Dedication

This work is dedicated to the millions of children and adults around the world who have been so devastated by autism.

May this work finally help them to be understood in order that they get the help – they so very desperately need!

Disclaimer

I, Jeanne A. Brohart, am not a physician, nor do I have experience in the field of medicine at all. I am simply a mother with a story to tell, information and opinions to share.** **Everything in the two books written by Jeanne A. Brohart, 1) Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, and, 2) Breaking The Code to Remove The Shackles Of Autism: When The Parts Are Not Understood And The Whole Is Lost!, and, on her website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com, are based on experiences with her autistic son, Zachary.

The above mentioned books and website and any other materials provided therein, either electronically or on paper are not meant to be a substitute for individualized medical evaluation, advice, care, or recommended treatment from a qualified, licensed health professional. I do not recommend taking supplements, medications or implementing dietary or behavioral programs/changes without first consulting your personal physician and/or therapist. Each child is different and family medical history has a bearing on the care any child receives. Parents are strongly urged to consult with their child's physician/therapist prior to adopting anything suggested in the above books or website or prior to drawing cause/effect conclusions or inferences from these materials.

Although many parents have written me and expressed their agreement with my theory, what I propose is a very new theory that has yet to be reviewed by the autism research, therapy, or medical community in general.

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A Theory On Autism…

Breaking The Code To Remove The Shackles Of Autism©

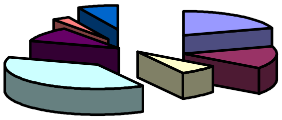
Perhaps the best way for parents to think of everything presented in my materials as it related to the need to understand "the parts" before "the whole" could be understood, was to think of all these issues in terms of the autistic child's need to "break the code".

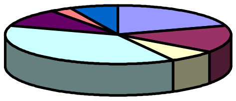
By this, I meant that in order to understand almost everything in his world, the autistic child had to first understand how every part fit into the whole – and ultimately, into his world. This was true in everything from language to emotions, socialization to process completion, sensory (visual, auditory, touch, etc.) input processing to issues with potty training. All these things - be they behavioral, social, emotional, or sensory – had to first be broken into their respective "parts" for the whole to be understood.

Thus, for the autistic child life consisted entirely of "breaking the code" or breaking things down to their lowest level. Once each part was understood, the whole could then be "put back together" and understood for what it was. The difficulty, however, lay in understanding those things that should be occurring subconsciously or automatically – those issues dealing with digestion and immune system functions, for example.

Until that happened, everything in the autistic child's mind and life would be perceived as:

A when it should be perceived as B





The key, I thus believed, was in helping the autistic child "break the code" to get from A to B. This was true in absolutely all areas of life for the autistic child! :o)

I truly believed the inability to properly integrate sensory information, the "ordering function", and specifically, the concept of "the partial verses the whole" had been critically misunderstood and, therefore, neglected by researchers, doctors, therapists, teachers, and parents alike. But, when you looked at so much of what you saw in autism based on this one common thread... it now all made perfect sense! What was amazing about my theory was that ONE thing explained so much... how the brain processed the part from the whole... a function that had to do with the ordering of information... whether that information was reflected in or considered a behavioral, social, emotional, or sensory aspect of life made no difference because the issue was one of how things were mentally processed – not an issue as it related specifically to behavior, emotion, socialization or physical sensation (although I did believe there were a few aspects of autism that were "truly sensory" in nature – having to do with the physical structures involved in how the brain processed sensory information and the possibility that these physical structures were damaged in autistic children)!

Truly, so many issues were explained by my theory about the processing of the parts to sensory information, what I refer to as "partiality", that it was certainly a major piece of the autism puzzle. For decades, no one saw the ONE thing all these issues had in common! In trying to look at the whole picture, the whole puzzle of autism, we failed to see that the underlying issue was actually one dealing with the processing of parts as they related to the whole – the processing of all the pieces to sensory information. In trying to "solve the puzzle of autism", we failed to see that in order to solve the puzzle, what we needed to see were – literally – the pieces, the parts to the whole!

Perhaps this explained why this link had for so long been so allusive – why it had for decades - been completely missed! In looking at the whole, we, too, failed to see that the issue was in "the parts that made up the whole" and how they literally, did not fit together! All these issues we saw in the autistic seemed so unrelated... but, when each was examined in view of the function of sensory integration or partiality processing they were all **completely** related! :o)

In the remainder of this text, I will simply refer to the inability to integrate information from the senses and to relay that information to all parts of the brain needing it to do "their function" as an issue with "partiality processing"… an issue with the inability to put "the parts together".

There were several key behavioral, social, emotional and sensory issues that could now be explained by my theory of the importance of sensory integration failure, partiality verses the whole, labeling, color and motion in the life of the autistic child. The numerous issues explained by my theory included:

Spinning, visual stims, self-spinning, odd behaviors (I could now explain over 60 in my own son), issues with interrupted tasks and transition issues, hyperactivity, motor skill issues (difficulty holding a pencil, inability to point with a finger, inappropriate use of stairs, difficulty drinking from a cup or straw, etc.), issues with cutting hair and nails, issues with brushing teeth, the inability to look at oneself in the mirror, issues with potty training, issues with toe walking, issues with the sense of touch, issues with specific food textures, auditory issues (i.e., the deaf child syndrome, unexpected sounds, etc.), issues with breaking eye contact (i.e., "looking through you", blank stares, etc.), issues with color, issues with the concept of "same verses different", issues with language (fascination with captions, echolalia, "nonsense language", talking in labels and commands, the inability to hold a conversation, the inability to remember a sentence), issues with socialization, issues with leaving one's familiar environment, issues with sharing, issues with process completion, safety issues, issues with motion, apparent inability to tell a lie, issues with imaginary play, issues with perceiving emotions, issues with aggression and violent outbursts, hand flapping, licking, rocking, ritualistic behaviors (i.e., aligning or stacking objects, etc.), fascination with trains and puzzles, the uncanny ability to remember innumerable, specific facts relating to specific topics, routines and specific therapy approaches (why they seemed to work for some), issues with the great variation that existed among autistic children, etc.

The remainder of the materials provided herein consisted of a review of each of these topics in view of partiality processing.

Given that this theory was so new to everyone, including myself, there would, undoubtedly, be periodic updates to these materials. Readers could always get the latest on each of these issues by going directly to my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. What I provided in these materials, however, was certainly more than enough to help parents see how all of these issues fit together when examined in terms of the inability to properly process partiality – the inability to properly integrate the parts into the whole!

In these materials, after reviewing all issues explained by my theory, I also provided for readers exercises I did at home to help my autistic son deal specifically with issues of partiality processing. The information provided in these exercises also clearly showed that partiality was indeed at the root of many issues for the autistic child.

I think all readers will find, once these materials had been reviewed, that there was no denying that fact that partiality processing in terms of sensory input processing, integration and relay, indeed, played a critical role in the life of all autistic children.

Before we get into each of these specific topics, there was a little background information I wanted to share with all readers.

When I wrote my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, I thought the issue was primarily one of "order". Many parents wrote me and said they agreed with my conclusions. Yet, many parents wrote to me and said that their children did not seem to have issues with "order". That troubled me greatly. How could I be so easily able to turn my son basically on and off like a switch -a little boy who had characteristics so common to all autistic children - and yet, so many other parents were not seeing what I saw. I continued to look for the answer…and found it!

We had all been told that "every autistic child was different", yet, the fact that they were all similar "enough" in so many aspects that they could all have "the same label" told me that there was truly something "at play here" for ALL these children. I knew in my heart that "order" was definitely involved - and it was - but what I had failed to see at the time I wrote my first book was that the issue involved more than the simple concept of "order" - that the issue lay more specifically with a subset of order - order as it related to the processing of "partiality" of the “parts to the whole”. That was the KEY to it all!!! - and when I came to that realization, almost all (99%) the pieces of the puzzle suddenly fell into place. There were still a few things I could not explain - but very few - those few pieces dealing specifically with what I believe were sensory issues relating to physical damage to the structures involved in the working of the senses and those issues relating to immune system impairments. Issues with the processing of partiality, however, also explained many issues we once saw as simply "sensory" in nature.

In many cases, what was once thought of as "sensory issues" were not "sensory" issues at all - many of these issues, too, could now be traced back to the inability to process the partial in anything.

I did firmly believe that autistic children did have an assaulted immune system and that casein and gluten, (and in many cases, phenols) were also definite issues for the autistic child, creating a natural opiate or "drug induced state". These physical issues, too, needed to be addressed by all parents. Issues of diet and the immune system were areas I considered "physical" issues and, indeed, some fell in the "sensory issues" category as well, in terms of actual physical damage to the structures involved in sensory perception and processing.

My focus was with the specific breakdown of a specific function within the brain - and how mental processing as it related to the processing of the “parts to a whole” was impacted in the autistic child. There was absolutely no doubt in my mind that the immune system and overall physical functioning of the digestive process and physical sensory structures in the body were greatly impacted in the autistic child. My focus, however, was with mental processing of the parts to the whole and how this specific breakdown within the brain of the autistic affected all aspects of life in these individuals. There were many excellent sites that discussed immune system, digestive system and sensory functioning in terms of physical impacts to body structures in the autistic. My intent was not to review or redo all that information... it was already out there. My intent was to introduce completely new information as it pertained to mental processing... specifically, information that related to the processing of partiality, of sensory information integration and relay. Others had put forth their theories on how specific systems within the body were impacted in autism... what I was putting forth was a theory on how the brain's functioning itself, as it related to ONE function in particular - the proper processing, integration and relaying of information - of the parts to the whole - was impacted and how this one impairment affected absolutely all aspects of life for the autistic!

I encouraged all readers to also read my first book to fully understand my journey in coming to the conclusion I did. At the writing of my first book, I had a partial answer... now, I had a much more complete answer. The first book was but a first step that put me on the right.

I now looked for the role of order and partiality processing in every aspect of my son... and sure enough it was always there, playing a critical function in his moments of frustration as well as in everything in which he took so much joy.

For the autistic child - in absolutely everything - it was my opinion that before the "entity" or the "whole" could be understood there needed to be an understanding of the "parts" that made up the whole. **"Parts" really could not "stand on their own" - they first had to be viewed as "entities in and of themselves" before they could be integrated into the "whole".** That was why labeling everything was so critical to these children.

When you labeled something, even something that was a "part" of something else, that label created for that "part" a "whole entity" in and of itself. Thus, labeling could be a tremendous help with behavioral issues but it was also the key to every other aspect of life for the autistic child. Labeling was the one tool parents could truly use to their advantage in recovering their autistic child.

What was so difficult to see until now was that the inability to cope with the partial as "part of an entity" affected absolutely every aspect of the child's life... his behavior, his ability to communicate, his emotions, his sensory processing and his overall social interaction.... and it was this inability to understand the whole without first understanding "the parts" that was the common thread that appeared to explain almost everything we see in the autistic child, including the intense frustration that was so much a part of their daily life!

These children, I believed, were constantly trying to "break the code", to understand the parts to the whole, and herein, was for parents, the opportunity to best help their children recover from autism - simply by helping them to "break the code" in everything, by helping them see exactly how all the parts fit together to form a whole - be that in behavioral, social, emotional or sensory issues - the idea was the same for all aspects of the child's life.

As I embarked on this journey in writing this document, I knew not where it would lead me. By the time this document had been completed, my understanding of many issues relating to autism was much more complete and as such, readers will see how I came to view autism in an entirely new light as I progressed through this document. I was certain all readers would also have that same experience.

This book provides many examples of behaviors I saw in my own son, behaviors I now so completely understand based on brain structure and function. Because I knew my audience was quite varied, this book was written in simple language so that anyone – even a high school student – can understand it. As such, I hope the examples I have put forth, also help parents and those in science to see autism in a whole new light.

Special Note To Parents

I will warn parents – the materials you are about to read get to be very overwhelming - when you finally see and truly understand just how completely impacted the autistic child could be by the inability to properly perform ONE task in his brain - the proper processing of "partiality"... to automatically put "the parts" together to form "the whole". Yet, parents could find comfort in knowing that understanding the problem was the first step to overcoming the problem… and there was much that could be done to help these children. Being able to focus on specific issues would allow parents and therapists to be much more effective in the recovery of these children than have been past approaches that were too often "hit and miss" because nothing seemed to link any of the issues together in terms of what we saw in the autistic child – until now!

