at all maps and directions. He knows all maps of every transportation system in the Bay Area and California.

The kids in the 3rd grade know he is an expert at transportation and if they need a bus, they ask Zach for details. Also, My mornings are also blessed with Channel 4 News with Zachary as my weather and morning commute man. He loves all kinds of serious weather storms and keeps me updated, including his class.



Zachary has a wonderment that is amazing, his mind is always thinking and it never stops unless its a sleep. Zachary knows he is special, he is different, he likes what he likes and what he wants to do, but he still has this special heart that wants to include everyone into it. On his terms..in his world..in his time. Zachary is caring at heart and tries to express it as best as he knows how and to me that's all I can ask. I love his big blue eyes and the wonderful hugs and kisses he surprises me with at all times of the day and night. I love the fact that my mom or I always have to walk him to and from class. I love that Zachary wants me to participate in every school function because its the "right" thing to do.

I want to say thank you Zachary for showing me patience and life through your world everyday, I love you son.

Stephanie Nielsen

107. What i love the most about my daughter Eilish (4 yrs) are her gorgeous blue eyes they penetrate my soul. i know she cant tell me she loves me but her hugs and kisses show me how much she loves me. each time i look at her i think of this song i wanted to share with you all.

In my daughter's eyes, I am a hero.
 I am strong an' wise,
 And I know no fear.
 But the truth is plain to see:
 She was sent to rescue me,
 I see who I wanna be, in my daughter's eyes
 In my daughter's eyes, everyone is equal,
 Darkness turns to light,
 And the world is at peace.

This miracle God gave to me,
 Gives me strength when I am weak.
 I find reason to believe, in my daughter's eyes.

An' when she wraps her hand around my finger,
 Oh, it puts a smile in my heart.
 Everything becomes a little clearer.
 I realise what life is all about.
 It's hangin' on when your heart has had enough;
 It's givin' more when you feel like givin' up.
 I've seen the light: it's in my daughter's eyes.

In my daughter's eyes, I can see the future.
 A reflection of who I am,
 An' what will be.
 An' though she'll grow an', some day, leave:
 Maybe raise a family,
 When I'm gone, I hope you'll see,
 How happy she made me,
 For I'll be there, in my daughter's eyes.

my love for her will never change. i love her more than anything in this world.

Comment by Narelle — December 25, 2006

108. My daughter, Melanie, is now 9 1/2 and has high functioning autism. She has taught me patience (although I am still working on this one daily), compassion, the real meaning of the words "unconditional love", and to see joy in the simplest things and beauty in water towers (with which she is fascinated). Everyone is her friend. She is my teacher, my guru. I may never fully understand her, but I am thankful each and every day that she is in my life.

Comment by Yvette Breaux — December 26, 2006

109. My son is 7 and has HFA....having him has been a lesson in humility...to appreciate that everyone has differences and difficulties and we should not ridicule or make fun of them...it is cruel. I appreciate most when I have days that are "easy" when compared to what they can be like....I appreciate it when he gets up in the morning and does not

trantrum or have a hard time completing his PECS....I appreciate it when we take him somewhere and he behaves better than other "normal" kids with their parents. I love to hear him laugh... even when it is not funny. I love to hear him say "I did it!" when he accomplishes something new...I appreciate the "little things" more and value things that aren't material.

Comment by Lori — December 26, 2006

110. Oh, what a treat our dear Michael is to us! He challenges us but he makes life entirely full of promise. Especially the promise of God and what he has planned for us. Michael does not speak in conversation but in expressions and how they surprise and elate us. He loves his family very much and will often give us a standing ovation when we enter a room. We are so grateful for the miracles we see daily in our sweet boy. He has taught us patience and love that bears much but how great are the returns. He reminds us that we all are image bearers and how precious each and every life is and how amazing God is.

Comment by Melissa Hartwell — December 27, 2006

111. My son Jace is the most beautiful little boy. Big blue eyes, and a smile that lights up the room. He is 3 yrs. old and has moderate autism. He has a long road ahead of him. But, he takes all of his therapies in stride, and is so proud of himself when he accomplishes what is asked of him.

He loves to hug us and kiss us. He has a crazy little dance that makes everyone laugh.

