

A Cup of Comfort  
For Parents of Children  
with Autism

Edited by Colleen Sell  
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Colleen Sell collects awesome stories from parents of children with autism. This book is filled with enlightenment and hope.

The Center For Disease Control states that the rate of autism has increased from 1 in 2000 in 1980 to 1 in 160 in 2004. Autism is not one set of symptoms but encompasses a wide spectrum of disorders ranging from high functioning to severely disabled. Many forms of autism include: no eye contact, poor to no language skills, inability to communicate, inability to cope with change often manifested as a tantrum, endless melt down with loud howling and kicking, head banging, and repetitive habits of immature outbursts.

Often autistic behaviors do not appear until the child is 2 or 3 years old. Parents share their concerns, fears, and anxiety upon becoming aware of their child's struggles. On page 133 Kelly Harland says, " I have lain awake as my tears mix with prayers, feeling heavy, helpless, and terrified for a future I can't predict." This awareness of life with an autistic child is life-defining. The heart hurts and courage is summoned. The speech pathologist, occupational therapist, psychologist, and clinics become routine daily chores. What others learn naturally, autistic children often need on-going therapy to learn: physical skills, how to play with toys, how to follow directions, how to respond in social settings.

Family and therapists spend endless hours observing and experimenting with what works for each individual child. These concern parents can't change the world, but they work diligently to find the tools that can help their children puzzle out the world for themselves. In seeking to meet the daily challenges of their autistic child, parents share some profound conclusions:

Page 134 Heather Jensen, " I'd do away with the diagnosis of "processing disorder" and replace the term with creative wiring."

Page 283 Barbara Toboni, " The kids who come in last, learn the hardest lessons...how to run against the odds."

Page 30 F.L. Justice, " Looking back I would not change my daughter...just the world that doesn't value our differences or see our strengths.

The stories in this book are stories of courage, determination, and acceptance. Perhaps the research to meet the needs of autistic students will also save general education. Maybe we will learn to judge a child by their talents and strengths and not by a score. Maybe we will learn that effective teaching comes from observation, expectation, and making connections with a child and a child's potential. Maybe we will rejoice in a diversity of gifts rather than one shoe fits all. " A Cup Full of Comfort" also measures out a healthy dose of wisdom so timely for all of us in the educational field.