I believed that it was paramount parents understood the critical yet so misunderstood role of order, partiality, labeling, color and motion in the autistic child. Pretty well all behavioral issues, social issues, emotional issues and many sensory issues I saw in my child could be explained by this issue with the "partial" and the very critical need for labels in everything (labels and fractions were a parent's greatest tools because they helped the child understand the concept that "parts" once given a label, could stand as entities in and of themselves).

This truly explained also why those things that involved the most "parts", things like conversation and social interaction were the biggest problem areas for these children and yet, why autistic children often easily surpassed "normal" children in areas dealing with specifics and the "ordered".

Certainly, some parents would say, for example, that math was an issue or stumbling block for their child... or learning language... but, I was of the strong belief that the issue may not be the "math" or the "physical ability" to communicate itself but rather that the issue was more in **teaching these things in the "proper building blocks approach"**. If not taught in a specific order, then, I believed, the child could not "break the code" and grasp the concept. The teaching of **all** concepts had to be done in a very specific manner for the child to move on and progress and grasp the next concept for each subject.

My theory also explained why we saw so much "variation" among autistic children… why some were strong in certain areas yet weak in others. Parents had adopted the all too familiar phrase "every child is different". That was true, but this was true of all children… not simply of autistic children. Therefore, as parents of the autistic, we needed to focus on those areas of similarity among the autistic, for therein was the answer to the puzzle.

I believed some parents "stumbled" upon the right way to teach something and so their child progressed in that area but if they failed to "stumble" upon the proper order in another area, then that child had difficulty moving on. The **key** was in knowing **how** to teach something based on the need for order and the difficulty with "the partial" or anything "not labeled". The world of the autistic child necessitated that everything come with a label... and the proper, **often exact**, label (at least in the beginning)... to allow these children to separate the parts as necessary to then be able to see how they fit together to form the whole!

What I was advocating here was not a cure for these children. The information provided would give your child coping mechanisms and would most likely bring sanity back to your life in that you would so much more completely understand your child. To provide a cure, the brain itself would have to be "fixed" or "rewired" somehow. I did not believe anyone knew how to do that although there was considerable debate as to whether or not the brain itself could actually regenerate neurons in damaged areas. Many scientists did seem to believe this was possible.

In closing this special note to parents, I wanted to emphasize a special warning to parents. The brain is a complicated, intertwined organ. Yet, we had many "research labs" and of course, the pharmaceuticals, who were quick to tell us they understood so much about the brain. The pharmaceuticals, especially, were quick to show us their "brain studies" providing "evidence" that specific drugs were apparently "of value" for specific brain function ailments. I urged all parents to learn to question these studies. In my opinion, they were often very deceptive in what they were putting forth. For example, there had been studies that showed specific drugs "helped with aggression" in autistic children. Yet, what the studies failed to tell you was that the drug in question was a tranquilizer and thus, yes, I would expect aggression to decrease in the autistic when given this drug... but, I would have expected that to be true in ANYONE... not just the autistic child. It was critical parents learned to question these studies and read between the lines... and learned to look for "what you were not being told", because, herein, all too often, was the truth about such studies. :o) To any parent who would be quick to believe the many "half truths" that came out of these organizations and studies, I encouraged you to read very carefully my section on: All Those Brain Studies – The Need To Question Everything! The information within those pages would help all parents see things in a whole new light when it came to "what we knew of the autistic brain" and "how to help it"... or what we knew of the "normal brain" for that matter! Indeed, if my theory was correct, many of these so called "brain studies" were now "out the window", as explained in my section on All Those Brain Studies.

We will now take a closer look at just exactly how so much was explained by my theory of the autistic child and his inability to process “the whole” without first understanding “the parts”. The journey you are about to take through the rest of these materials, I hope will be just as exciting for you as it was for me. To finally understand your child, no matter how difficult “the message”, was truly priceless and I hoped these materials helped in a quicker recovery for many children.

Odd Behaviors - Understanding Why The Autistic Child Does What He Does...

In this section, I will be discussing "odd behaviors" in the autistic child as they relate to issues of partiality.

Spinning and Visual Stims…

What's The Fascination With This Activity For The Autistic Child?

If there was one thing that was characteristic of the autistic child, especially in earlier years, when autism first surfaced, it surely was the love of spinning things.

Zachary indeed loved to spin if given the opportunity. In addition to spinning, there were other activities that parents had also come to describe as "visual stims"... such as a child moving a pencil rapidly back and forth in front of his face. Spinning and other activities so often referred to in the past as “visual stims”, I believed, were basically one and the same. I will therefore, discuss spinning specifically in this example, although the concept was equally applicable to other “visual stims” as well.

What was it about spinning that was so intriguing to the child with autism? The answer could be traced back to the issue of the "partial" verses the "whole.

There were many parents and professionals who believe that spinning was simply a way to get a visual stimulation. If that were the case, spinning would not continue once eye contact with the spinning object was broken. That, however, was clearly not the case.

Autistic children continued to spin while looking elsewhere... as shown in the pictures below.

1

2

3

In the first set of pictures, Zachary was almost 5 years old and he was watching television. In the second picture, he was more fascinated by the fact that mom was taking yet another picture. In the third picture, Zachary was looking at something on the floor as he continued to spin. The second set of pictures was taken when Zachary was only 2 years old... yet the pattern was the same then too.

1

2

3

4

5

The love of spinning was clearly present, as was the fascination with a specific part of the spinning object. Again, Zachary's attention was primarily with the inner part of the wheel when it was a wheel that was the object of the spinning activity. Again, eye contact was easily broken with the spinning object, as clearly shown in the second picture. If you look closely, you could see Zachary had a small car next to him as he sat in the plastic bin. The small car was flipped over as he spun the wheels... looking about the room - happy as a lark!

These pictures clearly indicated that there was more to spinning than simply the fact that it provided a "visual stim". So, if a visual stim was not the answer - at least not the whole answer - as to why autistic children spinned... what was?

It was my firm belief that this activity was simply an "order fix" and stemmed from the autistic child's inability to process the "partial". Spinning was but an attempt at making the partial whole again.

Before going into greater detail on what I believed was going on when an autistic child spinned, it was important for me to provide for you a description of the object Zachary was holding at almost age 5. This object illustrated the point quite well... although the same was true of pretty well all objects Zachary spun. This particular object, however, was the object that truly helped me to understand and so clearly see what was going on with this issue of spinning. This object was pictured below:

1

2

This was a little "car thing" I had purchased one day at McDonald's. It was part of the McDonald's Happy Meal that week. We had gone there to play on the equipment. Zachary could not eat anything in the restaurant due to the fact that he was on a casein free and gluten free diet. I often took Zachary to McDonald's just to play - to see how he interacted with other children. When he saw other children with this toy, of course, he wanted one also. So, I purchased the toy without the meal.

There were a few interesting characteristics about this toy that readers needed to take notice of. In the first picture, you can clearly see the toy had 2 large wheels with treads, and a smaller "wheel looking thing" in the middle of the toy. That small "wheel looking thing" in the middle of the toy had a "raised surface on it" that looked like a railroad track - but with only one rail positioned in the middle of the track. In addition, if you looked closely at the larger wheels, you could see that they had elevated "bumps" in the middle... to represent wheel studs. There was a larger one in the center, and 5 smaller ones around the larger one... they were barely visible on this picture, but they were there. The wheel studs of this toy created the interesting illusion of appearing to "go backwards" or in the direction opposite that of the spinning motion (see section on Motion for more on this issue).

This was where things became quite interesting... the focus of Zachary's attention was clearly with the wheel studs in the middle of the wheels – the parts to a wheel - parts to a whole. It almost looked as though he was trying to "pick them out" of the wheel... to get rid of them. In the second picture, note also the positioning of the fingers, on the wheel studs and the wheel treads. Also note that Zachary's first preoccupation was not with the activity of spinning, but rather with the wheel treads and wheel studs... the parts to the whole.

1

2

Zachary tried to "pick out" the wheel studs for quite some time... unable to do so, frustration set in and spinning started...

1

2

At this point, I asked Zachary to "stop spinning"... not willing to do that, he got off the couch - where he had been watching a movie - and resumed his spinning activity on the carpet. By then, I had noticed that Zachary only spun the big black wheels... he never tried to spin the little "wheel looking thing" in the middle of the car - so, of course, I asked him to spin the "small wheel" in the middle. His response surprised me... he stated: "no... no spinning small wheel". He then proceeded to do something else that was rather interesting...as depicted in the pictures below. I took the object and tried to spin the small middle wheel for him a few times in order to see his reaction. As I did this, Zachary kept saying: "no... no spinning small wheel". Once I gave him back his toy, he immediately physically positioned his thumb onto the "small middle wheel" to totally prevent it from spinning... and resumed the spinning of the large dark wheel.

2

This was quite interesting to me. I took the toy car from him, and inspected the "small middle wheel" a little further. I again tried to spin this "middle wheel" myself. This time, however, I noticed it could not physically be spun fast enough to make the "raised surface that look like a one rail track" disappear. As I tried to spin this "little middle wheel", Zachary, in a very assertive voice shouted: "Stop spinning". He became frustrated by my attempt to spin the small wheel. I then gave Zachary the car toy again to see what he would do if further prompted to spin that "small middle wheel"...

1

2

Zachary simply took the car and started to push it along the floor. Well... there was a time where I would have been thrilled to see him do this... thinking he was actually using a toy appropriately... pushing a car. To society, this was "normal"... socially acceptable behavior. Zachary, however, had simply figured out that I allowed pushing cars... even when I said "no spinning"... because "pushing cars" was considered socially acceptable. This time, however, it took very little time for me to realize that even this "pushing of the car" was not "normal play" at all because Zachary's eyes were still very much focused on those wheel studs as he pushed the car along the floor. Again, he could easily break eye contact with the toy if I did something to result in his breaking eye contact with the object of interest. By this time, I was convinced that spinning was not a behavior the autistic child engaged in primarily for a "visual stim"... it was something else.

Zachary then figured out that he could take his toy car and have the wheels spin as he turned his Sit'N Spin. So, I let him do that for a while, to the point, where eventually, the Sit'N Spin was going full speed as was the black wheel on which Zachary was so focused.

After this particular activity, Zachary was exhausted and went back to the couch to watch the rest of his movie. He placed the toy car next to him as he lay on the couch... and again, those wheel studs were positioned in his direct line of sight, as shown below. Although he was exhausted, Zachary was still somewhat restless, and for a short while, moved from one end of the couch to the other... moving the toy car and positioning the wheel studs each time he moved, again, in his direct line of sight.

2

I soon realized that the inability to process partiality was at the root of the autistic child's fascination with spinning. Spinning, if you think about it, does something that few other activities could do... it could create a visual impression that allowed the parts to become "the whole". As the toy car was spun, the wheel studs disappeared and became part of the whole. Since the "small middle wheel with the raised surface" did not spin fast enough to produce this illusion of the part becoming the whole, Zachary refused to spin it and in fact, did all he could to prevent even me from trying to do so. That particular "small middle wheel" was still very much a source of frustration for him.

This was a critical key to the autistic child's love of spinning... spinning made the parts become part of the whole... made the parts no longer easily distinguishable from the whole. It was important to note that "a part" could be as small as a "spec" on an object - it needed only be "something" the child did not perceive as belonging there... as a "natural part" to the whole. The inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts, was completely in line with what was observed in spinning. Until the child understood "the parts" - in anything in life - and how they "made up the whole", “parts” would continue to be a source of frustration for the autistic child and would continue to make him seek coping mechanisms, such as spinning, to help him deal with the frustration that resulted from those things, those "parts" in his world he could not make sense of.

This also explained why eye contact was not always necessary. Motion, I believed, played a role in spinning (see section on Motion), but "just knowing" that the part was becoming a part of the whole as an object spinned was surely comforting to the autistic child... putting his world "back in order"... providing that "order fix" he so desperately needed to cope. When Zachary could not physically find something to spin, he simply pretended to be spinning something with his finger "in the air" or on my cheek... that alone provided great comfort for him.