He surprises me everyday. Christmas morning, his gift to me was counting to 13. He has never done that, but, it is like he knew that it was a special day and he wanted to give his mom and dad a gift.

His life will be one with alot of hardships, but we will be by his side all the way helping him to fulfill his potential. I wish everyone would be able to know how special our children are and except them for who they are. That would be wonderful.

Comment by Kelly Grudowski — December 27, 2006

112. My son Ian, who will be 5 years old in three days, is truly the light of our lives. The challenges of autism aside, he is a loving and sweet-natured person. I've never met another person like him, he wakes up with a smile and pulls me into bed with him for a snuggle, pure bliss! His funny sounds, the garbled talking interspersed with words—we call it lan-speak.

His three older sisters adore him and will play with him in his chase games. He now calls me "Mommias" probably because I have always called him "momma's sweet boy", and it is wonderful to hear him call my name now. He loves his daddy and their play time together.

Of course, there are good days and bad days, but the purity of his spirit and his love of life always shines through. He isn't worried about what will happen next, he takes each moment as it comes. I won't lie and say it wasn't devastating news to hear he had autism at age two—but the pain has faded and has been replaced by joy, joy that my youngest child has no sorrow, no worries, no strife. He is truly and well loved by our family and friends, as well as his teachers at the special day class he attends. I accept and adore Ian for exactly who he is. I hope and pray that his life is an example to all (abled and disabled) as a life truly lived. 😊

Comment by Karen Sutton — December 27, 2006

113. My 3 year-old daughter was diagnosed 10 months ago with moderate autism. She tries to speak, but is only understood by the closest of friends and family. She is such a joy though! She has brought so much compassion to some of the people in the family who didn't have much patience for any of the children. Her eyes are so full of depth and sparkle and her laugh too is infectious. I love the way she gets excited everytime she learns something new, and it seems she learns something every day! I think that God blesses certain parents with special children to bring more joy to their lives, and I thank him for our angel!

Comment by Bonnies Mom — December 27, 2006

114. I have 3 children Matt 23, Shari 18 and Joshua is 13 and autistic. I love my kids and all of them are special. Josh is our gift from G-D. We had some hard times but when he smiles he lights up a room and our hearts. He is so happy in his and our world, He doesn't know he is different. He wants to know everyone's name, Tells us he loves us and who is the best and we tell him "Joshua is the best." and he is happy.

Comment by marla goodman — December 27, 2006

115. My husband and I have three children; twin boys, Matthew and Mitchell (age 10) and a daughter Jessica (age 5). Our boys were both diagnosed with autism at age 3 1/2. Our daughter is "Neurotypical" (whatever that is...she's doing great!). We love all of our children dearly. Related to our boys, we love their "Hearts" the most. They have an unconditional regard for others and are not negatively impacted by social fears. They can get up in front of 350 people at a school Christmas concert and not feel nervous to play Christmas songs on the piano. They don't care (or maybe don't know) how others may perceive them. They are free to express themselves and are not impacted by nervousness and embarrassment that often prevent so many of us from taking risks. Our boys have a deep impact on others who spend time with them. At the Christmas Eve service at church last week, our son Mitchell brought many of us to tears as he was the only person to greet an elderly woman who sat in her wheelchair a row away from us. Mitchell not only shook her hand, but hugged her as well. She began to weep. Last night, a parent volunteer who had been helping our son Matthew happened to be in the same restaurant as us. He immediately walked to her table and began a conversation with her and her husband. Afterward, she sought me out to tell me that Matthew is the neatest kid that she has ever worked with and that she has worked with hundreds of kids over the years. These are some of the special moments that we cherish. While there is considerable pain and heartache for us as we see them struggle with so many of life's daily routines, there are moments like these that take our breath away and help us realize their Godlike kindness that is often missing in society today. We are truly blessed!

Comment by Julie LaBerge — December 28, 2006

116. I have a 22 year old son, Brent. Brent has Asperger's. He is the 5th of 6 children in our family. Brent is the most tender hearted, kind person I know. He can seem very annoying and two minutes later he comes back and says how sorry he is and is as sweet as can be. He is also the most honest person, sometimes to a fault. He will tell you when you look great and when you don't.

