

## A LOOK INTO THE WORLD OF AUTISM

Written By a Parent of St. Mary's

If you put yourself in this mother's shoes of a "Special Needs Child," I feel a "breath of fresh air" knowing that my son is surrounded with so much love, patience and understanding. I would like to give you a brief look into "The World of Autism."

Imagine because of a child's sensory issues, smells & noises set him into a fight/flight response of panic & fear, resulting in him pinching, kicking & biting. The hardest things, of course, are the looks and comments from others watching in the crowd without understanding. These situations must be handled in a very dignified manner with understanding.

Imagine needing to address these sensory needs every day with some children needing earmuffs because sounds are too loud, some children needing to swing & constantly move making it difficult to sit in a typical classroom ... and the extreme difficulty with EVERY SINGLE change in routine.

Imagine never being called for a play date, to a sleep-over or to come to a birthday party....except those that other family members are invited to. This is the case with a lot of "special needs" children, so it is

important to make every day special encouraging involvement of "typical peers" so that our children feel accepted & included.

Imagine this child going to every ballgame his sister & brother play...but NEVER PLAYING. While sitting in his "special chair" & being the "most faithful" cheerleader...he adds excitement running onto the field during the game when Mom lets her guard down! :)

Imagine being "kicked out" of day care at 2 years old, because you would be "too much to handle" in Pre-K 3. However, accepting the challenge to make behavioral modifications helps these "challenging" children & successfully teaches them academic skills that no one ever dreamed they would have.

Imagine being so orally defensive that your teeth are brushed only after you are fast-asleep in bed until the age of 5... so orally defensive that you bite the dentist's finger. ....Be persistent and consistent offering a variety of foods, and successfully help them "get over" these food aversions.

Imagine the self-esteem of a child not able to speak until 6 years old....finally able to express "basic needs." We have tools to build our children's self-

esteem by offering adapted forms of communication and picture schedules.

Imagine not being potty-trained & wearing diapers until the age of 7.

Imagine the looks and reactions you get EVERY DAY from people who don't understand why you do the things you do or say the things you say....so repetitively! Just smile and accept our children's differences identifying the reason why they say the unusual things they say.

People often wonder why I'm always positive & smiling.....well, I MUST to handle my "life's challenges"... like we all have. Looking for the positive in everything keeps my family smiling and happy.

Imagine these children needing an adapted learning environment to feel "successful" academically, and the creative talents necessary to adapt to each of the students at St. Mary's individually.

The teachers & trainers at St. Mary's are amazing, insightful, loving and compassionate and have taught our son.....

How to button his pants

To enjoy brushing his teeth

The joy of messy paint

Why it is a bad idea to burp in front of others

The enjoyment of reading & computer games

How to watch a movie without constantly  
rewinding

How to relax when life gets too intense

Why stepping in ants is a bad idea

The importance of cooperation

How to laugh & cut up!

Those that have met my son know how angelic he is....when all conditions are favorable. :) He is the inspiration for all that my husband & I do. There is such a need in this "special needs" population. St. Mary's fills that need.

Each child is as different as every snowflake is different. Let's all work together to accept everyone's differences, especially those in the autistic world.....