This issue of the partial and the whole also explained why the autistic child was so fascinated with ceiling fans. If the fan was not moving, the child showed very little interest in it or begged to have it turned on. Most ceiling fans had 4 to 5 blades. As these began to spin, the blades "disappeared" and became part of a whole entity... no longer easily distinguishable from "the whole".

This also explained why even "odd" objects were spinned by the autistic child, such as irregular puzzle pieces. It did not matter what shape the object was... once it started spinning, the parts became part of the whole, resembling a circle even though the original shape could be rather "odd". Even with "odd shapes", the illusion of a complete circle was formed by the spinning of the object. In addition, there was a blurring of any design on a puzzle piece so that it became fully integrated into the whole again, eliminating any "parts" that could not be understood or properly processed by the child... and that was why the autistic child loved to spin.

I could think of nothing else in the autistic child's environment that could provide this necessary coping mechanism to cope with issues of partiality. Spinning, an activity so characteristic of the autistic child, was truly explained by my theory that the autistic child could not properly process the parts to a whole and that it was the inability to understand the "whole" without first understanding the "parts" that resulted in tremendous frustration for these children.

Spinning provided what no other activity could do... it made the "parts" become indistinguishable from the "whole" and as such, spinning was but a coping mechanism - the perfect "order fix" for the autistic child - his perfect way to cope with partiality - to make the partial whole again! :o)

I also believed there were issues of motion involved in the autistic child’s love of spinning. For more on that, see the section on motion.

Self-Spinning

Another area I came to understand a little more had to do with "self spinning"... something I still see in Zachary to this day. Zachary often looked up to the ceiling or down at the floor and he "spun himself". Was this his way of attempting to figure out how he himself fit into the "whole"... the environment? After all, persons were, like cars, moving "parts" to the world and perhaps Zachary simply could not understand how he, personally, fit into that whole... the environment, much in the way, I believed he did not understand how cars, these "other moving objects", did not fit into the whole! Self-spinning was simply Zachary's way of attempting to "decode" how he, himself, fit into his world!

Other "Odd Behaviors"… In General

There are countless odd behaviors in autistic children that parents just cannot seem to explain.

The key to these "odd behaviors" as in spinning, was again in the autistic child's need for order and/or completeness and his need to understand the parts before the whole could make any sense. As with all behavior in my son, I found things got very easy to understand and control once I simply "knew the issue". In Zachary, I easily identified over 60 "odd behaviors" I could now explain based on issues with the proper processing or integration of the "parts to the whole".

I noticed how this one function helped explain not only the odd behaviors themselves, but what was going on "within the odd behavior". For example, the whole issue of "the interrupted task" and the constant need to "start all over" was now explained also.

There were literally dozens of behaviors in my son, Zachary, that were explained by my theory that the autistic child was unable to properly integrate "parts" or "in betweens" into the whole. Below, I provided close to 60 examples of such behaviors for all readers...but, again, there were many, many more such examples (these were just the very obvious ones). This realization - in terms of the inability to properly process partiality - I came to only a short time ago. Although Zachary still had some issues with certain behaviors, I hoped that as I spent more time with him, working on specific problem areas, teaching him coping mechanisms and providing those all so valuable labels, that the majority, if not all these behaviors would soon become non-issues for him. The simple fact that the autistic child devised his own coping mechanisms over time, allowed me to take the positive in these coping mechanisms and use them to my advantage. As I labeled "more things", more "parts" to the world, Zachary's frustration levels continued to decrease. My theory of partiality processing also explained why for some children the extent or "degree" to which many of these odd behaviors were a problem varied so greatly. Each parent, unknowingly, had provided for his child coping mechanisms by the simple use of labels at various times... and in various situations - thus explaining the variation we saw in these children.

In addition to labeling things, teaching Zachary the concept of fractions greatly helped with many of these issues. After labeling, fractions were perhaps the parent's greatest tool in helping an autistic child deal with issues of partiality since fractions helped the autistic child understand that "parts" make up a whole and that once labeled, even "parts" became entities in and of themselves. For Zachary, understanding this concept provided a huge coping mechanism for a world that so often did not seem to make sense.

Zachary’s odd behaviors, as outlined below, I noticed tended to show up more when Zachary was idle. This issue was addressed in my section entitled: When Rest Is Work Too!

Zachary’s Odd Behaviors Explained By Issues In Partiality Processing

Putting clean and dirty dishes together in the dishwasher or sink - to Zachary, they **all** belonged together... dishes were dishes. Zachary could not understand "the difference" between the two unless the "parts" (clean verses dirty dishes) were first explained. To Zachary, all these "things" (dishes) belonged together and there was no need to separate them. Indeed, to separate them led to the creation of "parts" that made no sense when separated from the whole. Labeling dishes as clean or dirty and actually showing Zachary the difference between the two made all the difference because now, two separate "entities" or "parts" existed... clean dishes... and, dirty dishes. Clean and dirty dishes were no longer an issue for Zachary. An "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Putting my basket of clean clothes in with the basket of dirty clothes... if a basket was not around and there were dirty clothes in the washing machine, Zachary would take clean clothes, even taking them out of dresser drawers and put those in the washing machine too. Again, to Zachary, clothes were clothes... and they all belonged together. Again, I found the key was simply in labeling and showing him the difference between "dirty clothes" and "clean clothes". In order to do this, I showed Zachary stains on dirty clothes and actually made him smell dirty clothes and clean clothes to help solidify the concept that they truly were "different". To stop Zachary from putting all the dishes together, clean and dirty, or all the clothes together, clean and dirty, all I had to do was label "these as dirty" and "those as clean" ... I showed him the difference in the laundry by making him smell "stinky" clothes verses clean clothes as I said: "these are clean clothes" or "these are dirty clothes". When he wanted to put in one big pile all the clean laundry I had folded, all I had to do was label the piles: "a pile of towels, a pile of socks, a pile of dishtowels" and so on. Once Zachary had a label, he could see each pile as its own separate entity as opposed to being part of "all the clothes" and he no longer had to put them all together. Clean and dirty laundry was no longer an issue for Zachary. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Taking bandages off his skin, or scratching off scabs on his skin... to Zachary, the bandages and scabs were not "part of" the skin and as such, they did not belong there since they were not "part" of the original "whole" (the skin). Again, the key here was simply to show

Zachary that these things were entities in and of themselves and to explain their purpose. Zachary still had some very minor issues with "things that did not belong on the skin", but he was much better than before. I found he could better tolerate a bandage on his skin in particular places. Bandages on the face, for example, were less tolerated than bandages on the leg. I believed there were "sensory issues" at play with the sense of touch... although these issues had greatly improved since Zachary had been on digestive enzymes (see section on First Steps For Parents!). Given the progress Zachary had made in the last 6 months with overall sensory issues as they related to touch, I expected this issue to be completely gone in the near future. Another two "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Peeling labels off cans, peeling stickers off everything. Again, these were not part of the "whole"... they did not belong and as such had to be removed. Labeling these things as "labels" and "stickers" almost completely did away with this issue. Zachary no longer removed labels from cans. He did remove stickers once in a while... especially when he was bored, but then, so did normal children. :o) It used to be that **all** stickers were removed. That was no longer the case. Many behaviors in the autistic, such as the removal of stickers, were also behaviors in normal children... the difference was really one of "degrees" or "how much" of a particular behavior was done. Another few "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Putting all his toys in a stack, or aligning them perfectly. In the past, this was always an "all or none" activity... no toy could be left "apart" from the stack (the whole) and all had to be perfectly aligned. Zachary was literally trying to similar objects together – to “connect” the parts. For example, he aligned all his pencils… or tried to stack them… he stacked puzzle pieces, flashcards, etc., to figure out “how the parts to the whole fit together”. For items in the house, this was now barely an issue… especially for those items that Zachary now understood in terms of their “purpose” (like the fact that pencils were used to write). As with other behaviors, the aligning and stacking of objects tended to surface more if Zachary was "idle". The perfectness once required and the intensity with which Zachary once performed these activities had also both been greatly reduced. More "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Putting all toys in the sandbox... or throwing them all out. One or two toys could never be set apart from the rest. Things on the lawn, such as sprinklers, the dog dish, etc., were also perceived as things that were not "part of the whole" and hence, had to be removed and "thrown away". Another few "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Filling the bucket in the sandbox... it had to be completely filled and dumped... the sand was either in or out... the bucket was either full or empty... there could never be an " in between" in terms of the fullness of the bucket. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Turning all lights either on or off ... Zachary could not have some off and some on at the same time. This, too, was much less of an issue for him compared to what it once had been. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Opening or closing all doors... again, he could not have some open and some closed at the same time. Also, if a door was opened, it had to be opened all the way... no "partially" opened doors were allowed. Another two "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Car windows had to be all up or all down... a partially opened window, either in the house or in the car sent Zachary screaming from the top of his lungs. I had now come to realize that although "biting" seemed to increase with the intake of phenolic foods (i.e., apples, bananas, tomatoes, raisins/grapes, etc.), "biting" in the autistic child was also very much a coping mechanism. This coping mechanism of biting I clearly saw in Zachary. When frustrated by my partially open living room or bedroom windows - things he could not "spin" - he simply resorted to biting to deal with the frustration of the situation. The result of this "biting" in an attempt to deal with the frustration of a partially opened window was evident in pictures provided in my section on "Biting". A few more "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Putting snow chunks back onto the snow bank after the plow had passed... all chunks (parts) belonged with the whole... the snow bank. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Separating flowers from their stems... to Zachary, stems belonged together, and flowers belonged together... there could be no "mixing" of the two. When Zachary picked flowers (dandelions), he immediately proceeded to ripping off the tops and throwing both parts away. It took a very long time for me to show him the concept of a "bouquet" and to actually have him be able to take flowers home in a bunch. Yet, even once home, in no time, I found Zachary separating the flower from the stem and making a "pile of flower tops" and a "pile of stems". The "flower" (flower + stem) was not perceived as a whole until labeled as such. To call a plant: "a flower" was confusing to Zachary. He thought only that "top part" was the flower and did not see the stem as a part of the whole until I literally pointed out that "a flower" was "the flower + the stem". Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Wanting to pick **all** the dandelions while on a walk... again, he felt they "all belonged" together. This made for very slow, and very short walks in terms of distance, yet very long walks in terms of duration. Much as was the case with "snow chunks", it could take close to an hour to make it but a few feet from our driveway. Luckily, I finally stumbled upon the concepts of "too many" and "take some" to explain to Zachary that there were "too many flowers to pick" or "too many snow chunks to put back on the snow bank". Once labeled as "too many" and encouraged to take "some", this was no longer an issue for Zachary. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

All clothes had to be either on or off... again, no "in betweens". Zachary experienced great frustration if only partially dressed. This was true for many autistic children and why so many of them hated to wear clothing - especially, when very young and clothing had perhaps not been "defined" because clothing was not part of the whole... not part of the skin. I suspected some children had other “truly sensory” issues at play in terms of touch, but again, issues with partiality certainly explained many issues once believed to be “sensory” also.

Instead of simply "putting clothes on" Zachary, I came to label each piece as I put it on. At this point, Zachary had more issues with not having pants on... that was his big one right now. I have never really had problems with putting clothes on Zachary... I stumbled upon labeling them early on in life. Now, my problem was more that he did not like having his clothes off – especially his pants. Perhaps he had noticed that everyone wore clothes. I had also provided for him the “purpose” of clothes in telling him that he had to put them on not to be cold when he went outside. But, some aspects of this issue, I was still working on with Zachary. I knew that I could put shorts on him instead of pants... and that was ok... but he would not want to be without something on his lower extremities. He could more easily go without a shirt, however! I had some very specific thoughts on this issue with clothing when it came to Zachary’s preferences (see section on Potty Training for more on this issue).