Comment by Ann vonBehrens — December 29, 2006

117. What I Love about my Therin.

He has beautiful blue eyes that spot the smallest detail. He hears many things even though he doesn't always respond. He soaks up experiences and even though he may not talk about it for weeks or even months he has a unique perspective and I can see an event through new eyes when he tells me the story. He perseveres! He is very affectionate and I never quite know how he chooses the people he hugs - sometimes it worries me when they are strangers but he always sees the best in people. He can be a wonderful big brother. These and so much more are things that make my child special, not the diagnosis of high-functioning Autism.

Comment by Amber — December 31, 2006

118. Our grandson, Victor, is five and a half years old. When he was diagnosed, the pain in our hearts was severe, and yet I cannot imagine him any other way. He is our gift. He has made such progress despite the fact that he was struck with bacterial meningitis and consequently suffered a stroke at 3 and a half. Victor has ATTITUDE...great attitude. He smiles most of the day, is warm and loving, is happy with anything to eat, even on his special diet. He loves church, and when he is there, I feel that he has a connection to God that I just long for. His soul and his spirit are so pure. When I call on the phone and he says, "It's Gramma!" my day is made. His parents are tireless and selfless in their efforts to give him every opportunity. His two little brothers help him with his social skills. He has endured so much in his short years here and has given us so much. Having him wrapped in my arms fills my heart to overflowing. This child is truly a gift from God. All of those things that most parents take for granted are cause for celebration when Victor does them. His smile illuminates the room and our lives.

Comment by Rosemary Felbinger — January 1, 2007

119. I love how Dawson, my 7 year old attempts and reaches milestones on his terms, in his own time and not mine or his doctor's. Last week he visited my childhood home on the wind-swept central California coast and he climbed an old twisted pine tree I once climbed at the same age.



CReece

120. What we love best about James is the way he makes us laugh. He, as do many other autistic people, quotes from videos that he watches. He has learned to generalize pretty well, as of late, and he's always coming up with a quote from a video that applies. But, it seems to be a little out of sync with the "real world", if you will. Lately, when he is crying, he will take lines from Frosty the Snowman. He is sobbing and he says, "When the weather gets hot I start to melt. I get all wishy washy." He also is getting what teasing is, thanks to his PCA. He applies it appropriately and humorously. He looks over at us, does his teasing comment, and then the biggest grin comes to his face. He gave me, his Mom, great joy when he finally a few days ago, after a long time working on it, wore socks, closed sneakers, AND underwear to school. He kept them on all day and returned home to his Mom who proceeded to smother him with kisses, hugs and over exuberant praise. His belly laughing was hysterical. I think he thought his Mother had totally gone mad!

James's PCA says he likes the innocence of these children. James's brother might lie to him. However, James would not. (Although James does sneak food! He tells us to leave the room when he's about to do it or we catch him in the act.)

The best characteristic of Autism, to me, is the childlike quality that will never be lost. James will always be childlike. Wouldn't that be great for all adults to take from him, that wonderful lesson not to lose their childlike qualities?

Ann Fishkind

121. As I wrote to Tariq, now 27 and nonverbal

"I have tried so hard to change you, and in the end it was you who changed me. Instead of becoming the son I wanted you to be you made me become the man I needed to be...I accept you the way you are in my heart, but still I wish we could sit and talk. While that will never happen, it is just as true that no other son could have done for me what you have. You are in the very fiber of my being, in my every moment, and I wouldn't want to change that."



(from *Special Children, Challenged Parents*) Robert Naseef

122. My name is Kathy Grant and I have Asperger's Syndrome and read about autism and the project that you are compiling. So, I am adding my 2 cents by sending you my picture (its from three years ago with my smaller cat, Quiero, on my shoulders). It is good to read good things about us.

I live and work in Denver. The things that I am interested in are: politics, history, cats, Battlestar Galactic, flags (I have over 200), stuff written in

foreign languages (the latest thing from a foreign language I got is in Welsh from the National Autistic Society in the UK), Russian Orthodoxy (converted in 1994), cities (been to lots of them)!

Kathy Grant

123. My twelve year old son autistic Nate is my heart. He is my reason to get out of bed everyday and the best thing I ever did in my life. I love his excitement over simple things and how something very small and insignificant can make him happy. He has a smile that lights up a room and a laugh that causes one to melt when they hear it!