This was still a small issue I needed to work on... not a "biggy" in my book that I was overly concerned with. I learned a long time ago not to "sweat the small stuff"... and wanting to leave your clothes on was "small stuff" in my book! Zachary was perfectly fine with tearing them all off at bath time! :o) But, again, at least in part, this too was an issue with "partials" and "completeness in everything"... for Zachary, for a long time, all clothes were either on **or** off... no "partial dressing" was allowed. Socks had to be both on or off. There could never be one off and one on. The same was true for shoes. To leave Zachary "partially dressed" like this created a sense of frustration for him. Yet, this was not something that would be particularly troubling to a normal child. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Constant running back and forth down a hallway. Zachary always had to run all the way down the hall and all the way back... never would he stop in the "middle" (unless forced to do so by a person standing in the way... but even then, he would practically tear you down to get by and complete the motion of physically getting to the other end). It was this type of behavior so many saw as "lack of discipline" or "lack of manners" in these children. I, however, now saw these behaviors as simply a part of the overall problem... the inability to cope with partiality in anything. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Turning all the pages in a book very quickly until the end was reached... never stopping to read or look at the information on a particular page. A book had to be "closed" to be perceived as an entity. Pages were parts to a whole that were not understood and as such, Zachary attempted to physically ignore them by either disregarding the information on the pages and flipping through them as quickly as he possibly physically could do so, and by actually running away if I attempted to force him to look at a particular page. He did the same thing with computer programs that were set up "as books" with arrows for "turning the pages". Zachary would incessantly "click on the turn page arrow" until the end of the "book" on the program was reached. He also did this for "non book" type arrows on computer programs that "moved the user along" through to the end of a task or program. Needless to say, this made teaching and learning a very, very difficult task. Labeling, again, provided a huge coping mechanism in that a book could now be seen as something with a "book cover" or "front", something that also had "a back" and something that had "pages" in the middle. Furthermore, pages were labeled as something "to read" or "look at". A few more "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Constantly wanting to scroll "all the way up" or "all the way down" while on the computer... again, no "in between" or pausing "halfway" was allowed. Another "odd behavior" explained by issues with the proper processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Constantly removing the toilet paper from the holder... they did not belong "together" as a whole. Nor did the toilet paper actually belong on the roll itself. Neither did paper towels, foil wrap, etc., belong on their roll... and therefore, they too, had to be "unrolled" at the first opportunity. To Zachary, the roll and “that stuff on it” did not belong together, and as such, they had to be separated. Another few "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Screaming from the top of his lungs if a song was interrupted or the radio was turned off "in the middle" of something. Songs on the radio had to be "completed"... they could not be left "partially done". What helped here was simply to tell Zachary "music off" or "radio off" to help him anticipate the fact that what he was hearing was about to end abruptly. The inability to process partiality also explained why autistic children seemed to absolutely love songs. In my opinion, there was more at play here than the simple "beauty" of a song. A song had a beginning and an end that could be perceived by the child as the words and/or music ended. As such, I believed this was the reason songs and/or music seemed to work so well in teaching some autistic children and why for the autistic, music may be even more relaxing than it was to a normal child. Music, in an of itself provided a coping mechanism... something that provided completeness as it flowed from beginning to end! Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Screaming if videos were turned off prior to full completion... especially if turned off during the captions or credits at the end of the movie (for more on "captions", see my section on

Language). Again, the movie or the captions had to be "all done" before you could turn them off... you could not stop the video "in the middle", prior to its full completion! Rewinding the video with the pictures "going backwards" on the screen was extremely stressful for Zachary - resulting in screaming from the top of his lungs as he attempted to deal with the frustration this created in his world. To Zachary, normal "order" was "forward"... he knew nothing else... until the word "rewinding" came into his life. That word helped him to understand that this "going backwards" was actually called something... and that something, by the simple act of tagging a label to it, now became an entity in and of itself. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Spilling/tipping over of cups or containers only partially filled... yet, showing no interest whatsoever in cups and/or containers that were either completely full, or completely empty. Cups and containers had to be "all full" or "all empty"... no "in between" or "partial" was allowed. If I left a cup of coffee partially drank on my desk, Zachary, immediately upon perceiving this "offending object", in an almost "automatic manner", as soon as he saw the "partiality", flipped the cup quickly over, spilling the remainder of its contents. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Fascination with trains/puzzles. This, too, was easily explained by issues with the proper processing of partiality. Putting pieces together - puzzle pieces or train pieces - created a whole... and did away with the partial. Trains were especially fascinating since the train provided for the creation of a whole by putting the parts (train cars) together... and gave the added benefit of wheels in motion ... the spinning... something that also made the partial whole. Leaving one piece of the puzzle or train "out", however, sent Zachary screaming. More "odd behaviors" (odd, here, primarily due to the extreme fascination and to the degree to which these activities were engaged in) very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Love of putting things together... of any "mechanical" type object... and the almost insatiable desire to try to figure out "how mechanical things worked". Prior to Zachary's diagnosis, I used to joke with my husband that, surely, Zachary would someday be a mechanical engineer. He was always looking at "how things worked"... looking at the mechanics of most physical objects... pulleys, levers, gears, etc. - all these things fascinated him. Little did I realize that the fascination was with seeing how the parts formed “the whole”. With physical objects, "seeing how things worked" - physically - helped Zachary make sense of his world. And, this was true of the great majority of autistic children. Their fascination with the specific details of physical objects is one readily explained by their need to understand the parts to fully understand the whole.

It was when "the physical" was not as readily available in terms of how parts fit into the whole that frustration set in and life fell apart. This was especially true for abstract concepts such as conversation, socialization, process completion, etc. (see section on Teaching Language, Socialization and Teaching A Process). But, when parts could physically and especially, visually, be put together, things made more sense for the autistic child. This also explained why the autistic child attempted to always use "all parts or all pieces" before him... he was constantly trying to put the parts into a whole that made sense.

In anything where the parts could be put together to form a whole... there was enthusiasm and delight... in everything else, there was frustration and confusion. **As the autistic child developed more coping mechanisms over time, as more labels and words defining quantities were understood, fewer pieces were necessary to understand the whole and cope with partiality in everyday life (see sections on Fractions, Words Defining Quantity and Words To Cope)**. More "odd behaviors" (odd, here, primarily due to the extreme fascination and to the degree to which these activities were engaged in) very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Walking the white line on the side of the street when we went for walks - unwilling to walk "off the line"... the line provided a whole - as well as an order to direction. This behavior, I now refer to as "walking the line". For more on this, see section on Safety. This was a huge issue for parents of the autistic. Another "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Fearing certain sounds and the putting of hands on ears when **unexpected** sounds were introduced. Again, sounds were "parts" to the "whole"... and when a "new part", such as a loud, unexpected sound was introduced, Zachary would put his hands over his ears immediately. As soon as I labeled the "new part" (i.e., it's a broken muffler, it's a P.A. system, etc.), Zachary was better able to cope with the sound... both at the time he actually heard it and also in the future, when he heard it again, unexpectedly. In the future, whenever he heard a loud truck or car, he - himself - would simply say: "broken muffler"... and he no longer had to put his hands on his ears. He now understood the sound and it no longer provided a "new part" to the information he needed to process in his environment... the label had made it such that the once "unknown" and "unexpected" sound had been incorporated into the whole... everyday sounds of life.

I wanted to emphasize that I did think there were definitely other issues going on with auditory processing - issues that were “truly sensory” in nature (i.e., physical damage to the ear or the auditory nerve). I did believe that certain sound frequencies may actually cause pain to the autistic. The reason I say this was due to the fact that since on enzymes, Zachary, overall, was doing much, much better in the area of auditory issues. There was once a time where he would actually cry when he heard high frequencies... showing actual physical pain in his facial expressions. This was something I now saw only very rarely. Zachary was much less sensitive to noises overall and was now fine with removing his earmuffs in most stores. More "odd behavior" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything. For more on this, see section on Auditory Issues.

Note: In my opinion, buying earmuffs for Zachary was one of the best things we did for him as we continued to work on auditory issues. This $10.00 investment made life much better for him by filtering out noises that were too offensive or unexpected.

Making a mess "as I was cleaning up". This was a particularly troubling and exhausting behavior for a very long time. For example, if I was picking up cards off the floor and placing them on the table - as I did that - and returned to pick more up, Zachary would throw the cards already on the table back onto the floor. To him, they could not be "separated"... they had to all be on the floor or all on the table at one time. This was true for countless objects. If "partials" existed anywhere, he quickly "resolved" the partiality by "putting things back together... in his own way"... even if that meant undoing everything I had just done. If objects were perceived as "parts" that did not belong together (see Fraction and Exercises I Do At Home sections), as quickly as he possibly could, Zachary physically scattered the "parts", putting as much physical distance among the objects as possible so that he could no longer physically/visually perceive these items as parts to a whole. More "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Taking the pillow covers off the pillows, and at times, sheets and blankets off the bed. Pillow covers, sheets and blankets were not "parts to the whole", the mattress... they did not belong there. More "odd behaviors" very much explained by issues with the processing of "partiality" and the need for completeness in everything.

Pushing on body parts to make them "even" or "in the same position". For example, Zachary would get very upset if, as I sat on the couch, I had one leg crossed over the other. He would come up to me and try to put them both in the same position. The same would be true if I was on a bed, on my back, with one leg straight on the bed and the other positioned so that my knee was bent and my foot lay flat on the bed. Again, Zachary would "push down" on the knee that was raised until his weight forced my leg to go down flatly onto the bed... just like the other leg. The same was also true for arms. Labeling positions (i.e., I have one "bent leg") was the best way to help with this issue.

A behavior I once observed in my autistic nephew, Andrew, while in my home could also be explained by issues with partiality. Andrew had an **extreme** concern over the fact that he had a loose tooth... a part of the whole was about to be removed and as such, he became very distressed by it... to the point that this "loose tooth" was almost all he could think about for an entire day... it became the object of his complete focus – **obsessively so**!

Zachary, himself, however, had countless other behaviors that could now be explained by this inability to properly integrate the parts to the whole. Taking all the utensils out of the utensil tray in the kitchen. Again, these things were not "part" of the tray... they were not part of the whole. Zachary could not see "how they fit together" and as such, they had to be physically separated. The same was true as he took clothes out of dressers, clothes off hangers, pots and pans out of cupboards, soap out of soap dishes, pulled apart lamps, pulled apart countless leaves to separate the "veins" from the rest or "green part" of each leaf, pulled bark from trees, pushed countless rocks off pavement, tried to scratch off paint markings and "cracks" on the road, pulled ropes apart into individual threads, pulled wires apart (the enclosure or casing from its contents), pulled upholstery materials from inside couches, quilts, chairs - anything, tried to pull buttons off shirts, pulled a new small hole off his pants by picking at it so much that his fingers went through the hole and allowed him to then rip the pants, literally, completely apart, pulled individual threads in clothing apart, pulled carpet threads apart, emptied the trash from the trash can, tried to pull hairs - one at a time - from one's head, pulled growing plants from the garden, ruined countless videos and audio tapes as he pulled the tape from its enclosure, pulled countless CD cases apart, scratched and destroyed countless CDs on the floor or by biting them in an attempt to do away with the writing/labeling on the CD, ripped countless papers because text could not be perceived as part of the whole - the sheet of paper, emptied anything partially full - again, a huge issue in terms of possible danger for a child in terms of any toxic materials in any container and in terms of medicine. I have no doubt that if a medicine container was opened, the autistic child would not stop at one pill... the entire bottle would have to be eaten... the improper functioning of partiality in the autistic child's brain would certainly ensure that - and Zachary had, amazingly, figured out how to open child-proof containers at a very young age. Hence, I placed all medicine in a locked toolbox and hid the key.

This theory also explained why autistic children apparently had no fear of danger. Cars on the street were not properly perceived... they were not considered parts to the whole (the street) and if not properly perceived, and recognized as entities in and of themselves, and identified or labeled as objects of "danger", then the autistic child had no fear of them. Cars had to be identified as part of the whole. The child had to be made to understand that "streets were for cars - not people", "that streets and cars went together", that "cars were very dangerous" and that "you do not go in front of or in back of cars", that "you stay away from cars". Safety issues such as these, I believed had to be repeated, in multiple ways, in multiple situations to make the child understand all aspects of safety as it related to the situation (see sections on Safety and Motion also for more on this critical issue).

When it came to the autistic child, I feared issues of safety were very situation specific. Again, this was a very serious issue for parents and society as a whole. How can one possibly teach a young child "issues of safety" when that child cannot first understand the "parts" that make up the "whole"... in this case, the dangerous situation? As with everything for the autistic child this was something that primarily would come to be understood over time, as the child learned more and more about his environment, as he was provided with more coping mechanisms (i.e., labels) to more fully understand that environment. For the very young autistic child, this indeed was truly an issue of life and death.

This inability to understand the parts to the whole when combined with a dangerous situation indeed made for a deadly combination! This explained why Zachary once ran out right in front of an oncoming car in our front yard while we were raking leaves. He was playing quietly... and before I knew it, he was off and running down a small hill, into the street and straight into the path of an oncoming car. Luckily the car saw him and was able to stop in time. Yet, Zachary had not perceived the car as a part to the whole!

This also explained why recently, while on my in-laws farm, as his father and I worked, Zachary headed straight for a bull pen... he started walking down the "shoot" and had that door been opened to the bull pen or the latch opened, without a question, he would have gone in - the "shoot" leading to the pen was part of the whole (the pen), the bull inside the pen, however, was not... and as such, Zachary did not perceive it as a part to the whole... a very dangerous part... and as such, the "danger" was not perceived. The bull itself would have had to be labeled as "a bull" and then the label of "bulls are dangerous - stay away" would need to follow. For more on this issue, please read my sections on Safety and Motion - a must read for all parents of the autistic! The inability to perceive danger - another issue explained, yet again, by the inability of the autistic child to properly process the parts to a whole!

Screaming when changes in direction were perceived. To Zachary, normal order was "forward"... only that made sense...he knew nothing else. People and cars went forward... that was "normal" in life, and anything else created immense frustration. We often traveled at night due to Zachary's autism. But, on one occasion, we had decided to leave in the morning, after Zachary was awake. Zachary was about 2 at the time and we lived in the suburbs of Chicago. When we took an on-ramp to get onto the highway leading north to Milwaukee and Canada, Zachary noticed the change in direction and it upset him tremendously. He screamed and cried almost nonstop for 7 hours. No matter what we did, nothing could console him. We were 5 hours from home and the rest of the family could no longer bear the crying and screaming. Zachary was nonverbal at this time... his vocabulary consisting of perhaps 4 words. We decided to turn back... we just could not tolerate the very likely probability of an absolutely horrible vacation. As soon as we "turned back" and Zachary perceived we had turned around, he instantly stopped screaming. At the time, we were so thankful for the quietness that we failed to see what had caused it. We kept expecting the screams and crying to start over at any time. We were exhausted and anxious to get home. There would not be a peep from Zachary all the way home - for the next 7 hours. Zachary had no idea we were "heading back home"... we had simply agreed to "turn around". All Zachary could have perceived was the "direction change". I would later come to realize what a huge issue changes in direction truly were for Zachary... so much so that it very nearly cost him his life! I encouraged all parents to learn more about this very important issue by reading my section on Safety.

Zachary truly had serious issues with direction changes - until directions were labeled as "left", "right", "backwards" or "sideways"... in everything... from car rides , to walks, to rewinding of videos ("going backwards"). Yet, once labeled, and identified as an "entity in and of itself", these other directions were now "ok". This issue was a little harder to understand in terms of "partials", but if you think about it, the concept of "direction" was an entity in and of itself. "Normal direction" was going forward and as such, any change in direction would be perceived as breaking from the whole... from what was previously known as an "ordered" way to go... going forward only "made sense" and was "orderly"... this was the only "part" to direction Zachary seemed to understand... it was "normal" direction. All these other directions (left, right, sideways, backwards) brought an unknown dimension or "part" to the process of direction, and as such, they were not tolerated.

Although a little more "abstract" in nature, the issue of problems with changes in direction, also can be explained based on the inability to process partiality... the parts to the whole... in this case, direction.

As far as "rocking" was concerned, this was a behavior I **never** saw in Zachary although I knew it was one found in many autistic children. Having never been able to actually "observe" a rocking situation... to see what happened just before the behavior started, etc., I can only guess that perhaps this was simply another coping mechanism for the child... another way to deal with the stress of his daily life. Again, this was simply a guess on my part, but, I suspect, perhaps a good one. Even normal children find comfort and security in "rocking". :o)

Many of the above behaviors become “obsessive” for the autistic child. Obsessive compulsive behaviors, to some degree could be explained, again, based on the autistic child’s inability to properly cope with partiality… to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up the whole.

I had once heard a young man speak of his life with obsessive-compulsive disorder. This young man was approximately 17 and had no other "label"... he had not been labeled as autistic. As he talked he explained how he felt he could "catch germs everywhere" and that as such, he constantly had to wash his hands. If you think about it, much in the way that a bandage was quickly removed by the autistic child who had not had a bandage labeled, a child who had not learned to cope with something (the bandages) that was not part of the whole (the skin), so too would a person suffering from obsessive compulsive behavior attempt to "remove" something (germs) that were not part of the whole (the skin or person). It was my belief, that in the autistic, repetitive, obsessive-compulsive behaviors could often times be explained by the need to make something whole and to “do away” with the parts that were perceived as “not belonging”.

The one behavior still very troubling to me was that of Zachary's pushing of his forehead along the floor. I can only suspect that Zachary may have been experiencing physical pain as he did this, perhaps suffering from an intense headache. I, personally, did not believe the issue of headaches in the autistic had been given enough serious attention, although some studies did seem to suggest that headaches, such as migraines, could result from neurological stress. If this were true, this could explain this particularly troublesome "odd behavior". I believed this could be what was at play when it did occur so often... when Zachary was first diagnosed with autism. There was a chance that the issue with "forehead pushing along the carpet" could be sensory in nature, perhaps having something to do with auditory processing and the angle of the ear, but my instincts told me that pain, specifically in the form of a headache could better explain this “odd behavior”. This behavior had basically disappeared in Zachary, surfacing only very rarely. For parents who did see this behavior in their children, I encouraged you to try to determine if your child had a headache... although I knew this would indeed be difficult to do - especially when the child was nonverbal.

In closing this section on "Odd Behaviors Explained", suffice it to say that I could easily list over 100 "odd behaviors" that I can now fully explain based solely on the inability of the autistic child to properly process partiality, but time necessitated I move on to "other subjects". :o) I hoped that what I had listed here, however, would be enough to show parents that partiality was truly an issue for every autistic child, and in my opinion, was at the heart of 99% of their behavioral, social, communication, and emotional issues as well as at the heart of many sensory issues, too.

Autistic children had quite an array of "odd behaviors" and indeed, if parents started to think of "odd behaviors" in their own autistic children, I was sure those "odd behaviors" they saw also would have deep roots in the inability to properly process partiality.

The key to extinguishing these "odd behaviors" was in helping the autistic child understand how the parts made up the whole and in defining the “purpose” behind everything... and the best way to do that was through the use of labels, explanations, the concept of fractions, words of quantity, words to cope, etc. I found the best way to deal with all these issues mentioned above was simply to make use of labels. Labeling and explaining everything provided a "whole entity" for the partial... making each part a whole in and of itself. Labeling and other coping mechanisms were further addressed in other sections.

The Interrupted Task… Transition Issues and Overall Lack of "Flexibility"

Many parents had observed that their children were very focused in particular tasks but could care less about others. In addition, moving from one task to the other appeared to be particularly difficult with the autistic child.

There was something else I noticed in Zachary as I came to understand him more and more. It was the fact that if a task or activity was interrupted, no matter how far along in the task or activity at the time of the interruption, Zachary seemed to always have to "start all over". He could never simply "pick up" where he had left off.

This again, was easily explained by my theory of the autistic child's inability to deal with "partiality" and the autistic child's inability to allow for the "in between" situation... with issues of the "part" verses the "whole".

Autistic children had an overwhelming focus on tasks that provided for them control and predictability and avoided those tasks that did not provide that all necessary "order fix" or tasks that just were too difficult to understand in terms of how the "parts" made up the "whole". My section on the importance of LABELING everything shows how labeling can greatly help with transition and attention issues.

To the autistic child, there was no such thing as a "started task" that needed to be completed. Once a task was interrupted, it had to be started all over again... until the child learned to deal with "partialities" as they related to specific tasks and was shown it was ok and doable to "continue on" from where he had left off.

I found in working with Zachary, shifting tasks became easier the more I understood the true underlying issues and that in actuality, allowing for a shift in task was more a matter of using the right words and cues and teaching "words to cope" such as "all done" to move from one task to another. As a parent, I learned to use those things I knew worked to my advantage... things like labeling everything, hand over hand techniques, verbal prompts, etc.

For the autistic child, the less downtime - the better. Downtime allowed the autistic child to revert to non-productive, stimulatory type activities that taught nothing new. For the autistic child, rest was indeed work, and if not done properly, downtime could simply allow the child to slip further and further into his own world. For more on this read my section on: Rest And The Autistic Child - When Rest Is Work Too!©.

Downtime needed to be used for ordering activities that provided a lesson (i.e., spelling, math, reading, etc.). Even a video story could provide a sequencing lesson via its storyline. :o) The key was to show the child the lesson in everything...to make even leisure time productive. For example, when watching "The Ugly Duckling", I could bring attention to the fact that a duck laid an egg... then, the duck sat on the egg... after that, it hatched and finally, the duckling went for a swim with its mom.

I found Zachary had more issues with sequencing at a younger age… now he was slowly enjoying more in terms of actual storylines. And, stories also helped with issues of transition… showing how one thing was followed by another, etc. Thus, reading to your child, obviously, was a very powerful tool in helping to address issues with transition also.

As a parent, I had learned when I had to be there to help Zachary and when he could work by himself - and that had been key to keeping both of us sane.

Word selection was also very important in helping with transition issues. For example, I would not say: "Let's go practice writing". It was better to say, "All done... let's write Zachary" or something else that was very specific. This allowed Zachary to complete the initial task as well as visualize the upcoming task. This simple, yet very specific phrase provided the closure of the first task, and the labeling, order and predictability Zachary needed to transition smoothly to the next. :o)

I believed the key to helping the autistic child overcome these issues was to make use of fractions... to show the child that the task was "1/2 done", for example, and to show him to "start again" at the "other half" or where he "left off". The understanding and use of fractions was one of the best tools a parent had in helping his child to overcome issues of partiality. Where the task involved multiple steps, labeling each step as "step 1, step 2, etc." also helped. That way, if a task was interrupted, the concept of "continuing on" from a "specific step" could be more easily grasped. :o)

The fact that the autistic child was unable to distinguish the "parts to a task", by definition, meant that the child was also unable to determine the "beginning" and the "end" of a task. This was the reason we saw so many issues with what was so often referred to as "transitions" or the moving from one task to another in the autistic child.

This, combined with the fact that "all new parts" for the "new task" must be defined before the "whole task" could be understood, and the fact that the child also had issues with direction changes, as explained in my section on "Odd Behaviors" made that transitions, were indeed quite difficult for the autistic child.

The inability to properly process the parts to the whole, when examined in terms of the "interrupted task", issues with "transitions" and "direction changes" thus made teaching the autistic child quite a challenge - especially when combined with issues with touch, auditory issues, the breaking of eye contact, hyperactivity, process completion/sequencing issues, communication, socialization, behavioral issues , the inability to “rest” and coping mechanism engaged in by the autistic child and so many other factors related to motor skills, dietary issues, and immune system issues that were simply part of daily life for the autistic child. These issues were further discussed in other sections. Without addressing all these variables, teaching the autistic child would continue to be a source of frustration not only for the child, but for the teacher/parent as well. For optimal learning to occur, all these issues had to be addressed... a difficult task indeed!

Hyperactivity And The Apparent Inability To Sit Long Enough To Learn Anything…

The physical removing of oneself from an "offending situation", a stressful situation where the "parts to the whole" were not understood was but another coping mechanism used by the autistic child.

This explained why pretty well all autistic children always seemed to be "running off" as parents chased after them in the hopes of teaching them or having them complete a task. I found Zachary not only "ran away", but when he removed himself physically from a stressful situation, he usually moved right to an activity that helped him in terms of providing an "order fix", a way in which he tried to bring order back to his world when it simply made no sense at all. "Order fixes" could take on many forms.