He loves "Barney", "The Wiggles" and "ARTHUR". He also loves his dog, swimming, taking rides in his father's truck, ice-cream and jumping on the trampoline. He is a unique little man who has begun to notice others and started developing friendships. Nate continues to do well in school and loves the ESE staff. They have grown to love him and understand him. What he probably loves the most is the school bus. He enjoys attending school but the true icing on the cake is the ride on the bus. It's the simple things that make our lives seem to have so much meaning and my son has a way of putting it all into perspective.



Anne Bennett-Bready
mother of Nate Bready

124. My son Hunter is 8 years old, and has Autism. I too have heard lots of people telling their children to be quiet, and like any other Mother of an Autistic child it bothers me. One day as we were leaving a restaurant I told a couple, "Please let her talk, I'd give anything to hear my son say anything." I left with tears in my eyes. My reward was that when Hunter turned seven he said "Mom" for the first time ever. Now he's saying more and more. I am blessed to have my son, and we are very close. Don't ever give up on these kids they are amazing!

Gabrielle Higgins

125. Hello! my son Seth just turned 4 on the 23rd of January. We are so blessed by him. Like other parents, our road has been long, but well worth it. Seth was silent until speech therapy started at 2.5 years and now is speaking full sentences, some with emotional content and meaning. I love to hear him talk. We had the wonderful experience of taking him to the movie "happy feet" where he was singing and laughing LOUDLY - it took all the control my husband had to not try to quiet him, until the women in front of us turned around and gave Seth a big kiss and said "today is my birthday and it is so nice to hear a child getting so much enjoyment out of life, what a happy guy" - she then gave Seth a hug and said "Thank you for the best birthday ever" Seth said "your welcome" and THAT made mom and dad cry - for the first time, our son related to someone else and it has not stopped! Thank you to this wonderful community and all the prayers and thank you to that women in the movie theater ! Lastly, everyday I listen to the Garth Brooks song "The Dance" and I think of our journey with Seth - "I could have missed the pain, but I'd a had to miss the dance" Thanks for dancing Seth, lets keep moving!

Tracy A. Terrell

126. Our little guy is soon to be 6, and what a wonder he is!! At 3 we were told that he would never accomplish much and he would never talk or even be able to take care of himself. I love how God does his miracles!! For Kurt is a walking, talking, READING, miracle!! We give thanks to God for his teacher, Musshafen and the wonderful job God does through her!!

Barb

127. My son Matthew is 8 years old and has autism. Matthew is affectionate, he loves animals, and he loves his books. At first, we couldn't even sit down to eat in a restaurant. He would never sit. This past summer he finally did. Now we go out to dinner as a family. My son Matthew is the light of my life. I wouldn't want him any other way.

Joanne

128. Michael is 15 years old, taller and bigger than I am. He is his own person and our family loves him, even if he cannot say "I love you" back.

DiVina

129. My godson Jordan is 4 years old and has autism. He is the sweetest and cutest little boy and he makes our hearts happy to be with him. He is now saying words and each new word is a cause for celebration for the whole family. His mother is the real angel in his life and with him every step of the way. I feel so blessed and honored to be part of Jordan's life and to be loved by him. God has special plans for Jordan and I know his life will be full of love and happiness always.

Godmother Diane

130. My 9 year old daughter Abigail has autism. She brings so much joy to our life with her beautiful smile and her greetings to everyone she meets. We have to be careful when in a crowded store because she thinks everyone should say hello, and if they don't and we are close enough she will grab them and say "I'm talking to you. And even though it's January she loves telling everyone, Merry Christmas and Happy 2 years. We are truly blessed . She keeps us laughing constantly.

Donna

131. Hi I am the grandma of the best little girl in the world Meghan is 11. My daughter was very bright for her age and in the beginning we thought that my limited knowledge of children was just because of that fact. Meghan was a little slow at things and needed lots of love but cried a lot. I always said that my daughter was never a baby and I had missed thatso, I feel Meghan is Gods gift to me especially. She is nonverbal, not potty trained and doesn't play with very many toys or with other children. She is the joy jof my life and I just don't know what I would do without her. She is loved by all who meet her and she is so very beautiful and affectionate too.