For example, Zachary often climbed on the couch from one end, walked across to the other end and then got off... or continued onto the next piece of furniture... moving from one end of it to the other. He would do the same thing as he climbed onto the kitchen table... he would go from one end to the other before he got off. Never would he "get off in the middle" of the piece of furniture – until he understood "middle" or "sides". He had to "complete the task", much like he would "walk the line" on a street... he had to "follow" the furniture from one end to the other. If I was lying on the floor, Zachary tried to "walk the line" over my body, by starting at my feet, trying to physically walk over me, from my feet to past my head. When he first began to do this particular activity, I did not understand it... and of course, I always tried to "push him off" by the time he got to my neck, but, soon, I came to realize what he was doing... he was using me, too, as a way to physically get an "order fix"... he was again, "walking the line"... only in this case, the line was my body... from feet to head... and he kept starting over, going back to my feet if I pushed him off before he completed the task and actually made it past my neck and head!

For more on the issue of physical removal from offending situations, see the "Exercises I Do At Home"... exercises that so clearly showed me this issue with hyperactivity and physical removal... exercises with plastic eggs!

Hyperactivity was indeed another trait so characteristic of the autistic child. I do not doubt there are indeed some hyper children out there (i.e., children who may eat too much sugar, not have enough magnesium, etc.). However, I think that what we had for so long seen as "hyperactivity" was not "hyperactivity" but rather simply another coping mechanism in the autistic child... that of constantly, physically removing oneself or running away from sources of frustration. This explained why so many children were still "hyper" in spite of being given medications, magnesium, epsom salt baths/creams, and other supplements known to help with "hyperactivity". It was because this was not an issue of "hyperactivity" but rather one of a coping mechanism within the autistic child.

Thus, again the key to truly decreasing hyperactivity rested in removing areas of frustration in the child's life/environment by helping him to understand those things that, to him, just did not make sense. This theory explained the constant running away we saw in these children, the constant jumping, and the apparent inability to be able to sit down long enough to learn anything. If the child did not understand the parts to the whole for the teaching materials placed before him, there was no doubt in my mind that he would continue to "run away" in order to cope with the frustration resulting from what was being put before him.

The final thing I want to mention as it relates to "hyperactivity" was that, at times, it could truly be a physical issue for many reasons. These included lack of magnesium as well as issues with parasites (i.e., worms). The fact that autistic children engaged in numerous odd behaviors, such as licking, eating of sand, etc. made them very prone to parasite infections (see my first book where I explained how Zachary once ate an entire handful of sand, as I watched – in total shock and disbelief!). The fact that hookworms were often found in the brain of schizophrenics, considered by many to be the “adult form” of autism, made me all the more concerned about this potential link between “odd behaviors” of the autistic and parasitic infections. Parasites were a serious issue for all family members and I encouraged all parents to become informed in this area as well, for this too can make a significant difference in one's behavior. The cautionary word for parents here was that the medical community did not give this issue the attention it deserved. Most tests for parasites tested for only a very few types… and often, by the time the stool samples made it to a lab, the presence of parasites was “negative” because the eggs, etc., had died by the time the reached the lab (one of my sisters-in-law used to work in a medical lab and was the one who had mentioned that to me). As such, I cautioned parents to become informed on the issue of parasites (i.e., pinworms, roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, etc.) and to be very cautious of allowing their children to engage in those behaviors that made children prone to these infections.

When Rest Is Work, Too!©

Closely tied to the issue of hyperactivity was the fact that the autistic child did not know “how to rest” and “do nothing” during the day. It was almost as though these children had to be constantly doing something during the day… that the “day” was for “doing things” and the night was for sleeping… and again, that there were no “in betweens” allowed when it came to what the child did during his waking hours.

If there was one thing I had observed with Zachary, it was that his autistic tendencies manifested themselves more if he was not specifically working on a task. During his "downtime", when no one was actually "working with him on specific issues", his preference was definitely to spend that time in bringing "order" back to his world, his way... and for the most part, that involved doing things like spinning – non-productive activities.

My sister and I were once joking about how many naps she took during the day - she was an elementary schoolteacher. I commented on the fact that she took many little "power naps" during her time off. As she looked over and grinned, my sister simply responded: "Rest Is Work, Too©!"

How true! For everyone... but, especially so for the autistic child! The autistic child appeared to not know how to "truly rest", to "just relax". Indeed, his relaxation came from often, intense physical activity in the form of running, jumping, spinning, etc. As such, during the day, the autistic child experienced very little rest if he was unable to properly process the "parts" that made up "the whole" during his daily activities. To rest, by definition, implied leaving one’s stress or frustration behind – hardly something an autistic child was capable of doing given his life was often one of complete frustration! Rest - yet another area to work on!

For the autistic child downtime was not "rest" but an opportunity to slip further into the world of autism. As such, life became exhausting for parents who tried to keep their children constantly engaged in the daily battle against autism... a battle waged every day, every hour, every minute, every second!

In looking back, I realized that my husband and I were exhausted not from work, but were burned out because of all the work Zachary required. We had also not slept a full night's sleep in over two years until Zachary was put on a casein and gluten free diet. And the waking hours with our son were nothing short of completely exhausting. All opportunities for rest, both during the day and at night, had completely left our lives as well. Burned out, we had to leave corporate America and make a lifestyle change. Although things were somewhat better today, life with an autistic child continued to be draining and exhausting on all family members... but for our family, institutionalization was not something we would have ever considered. Given what I now understood about autism, I was glad that was a decision we had made early on.

It was especially critical to understand that institutions were perhaps the worse thing/place for an autistic child. In an institution, the child would have too much downtime... and thus, slip further and further into his own autistic world. I suspect few, if any caretakers in an institution would be there, constantly engaging and caring for an autistic child, every waking minute. Institutions, generally, simply did not work that way... and thus, in my strong opinion, most simply would not benefit the autistic child!

Once again, I believed the key was in teaching the concept of rest and what can be done during "rest times"... I still struggle with this one... as I was sure all parents did. I was not a person to take much "rest" in the first place. Yet, there were indeed times when the ability to rest at will would certainly be golden. The reality of life with an autistic child was that it was simply totally exhausting to constantly be engaging a child... exhausting for the child, and exhausting for the parent or caretaker... and exhausting for siblings as well. Indeed, for the entire family of the autistic child, and especially the autistic child himself, "Rest is work, too!©"… and in this particular work - as difficult and overwhelming as it was – for most families, the “pay” per hour, was basically non-existent because in spite of parents efforts, all too often, the child simply slipped further and further into his autistic world!

Indeed, for the autistic, downtime was very much detrimental – simply providing an opportunity to slip further into isolation – to slip further into the clutches of autism. Rest, yet another area to work on – something so “natural” that once again did not come easily to the autistic child – something once again, that had to somehow, specifically, be taught!

Issues With Motor Skills In The Autistic Child...

The autistic child had many issues with motor skills. These included the inappropriate use of stairs, difficulty in drinking from a straw or cup, difficulty holding a pencil, issues with the brushing of teeth, the inability to look at oneself in the mirror or to maintain eye contact, issues with potty training and with toe walking, etc.

As with so many other things in the life of the autistic child, in my view, many of these issues were also explained by the autistic child's lack of understanding of a situation based on the inability to properly process the parts to the whole.

Difficulty Using A Pencil…

I found I had to give Zachary time to familiarize himself with anything new in life... I truly believed this "familiarization process" he always went through was simply his way of trying to make sense of new "parts" in his world. Pencils were no exception. Before he could actually use them as tools, he had to "familiarize himself" with them. He had to align them, stack them, etc. until the "newness" was gone. Only then could I even begin to put a pencil in his hand and help him draw/write. I found that to be true with almost all new tools.

In my opinion, if a child had difficulty perceiving the part from the whole, then the act of placing a pencil in his hand, by definition, introduced a new "part" to his body... one he was unable to understand and cope with... one he was unable to separate in terms of "what belonged to him" verses "what was a separate entity" in and of itself... because once these "parts" (the pencil and the hand) touched, to the autistic child, they became a "whole" that needed to be understood in terms of its parts... and unless these "parts" were well defined, the autistic child could experience frustration as a result of the simple act of trying to hold a pencil.

Clearly defining the hand as an entity in and of itself, the pencil as an entity in and of itself, a sheet of paper, in and of itself and stating that "I am putting the pencil in your hand" as I did it, helped Zachary with this issue. In terms of the hand, all fingers needed to be defined... I started by counting them… the easiest way to do this was by saying: 1 finger + 1 finger = 2 fingers... working all the way up to "5 fingers" as I counted and raised each finger on my hand and then showed Zachary he too had “1 finger + 1 finger = 2 fingers”... again, all the way to 5 fingers.

To define the pencil, I told Zachary about the pencil's color, that the "thing inside" was "lead for writing on paper" as I showed him how the pencil made a mark on paper when I used it... the pencil mark itself was also defined as "a mark"... I used shapes familiar to Zachary, such as a circle, and defined the shape as I made it with the pencil on the paper. In addition, I defined the "eraser" as something to "erase a mistake" as I showed Zachary how to do it. Making a "mistake" in a familiar shape was an easy way to put across the concept of a "mistake" as I erased it. For example, I stated: "let's make a circle" but then, I actually drew a square... Zachary would understand that "this was not a circle" and hence, I could say: "oh, no... that's not a circle... that's a square... I made a mistake... let's fix it" as I then erased the square and said: "all gone" and drew a circle.

Notice again, that every single aspect was defined... the "thing I drew", the "mistake", the "let's fix it"... to help Zachary understand the issue that "this was wrong but there was something we could do to fix it"... the concept of "let's fix it" became a **huge** coping mechanism for Zachary in terms of understanding how parts fit into the whole... as did the concept of "it's broken" ... or "it's stuck"... all these simple concepts helped him to cope with the world at times when it just did not seem to make sense to him... in so many issues... until they could each be individually addressed. I encouraged all parents to use these simple phrases to help their children cope. For more on this, see Words to Cope©.

By saying: "it's stuck", for example, I could joke with Zachary about the fact that the pencil was in his hand, on his skin, without causing him too much stress. The concept of "it's stuck" allowed "things to be put together to form a new whole" without creating a huge amount of stress. This concept, I used to help with overall issues with touch, and with anything else as it related to things "going together", like stickers on things, bandages on skin, etc.

With Zachary, I found doing these simple things helped him tremendously. By working with familiar things, I easily reduced stress levels to help him understand the issue of "creating a mark" without introducing a new stressful concept. At first, since I used a shape he understood and loved... his love of circles (a "whole entity" in and of itself) allowed me to trigger his interest as I helped him deal with the overall issue of holding a pencil. The sheet of paper also needs to be defined... I explained "a sheet of paper" to Zachary as something "to write on" as I showed him how to make a circle or letter on it... something he was familiar with. As I moved on to "other markings", I defined those too... whether they were just "marks" or "sketchings", etc., ... they were defined as something to help Zachary cope with this new concept of "writing". The sheet of paper, I further explained in terms of its color (i.e., "this paper is white"), its shape (i.e., "the paper looks like a rectangle" - as I showed him the outline of the paper with my hand), its surface (i.e., "it's smooth - as I used his fingers and pushed them across the page), etc. Thus using familiar concepts of color, shape and texture further helped with the overall issue of "writing" in terms of removing the stress from the situation.

Note that I did not use a "workbook"... just one plain sheet of paper... at first, one that had no lines... then one with lines as Zachary became familiar with the concept of "paper". A workbook involved a lot more in terms of defining the "parts" that made up the "whole" in terms of a "workbook". The concept of "pages" to a workbook was a difficult concept for Zachary to grasp... a workbook (or any book) involved a "front cover", "back cover", pages in the middle (if not numbered, they became much harder to define for the autistic child... thus, it was extremely difficult to explain how the "pages" fit together to form a whole). In addition, a workbook could have writing on it and if the child did not yet understand the alphabet and how letters "fit together" to form words, then, that also introduced a whole new area to deal with. A plain, non-lined sheet of paper was best to get started with this issue. As the Zachary progressed, I moved to "lined paper", and so on... always completely defining the new "parts" to each tool!

Given that colors could play a huge role in how the autistic child perceived his world (autistic adults report that as children, they perceived objects as "colors" – see section on Colors), I also found another great tool for Zachary.

A friend showed me a new mechanical pencil, marketed under the name Rainbow Stix. These mechanical pencils had something I had never seen before...the lead that you inserted had three colors - red, blue and green. Simply turning your wrist slightly as you wrote made you write in multiple colors. :o)

For Zachary, these mechanical pencils provided that fascinating visual and colorful "unexpected"... multiple colors apparently coming from the same object... first the mark was red, then blue, then green... he was totally captivated by these pencils right from the start! As I wrote, I called out the colors. After I showed him how I could write in multiple colors, with the same pencil, apparently not doing anything to make the colors change, he just had to try it for himself - he picked up the pencil and started to draw/make lines on a piece of paper. He found these totally cool... and so did I! :o) The neat thing was that although the lead had three colors, as you wrote and the colors mixed, you ended up writing in a whole bunch of colors. You received four mechanical pencils per pack, with 12 refill leads (each about 2 inches long) for about $2.50. You can buy these at Staples stores. The company that made them was called Pentech, a subsidiary of Jakks Pacific, Inc., a maker of children's toys. The company could be reached at 310-456-7799. For more on the role of color in the life of the autistic child, see my section on called "Color: The Pot Of Gold At The End Of The Rainbow©"! :o)

The Inability To “Point With A Finger”…

It had often been observed that autistic children were often unable to point with a finger…something even a child well under a year of age was able to do. Yet, it could take well past the age of three or more for an autistic child to master this skill. I had not noticed this issue in Zachary for a very long time…but, indeed, he did not point until December of 2000. He was almost 2 ½ years old the first time he actually pointed!

What was it with finger pointing that was so difficult for the autistic child?

It was not that the autistic child's finger could not physically make the motion. Zachary’s two hands worked perfectly well – physically - able to move and bend just fine. Therefore, if not a physical impairment, why could so many autistic children not point with their finger? If not a physical inability to point, then, this “inability”, I thought, must somehow be in the "refusal" to point. It was not that the autistic child "could not point", it was that he "would not point". There was a huge difference!

This was another issue that was so easily explained based on what I believed was the autistic child's inability to properly process the parts that made up the whole... the inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up that whole... the inability to process the "partial" or "in between" situation.

To "point" necessitated that a child separate "a part" from "the whole"... "a finger" from "the hand or fist". Given my theory of the inability to properly integrate the parts to the whole, it made perfect sense that an autistic child would refuse to point. To do so, would separate a “part” from the whole – something the autistic mind would not do on its own without first having an understanding of what it meant to point and how that “pointing finger” fit into the whole – in other words, understood the “meaning” of pointing!

Therefore, the key was in showing your child that a finger was "but a part" to the "whole"... that a "finger" was "one fifth" of the hand and in “explaining” why you point.

This was why the whole concept of using fractions to show a child a "part" verses "the whole" was so, so critical to helping these children cope with everyday situations or things that came so naturally to the rest of us, but not to them. Zachary developed this skill on his own... but it took a long time (see below). If my child had not developed this skill, I would use do the following to help him learn "how to point": I would use fractions to teach the concept of "parts" making up "the whole" as I have explained in the section on using FRACTIONS. Then, I would take his hand, and count out the parts, saying: 1 finger = 1 fifth of a hand, 2 fingers = 2 fifths of a hand, 3 fingers = 3 fifths of a hand, 4 fingers = 4 fifths of a hand, 5 fingers = 5 fifths of a hand, 5 fifths = 1 hand. That way, the child could see that "parts" had labels, too, and can "stand" on their own as an entity in and of themselves... that they did not always have to be part of the "whole". Then, I would teach the reason behind pointing – “to show something”. :o)

Zachary finally figured out how to point to an object on his own... as I was sure many autistic children eventually did. The Christmas tree I had put up that year had fascinated him. He had seen a Christmas tree in some of his children's videos (i.e., Seasons by First Impressions, 800-521-5311, http://www.small-fry.com/babfirim.html) and was totally fascinated by this object now in our living room. His fascination overtook his desire for "wholeness of the hand". The Christmas Tree, as labeled in his video, and now physically in our living room, provided an "entity" in and of itself - Zachary understood a "Christmas tree". He made the "connection" between the trees in his videos and that in our living room. Out of the blue, he walked up to the tree, pointed to it and said: "a Christmas tree". That was on Dec. 23rd, 2000... he was 2 1/2 years old at the time. After that, I practiced making him "point" using an "I Spy" book by Jean Marzollo, and an "I Spy" software program (as explained in my first book). From that time on, Zachary has been able to point "on command"... when asked to show me something... he still preferred not to point on his own unless asked but, if asked to point to something, he could now do it easily and with absolutely no stress.

Yet, another issue explained so fully by the autistic child's inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up that whole! :o)

Inappropriate Use Of Stairs…

My theory on the autistic child's inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts also explained the inappropriate use of stairs I came to see in Zachary. He had previously used stairs properly, however, after a time, I noticed the only way he now went down stairs was by taking BOTH feet and jumping on ONE step at a time... all the way down. Gone was the appropriate use of alternate feet and alternate stair.

Again, if you think about it, the appropriate use of stairs would require each step (the parts) be identified as part of the whole. In addition, as the child went down the stairs, the feet were not perceived as a "part" to the whole. They were not easily "integrated" with the stairs as one moved down stairs in the appropriate manner. “Feet” were moving parts, but not “a part” to the whole (the stairs). Jumping down stairs, one at a time, using both feet at a time would not allow the child to perceive this "union of his feet with the stairs"... this addition of a new "part" (a foot) to the whole (the stairs).

The brain of the autistic child necessitated complete accuracy in everything - and hence, everything had to fit together perfectly to avoid frustration… and moving parts did not “fit” into the equation of the “whole”. The introduction of "new parts" - feet going down stairs one at a time - would introduce frustration to the autistic child as he would be unable to "integrate" those "new parts" with what was previously a "whole" in and of itself (the unit stairs), especially given the motion involved in this task. This was why labels were so important to the autistic. In this particular situation, the child first had to perceive the "unit of stairs" and understand those stairs as an entity in and of itself... with multiple levels… and then, had to integrate moving feet on those stairs. The "multiple levels" of stairs, in and of themselves posed a special problem for these children. Anything on the stairs, such as shoes, etc., also introduced a variable to be dealt with and understood as did the introduction of the "feet" themselves as they went down, in the normal alternating foot, alternating step pattern. To go down stairs by “jumping with both feet at once” did away with the “partiality” involved with “feet” themselves as they could be kept out of one’s line of sight. For more on this issue, see the section on Motion.

In my opinion, once again, to obtain "flexibility" with this task, the key was to come up with the "correct labeling". For example, to say to an autistic child: "go down the stairs" would be an inaccurate label. The stairs were comprised of "steps"... and as such, the steps should be labeled as "steps" and the child told that, "steps - put together made stairs". Individual steps were not perceived as parts to the whole entity until labeled as such... as steps. Perhaps, since so many autistic children seemed to love counting, that labeling the steps as "this is step 1", "this is step 2" and so on, all the way down and then showing the child that "step 1 + step 2 + step 3 and so on = STAIRS" (to specifically, verbally give a child such an equation defining the "parts" as steps and ending with the definition of the whole as "= stairs" would be helpful in solidifying this concept for some children.

There could also be “truly sensory” issues at play also in the inappropriate use of stairs... that the "banging" on the soles of the feet may create a sensation the child likes. For

Zachary, encouraging the proper use of stairs was as simple as labeling the steps, counting them for him, and "showing him", physically, how to use the stairs properly and telling him to "do it this way" as I showed him the proper way to go down steps and defined his "right foot" and "left foot" as each hit the appropriate alternating step. Once I did that, he caught on fine and started "practicing" using the stairs properly on his own. I also think that auditory issues may come into play in this one. When Zachary "practiced" going down the stairs on his own, I found him to be "rather shaky" and not well balanced. I thus wondered if perhaps there were auditory issues at play, also, that interfered with his actual physical balance as he went down the steps and whether or not there was actual, physical damage to the ear structure as well. Since he had been on enzymes, Zachary's auditory issues have greatly improved... as had his use of stairs. :o)

Difficulty In Drinking From A Cup Or Straw…

Why Are Such Simple Skills So Hard To Learn For So Many Autistic Children?

Again, the difficulty in mastering basic tasks was easily explained based on the role of partiality in the life of the autistic child. The act of drinking from a cup or straw involved taking a "part" from the "whole". Thus, I was not surprised that this would be an issue for many autistic children. Obviously, the gratification that came from drinking something that tasted good easily reinforced this behavior so that this was an easy skill to teach/learn once understood or tried successfully even just once! Again, fractions could be a great help with this issue, as would be simply "counting". For example, you could say: "Take 1/2 of the juice" or "take 5 sips" while showing the autistic child how to do this and counting "your sips" as you drank and swallowed. :o)

Recently, as I sat in church, the pastor gave a sermon on building a memorial… something to leave your children… from a spiritual perspective. As I sat there and listened, he used examples of how children see things so much differently than do adults. One of the examples he gave had to do with the task of “drinking from a straw”. Of course, when I heard this, my ears really “perked up”… not that they were not earlier, but now, I was especially interested in what he had to say in terms of how it may relate to this issue in autistic children.

As he began his story of a child learning how to use a straw, he mentioned how the father had tried and tried to get his little boy to learn how to use a straw, but that for some reason, the child still had a lot of difficulty with this simple task… until his brother chimed in with: “just blow backwards”!

How interesting! I could certainly see how this could tie in with the autistic child’s difficulty in drinking from a straw – especially given what I knew of Zachary’s issues with changes in direction!

Although everyone else in church laughed and found this to be a “cute story”… I, personally, felt like jumping from my pew and yelling: “Eureka”!

Issues With The Cutting Of Hair… and Nails…

Many autistic children did not like to have their hair cut. This was another issue that was so easily explained by my theory of the role of "the partial" verses "the whole" in the autistic child. If you think about it, when you were cutting hair, you were "removing a part of the child"... taking a "part" from "the whole". This, for the autistic child created an extremely stressful situation. Not only was the part being separated from the whole, but in this particular case, that "part" came from the child himself and thus, the stress created by this simple act could certainly be overwhelming for the child as he could sense and see that he was losing "a part of himself" and he just did not know how to cope with this. Only once did I take Zachary to a barber. The unexpected sound of clippers (a new part to the whole) further intensified the stress of the situation. That experience was described in my book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. That experience had been so stressful for Zachary, I then only cut Zachary's hair while he slept... not always the best job... but, it was certainly the least stressful method for doing this task... for both of us. :o)

Once I started to truly understand the issues of order, partiality and labeling in the life of the autistic child, I could explain this task and label it in great detail for Zachary as I also provided a coping mechanism to get him through it.

I explained to Zachary that hair could grow to be "too long" (words expressing quantity) and that when it was "too long", you could not see. This was easy enough to explain as I used my own hair and covered my eyes with it. What I found worked in helping tremendously with this issue of cutting hair was to simply find a way to bring order to the process... to show "parts" to cutting hair. I took a plastic bowl and simply asked Zachary to hold the bowl and "count" the clumps of hair as I put them in. That took his stress away from the removal of "the part" and focused him on an ordered process... counting! :o) As he counted, I encouraged him and reinforced his "good counting". Cutting his hair had never been a problem since... he actually enjoyed it now! :o)

The same concept applied to cutting nails.

Issues With The Brushing Of Teeth…

I knew a lot of parents out there still had a problem with brushing the teeth of their autistic child. I think I just happened to stumble upon what worked with Zachary...and, again, I can see why "what I did" worked based on Zachary's need for order and his inability to cope with partiality. If you think about it, a toothbrush, toothpaste, a sink, a tap, water, teeth and an open mouth... all are necessary parts to a process... brushing teeth. All these "things" need to somehow "fit together" for the child to understand the concept of "brushing teeth".