Marilyn

132. My son Tanner is 7 years old and what a joy he brings to my life. I have 3 other children besides him and love all of them the same, but he inspires me most. Diagnosed at the age of three, he has come a long way since. Today was very special, because he asked us to take his training wheels off of his bike for him. We know he does not yet possess the coordination, but his determination to attempt this was a huge step. He also got in a fight with a neighbor today trying to help his 11-year-old brother. I know most parents would say that wasn't a good thing, but for someone who only 2 years ago didn't know his twin baby brother & sister were home from the hospital for 3 months, it was a huge step in his emotional development. He showed he cared. Although he has very good manners, he has always been challenged by empathy, or lack thereof. He has a special way of making me smile; not just on the outside, but on the inside even more.

Holly

133. I am a teacher of children with autism. I cannot express how much I admire the parents of children with autism. As a teacher, I can go home at the end of the day to get away from autism, but you parents are faced with it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year! You are all an inspiration! You also entrust your "angels" to us educators to help you prepare them for life ahead. I hope that we all meet your expectations!

Janise

134. I am a single mom of 3 boys all on the spectrum. Travis (6) with PDDNOS and ADHD, Daniel (5) with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Chiari Malformation and Sidney (4 in April) with PDDNOS...I have learned more from my "auties" than I would have ever learned from a typical child. Yes there are days that I feel I can't handle it anymore and that I don't want to be mommy...but I know in the end it is all worth it. To see the love that they convey to me, I don't know what I would ever do if I didn't have them. I would love to be able to change what the world thinks and feels about our "auties" but I know that isn't an easy thing...I hope that all the other parents out there have as much hope and faith as I do, if not more.

Monique

135. I have been teaching with in the autistic population for 12 years. I have started out with many families who have just learned of Autism and what it will mean for thier children and their families. in doing this I have discovered a whole new way of looking at the world. I have a better appreciation for the little things like a smile, a hug or a engaging look. I want to thank the parents of these children and let them know how important they are not only in the lives of their children but in all the lives they touch by sharing their beautifully unique children with us.

Lisa

136. My 5 year old son Brandon is the love of our (myself, my husband and his 17 year old sister) lives. He has a smile that would melt your heart and he pops it on you when you least expect it. His laugh is infectious and he wakes up in the morning smiling and laughing. You can't help but smile yourself.

He sees things that I would never notice and his special personality has allowed me to see how accepting and loving my husband is. He is charming and confident and loves having his pre school friends visit our house (even though he doesn't interact with them a whole lot!) He wants every animal at our house, wants every character costume, and wants to play every instrument there is. We sometimes talk about how different our life would be if Brandon were a typical child and we wouldn't take it for anything in the world, wouldn't want him any different than he is. We are blessed to have him and every night I thank God for my family.

Comment by Theresa — January 10, 2007

137. JT is my 4 year old son. I never knew anyone who could be more happy or loving. Like so many other children that have autism, he sees the world in a beautiful light. He reminds me how fun simple things can be. Like closing your eyes on a windy day and letting the wind blow on your face. And how blowing bubbles can go on for hours with him laughing and jumping the whole time. God has blessed me with an autistic son....

Comment by Jennifer — January 16, 2007

138. One of the best poems I have ever read concerning living with a child with severe disabilities is Emily Kingsley's "Welcome to Holland." Please read:

Welcome To Holland by Emily Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away...because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

This poem opened my eyes to a whole new way of looking at living with my son who has autism. It just summed up our lives so perfectly . I realize how luck I am to have experienced both Italy, with my two sons age 20 and age 13, and Holland with my 18 year old son with autistim. After 20 years , I have to say that Italy is great, but so is Holland!!! I never knew there could be such love and magic in what started out as a terrible diagnosis.

Comment by Barbarar Wineland — February 15, 2007

139. It's hard to narrow it down but, here are a few things that I like about my sister Julia (25). She is so loving! She can be so difficult sometimes and you can yell and lose your temper, send her to her room, etc. At the end of the day she still thinks you are the greatest. There are 4 girls in my family. I am the oldest and Julia is next. We like to get her cornered at dinner time and ask her which sister is her favorite. Most people don't think she understands but, trust me she knows what she is doing. Usually the sister really wanting her to choose her is the last person she will say. She will name everyone except her and then she gets this funny little smile on her face. Another funny thing she likes to do is answer the phone. This is funny because she

just carries on random conversation. My mom was unavailable to come to the phone because she was in the restroom and Julia preceeded to tell the caller how she had started her period, etc. You never know when she is actually talking to someone on the phone or if she just picked it up to pretend. She likes to do that. To my mom's embarrassment her co-worker was on the phone. 😊 We love Julia and I couldn't imagine growing up with out her. It has been very challenging but in the end I would change a thing about her. She is the glue in our family!

Comment by Dietra — April 9, 2007

140. What I love the most about my child who has autism is I remember he is a child first and I love that the most. Because my child has autism, he has taught me as many things at the same time I have been teaching him things. One of the things I love is how he taught me how capable I was/am as a parent, and the many things I CAN do that I never thought in a million years I would be doing. One main thing is as I help him to locate his voice and words, I was able to find my voice and shout for him on his behalf 😊 I may never know exactly how everything works and clicks in his head, but I would bet many people don't know that about anybody else, either. Now my son doesn't show expression depending on how many people are about him. He is very reserved and quiet when there are too many people. At home it is much different and I see one emotion a lot! Anger! My child has to be a 'puppy' in order to show me affection, and you know, that's ok. One day he may kiss me than slobber me with a puppy lick 😊 before he ever figured out to be a puppy, I never had any affection from him so I am thrilled for 'reality pretend'.

Great topic! Many get stuck on the every day battles they forget all the small wonderful things there are about their loved one with autism!

Sandy

141. I have two sons on the spectrum. Douglas is 9 years old (PDDNOS) and Darius is 7 years old (Autism/ADHD). I will move mountains for these two and I love them very much. We have a lot of hard days because of Autism and we have dealt with a lot of cold, insensitive attitudes because of Darius's behavior due to his Autism, but what's to come is definitely better than what's been.

Comment by Sheila — February 16, 2007

142. My sons Jeffrey(age 12) and Jalen(age 9) were diagnosed with PDD-NOS, Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified. Jeffrey was diagnosed when he was three. He was a beautiful baby boy with fantastic motor skills but no language. What language he did have was nothing more than echoalia. He never let anyone near him but myself, my husband or his big brother. As a toddler, he used to pull me by the shirt into a room and point at objects. After emptying some of my cupboards, shelves, and/or drawers I finally reached for the food, drink or toy he actually wanted. This was very frustrating. Jalen was quite different. He was and still is a very energetic and outgoing kid who babbled constantly. Of course 99% of it was incoherent. But after being diagnosed and placed in autistic support classrooms that specifically addressed their needs, my boys began talking for the first time. Now I can't shut them up! They're high honor roll students and just all around great boys. They have a two year old brother who is beginning to show signs of a developmental delay. If he too has ASD, he will follow the route his brothers took. My heart is filled with so much love for my boys. I anticipate many challenges in the years ahead but more importantly I look forward to proms, first loves, driver's ed, SAT's and college applications. I simply cannot imagine my life without my three special "gifts".

Karen P.

143. My grandson Markus is a wonderful child , He is caring , funny, and a joy to be with . He always smells my hair and tells me I smell like Morning . I love it when he tells me that , I think of that as being a beautiful summer day .

May God Bless You All Tammi

144. I am the proud aunt of "my guy" tommy, 12 years old. He is my hero and always will be because things others complain about or take for granted he has to work so hard for. He is always positive and has brought more joy to our hearts. He does not have a bad bone in his body, and is incapable of being anything but pure of heart. Pray for a cure, these little people deserve it.

Comment by jackie cronin — April 8, 2007

145. I have a 7-yr old son who is high functioning autistic. I have never asked God "Why me?". I truly feel that God had this very special child who needed very special parents. I will never know why God choose us, but I am so very grateful he did. I would never trade Shane for that "perfect" child. Autistic child are such beautiful and caring human beings. Everyone needs to experience autism.

Comment by Stephanie Patty — February 13, 2007

146. I am mom of 14 yr. old fraternal twin sons. One has autism; the other profound cognitive delay with autistic tendencies. I have known they were "special" since they were born prematurely. I think when 2 babies are delivered 2 and half months early, your hope is for their physical health. They are healthy, handsome, sweet boys. There are challenges and rewards. Maybe I am selfish but I know that my sons will always need me. What a lovin' feeling.

Comment by Sherelle — February 14, 2007

147. I am a grandmother who is raising my autistic grandchild. He is such a blessing. My husband and I have custody of him because his parents are divorced and neither can cope with his problems. He has verbal challenges yet he can recite the pledge to the US Flag and sings songs as well as memorizes his favorite Civil War Movies. He attends Sunday School, AWANAS (church organization) and is homeschooled. His favorite subject is Civil War and is a very sweet child unless he gets over tired or the weather changes drastically.

Honestly I don't think my life could be any fuller. We are old west reenactors and he loves the activities involved with this sport. I give him regular doses of apple juice for his digestion and he loves pasta, rice and meat (as long as it does not have gravy on it). He turned 7 years old in April.

Pam Rodriguez in Oklahoma

148. My daughter's name is Taylor, she is 6 years old and was diagnosed with Autism-PDD-NOS when she was about 2. Unfortunately, I went through severe depression (being my only girl). I lost my mom soon after of a massive heart attack,(age 58 putting away her x-mas ornaments)my mom was always there for me when times were as we say tough with Taylor. Not only have I lost my best friend, rock and mentor, I lost my mom and Taylor lost her grandmother that loved and understood her. I then went through a heart catherization at 35! Then my brother of 42 has a stroke....I do have a bad back..nerve damage and 3 herniated disc, but the pain killers I rec'd were more I think for the metal pain of having an autistic daughter. But wait before you label me.....Yes, I became a white collar junky, yet belonged to the PTA and very high up I may add. Involved in all my children's functions, see I have three children, 2 boys and a girl. My 10 year old boy and 5 year old boys are fine...Go figure.. My point to this sad story is a happy one....My mother always taught me...your children are everything!!!! They reflect you as a person, only you can make sure that Taylor receives a life to her true potential!!! One day I woke up.....it's never too late....Taylor was 5...but wait I don't know how I did it, but I advocated all her IEP's and she rec'd more than other Special Ed children are suppose to receive or should I say than the school wanted to give...By going to conferences etc...I learned what FERPA and IDEA was and I also learned that you get more with honey than a sour apple...

Taylor who I was told to teach sign laguage because she would prbably never speak, now says over 1500 words, is on a grade 1 reading level in kindergarten and can mostly tell me what she wants and needs....You might think this is a miracle??? No, she's still autistic, she has major melt downs, wakes up in the middle of the night and decides to break all my eggs on our new rug, she loves to paint...especially the huge white paper in the living room, you all have them too, (maybe a different color) we adults call them WALLS, but she doesn't know...we have told her several times too. She has chalk board in her room and has a certain area we paint ,color etc...but at night she gets really artistic and needs wider space.....Her favorite thing is to crumble anything like crackers, cheese goldfish, etc. on the kitchen floor b/c it makes a neat sound. Taylor likes to control all 5 T.V. 's in the house at the same time but we say.. nope....She is a little different as my other children say...(yes, we have explained Autism to them) because mommy makes anything Taylor wants every night because Taylor doesn't eat what we like, but that's okay...

My daughter has taught me so much.....I AM OUT OF DEPRESSION WITHOUT MEDS! Not that meds are bad..they aren't, I was on them Amatriptaline and Lexapro worked for me....And I have never been so happy in my life!!! Yes,

it's rough...but so what it could be alot worse....After losing my mom in a second, I realized how short life is....I actually get happy in the morning because I woke up...sad but true!

I get soo excited when Taylor smiles and laughs, just like someone said before when they laugh at a something from the bottom of her stomach..It's priceless!

She is going through typical things that a 6 year old would go through, like being picky with what she wears..not b/c she wants to match..it's because she doesn't like too tight..she likes only certain colors...she doesn't like decals or irons on a shirt...she likes her hair a certain way(not the way I want of course) I quickly learned hell with the pink ribbon and skirts..I will be happy my child stays dress for the entire day! Ahhh, Taylor, for her sake of course I would change her if I could but I can't, all I can do is to rest the day I die knowing that I have done everything possible for her to live a life to her full potential...Isn't that what any parent wants for their child typical or special Ed?



from Heather, May, 2007