Furthermore, the child needed to understand "dirty teeth" verses "clean teeth". Thus, there were many "parts" that must be made to "fit together" for this process to make sense to the autistic child. The fact that this was also "a process" posed specific issues also for the autistic child as the "sequence of each task/activity within the process" also had to "fit together properly" to arrive at the desired outcome. Process issues and issues with sequencing were difficult concepts for the autistic child in that, by definition, a process involved many steps, many activities, many "things", many “parts” within each activity that had to somehow "properly fit together". For more on this, see my section on: Teaching A Process To The Autistic Chid.

For the autistic child, each "thing" was an individual "part" and he had to first understand each "part" in order for the "whole" to make sense. In addition, issues with touch also came into play. The toothbrush was not "part" of the "whole"... the teeth or the mouth - and as such it created a stressful situation when the toothbrush was placed near or in the child's mouth. As such, the toothbrush needed to be labeled as a toothbrush and its function identified as being "for brushing teeth" or for "cleaning teeth". That label greatly helped Zachary to understand that "a toothbrush" and "teeth" actually did "go together" in this process.

The simplest thing was not to require the child to brush his teeth by himself at first... but to do the brushing for him. As Zachary learned to cope with the overall activity, he was more easily able to do the "process" on his own based simply on the first part to the process, a "verbal prompt" to "go brush your teeth".

The key to brushing teeth was in bringing order and a coping mechanism to this process and in explaining the difference between “clean” and “dirty” teeth.

So, how do you bring order to a process such as brushing teeth?

I found with Zachary, what worked was simply making sure I used the toothbrush he liked (just letting him pick one out of the group available to him, providing variation in color for his choice) and then, taking that toothbrush and **slowly counting his teeth as I brushed them**... working my way in a very orderly manner from one end of the mouth to the other, first doing the bottom, then the top teeth... and always doing it this way. As I worked from one end to the other, I slowly counted the teeth as I brushed them. That worked like a charm. Zachary could anticipate how long the process took...since he came to know he had

10 teeth on the bottom, and 10 on top... so, when I did the bottom 10 and got to 9, I would let him call out the final number and say "10"... and then we would do the top teeth. Counting brought order to a process and so, for him, it made the whole task of brushing his teeth, ok. For those interested, Kirkman Labs, at http://www.Kirkmanlabs.com, offered a casein free and gluten free toothpaste! Miss Robens, at http://www.missrobens.com offered a casein and gluten free hand soap and laundry soap.

The Inability To Look At Oneself In The Mirror…

Look At You!!!

Why Looking At Oneself In The Mirror Is Such A Difficult Task For The Autistic Child!

As with so much in life, things were not always as they seemed.

Zachary always turned away when I tried to make him look at himself in the mirror. At first, I had completely dismissed this as a sign of autism although I had recognized the fact that he simply did not like to look at himself in the mirror from very early on... I just did not see the "why" behind it. I thought he was simply "scared" to see his image there... much as many cultures were afraid to see themselves in the mirror or to see themselves on a picture - believing their "person" or soul had somehow been captured.

Normal children, from a very early time on, were usually fascinated with seeing themselves in the mirror. As such, I believed this could truly be an effective manner of screening for "first signs" of autism. It took me a long time to finally see this one for what it truly was... simply another sign of autism manifesting itself.

There were several factors that come into play in the simple act of "looking in the mirror" when it came to the autistic child.

First and foremost, the child did not understand the "parts" to the "whole". First a mirror appeared as just this "object" and then, out of the blue, "something else" appeared... another part to the whole... the reflection of oneself... and the autistic child simply did not know what to make of this. Also particularly troubling perhaps was the fact that this "thing", the reflection, was a moving object or "thing" within something that just previously was "stationary" or "not moving"... so, you have a "moving thing" within a concrete object. How can that be? Truly, for the autistic child, this was a difficult puzzle to figure out... and without help in understanding this concept, how this was possible, the autistic child would continue to be stressed out by this simple activity... because in this particular activity, the laws of physics themselves seemed to be violated. How could a living, moving object be captured in something that was "not alive"?

I came to understand how the inability to look in the mirror could definitely be related to the issue of motion. Much like a street was a "stable object" without the "cars" or the "moving parts", so too was the mirror a "stable object" in and of itself... without a "moving person" within it. Once that "moving part" was added, however Zachary could no longer understand how this new, - moving part - fit into the whole! Once again, motion appeared to play a part!

The same kind of concept applied to the television screen. The difference in terms of stress levels, however was in the fact that with a television, the child could watch objects that were fascinating to him... objects that kept him occupied and focused on things like circles, triangles, trains, colors, etc. Thus, the objects, objects that had consistency (i.e., a circle was always round, a triangle always had 3 sides, blue was always blue, and red was always red, etc.) themselves became the main focus of interest. They provide consistency and order. That was why certain types of movies/videos were also more interesting than others for these children. With a mirror, however, it was an entirely new ballgame – because of the issue of “self”!

The "object" in the mirror was not only moving, but somehow, it "moved as I did"... yet another "part" to figure out. This "thing" in the mirror, could be perceived as "following" the autistic child... thereby producing even more frustration and stress. Furthermore, this "object" had no definite shape... it was not round, triangular, etc., ... it had a color the child perhaps was not able to relate to (not having learned about "skin color", etc.) and it had all these other "parts" that could not be understood, things like "clothing", etc.

Finally, there was one issue that has alluded even me, for a very long time... the fact that this "thing" in the mirror, this entity - even if once understood in terms of color, clothing, etc. - would not be understood until the autistic child understood the concept of "myself" or "my person" first. This explained why even after being able to look in the mirror, or in looking at pictures, for the longest time, Zachary still did not truly understand "who that was" in the mirror or in the picture... that it was him! "Zachary himself" had to be labeled as "Zachary", and he needed to have an understanding of “his label” for “this part” to the whole to make sense!

The "deaf child syndrome" we so often saw in autism was simply a child who did not yet understand that he "too" had a very specific label - a label we called "a name"... a label the autistic child had to be, specifically, taught! Once that label was learned, then the concept of "self" was understood and could be used to help the child cope with daily life! For more on this issue, of labeling the child himself before he could "see himself" in the mirror, see Auditory Issues and why "the deaf child" was but a child who had not been "labeled" - for himself! :o)

Again, in order to understand this simple activity of "looking in the mirror", the autistic child needed to understand all the "parts" to looking in the mirror... including the "part" of "my self". Until this was done this simple activity would continue to be one quite confusing and stressful for the autistic child.

It took me a long time to get Zachary to actually look at himself in the mirror...he still had some issues with it... no doubt still trying to totally understand the concept of how his "self" could be "caught" by this mirror. I had no idea as to how to even begin to explain this one to him, but, as time passed, so too did the stress of this situation since Zachary could at least "see" that he "did not stay in the mirror" once he moved away. In helping Zachary with issues of "looking in the mirror", I found using the words: "bye-bye" or "all gone" helped with this activity also. I would also tell Zachary: "look, there's Zachary in the mirror"... or I would ask: "Who is that?" and make sure I answered the question myself if he failed to do so, by saying: "that's Zachary"... to make him see that this "thing" in the mirror was him.

Again, for more help with labeling the child himself, see my section on "Auditory Issues" as it related specifically to the "deaf child".

Again, as with so much in autism, I believed the key to helping the autistic child cope and understand their world was in the use of labels, in explanations as to how the "parts" made up the whole - explanations to Break the code, in Words To Cope©, in Fractions and Words Of Quantity , in providing positive coping mechanisms and so forth. The keys were always the same! :o)

Issues With Potty Training… Why Is This So Difficult For The Autistic Child?

This was the one area I had greatly struggled with - at 5, Zachary had yet to be potty trained... although the writing of 2 books and the creation of my website, all in approximately 10 months had made it so that I had not spent the time with him I should on this issue... I was hoping to do so shortly. I could get Zachary to do a "big boy pee-pee" on demand (he still would not just go by himself when he needed to), but stools were still a huge issue for him.

I knew that Zachary could "sense" when he needed to go relieve his stools. I did not know if he could do so as easily for his urine. For example, in the past, I had waited quite a while for him to go potty and do a "big boy pee-pee". On one occasion in particular, I decided to let him "off the hook" and just wash his hands before leaving the bathroom without "having gone". I had just finished asking Zachary if he "needed to go" and he answered "no".

Within seconds of turning on the tap to wash his hands, Zachary started to pee on the floor by the bathroom sink (I had made the mistake of not putting a new diaper on right away). As soon as Zachary realized he was "peeing", he turned around and headed right back to the potty... standing in front of it in an attempt to finish up there. Needless to say, I was not that fortunate since once he started to pee, he had difficulty holding it in to make it the few steps to the toilet. Thus, I had always wondered if he could really "feel" his urine coming.

I definitely did know that he could "feel" the stools though. He always had "that look" and did the "stop in your tracks and push" when he needed to go. So, I knew he could "feel" that. The interesting thing, however, was that even though I knew for a fact he could "feel" his stools coming, even if I was lucky enough to put him on the potty before anything "came out", Zachary simply would not "perform" even though he was perfectly ready to go just prior to my putting him on the potty as clearly evident from his “crouching position”. I had, at times, even waited up to 2 or 3 hours, hoping that if he just "went", he could get used to it. But, Zachary could "wait me out" until the next day if he had to. He simply refused to go!

And, of course, after having waited even several hours, eventually I would break down and finally let him off the hook. I had been so determined to finally potty train him. For a while, I actually had a tv and vcr in the bathroom. We watched countless movies there, worked on countless flashcards and other exercises. I tried stickers as rewards, the clapping of hands... everything...but, still, regardless of what I tried, Zachary simply refused to go. In total, I was lucky enough to get perhaps 3 poops in all the times I tried to potty train him... in all the hours I had spent on this activity (especially right after the writing of my first book...that was 8 months ago). I spent most of March and April of 2002 trying again... but, still no success. Yet, often, within minutes of putting that diaper back on, Zachary would poop... something I was sure many parents of autistic children had experienced.

Although I honestly had not had the time to work on this issue with Zachary the way I needed to, recently, I think I may finally have the answer as to "how" to go about it the next time I do try to tackle this – in September or October of 2002.

Potty training had been such a huge area of frustration - I think more so for me than for Zachary himself - that I had actually started to often actually include "potty training" in my prayers at night... as I was sure many other parents had done also. But, why was it so hard? Why did so many autistic children have such huge problems with this issue? Was the answer a physical one or something else? As with so much, I now always looked for that "something else" given the "parts" – like the fingers – often seemed to work just fine!

To help with constipation, so often seen in the autistic, a casein free and gluten free magnesium and calcium supplement was often recommended. Many children were not casein and gluten free and those who ate a lot of cheese, apples and breads, for example, could indeed have issues with constipation, and, as such, perhaps parents needed to consider looking into the above-mentioned supplements. But, Zachary had pretty well always been on such supplements. So, for him anyway, I did not believe "regularity" was the issue... although I knew this was indeed a huge issue for some children... or was it?

Was it constipation, or was it "something else"? I kept coming back to that. I had read that the colon could stretch to four times its normal size... absolutely amazing indeed... and dangerous, because as more and more bacteria and feces accumulate in the colon, the more likely an infection. But, still, that was a very interesting piece of information. I then started to consider other things like the fact that other parents on discussion boards suspected toe walking may somehow be related to constipation... and indeed, I suspect it was, but perhaps not in the manner in which parents thought it was!

Issues With Toe Walking And Potty Training… Could They Be Related?

Parents seemed to think that constipation caused toe walking... but, I was beginning to be of the opinion that the very opposite may actually be true - that toe walking causes constipation and that this was simply another coping mechanism in the autistic child.

It certainly would make sense if examined in terms of issues with partiality and the fact that so many autistic children took so long to be potty trained. I came to wonder if "toe walking" was simply tied to issues with "potty training" and the child's inability to cope with the "parts" that made up "the whole" and the failure to integrate the "sensation part" (feeling the need to go) with the appropriate motor response (walking to the bathroom and performing the necessary "things")... in this case, those things that physically needed to occur for a child to go to the bathroom... the physical removal walking to the bathroom and the physical removal of "a part" of the child... his urine and stools... from the whole - his body.

Walking on one's toes created a "firming sensation" in the buttock area (yes - I actually tried it, and suspect, now, that many others will too :o)). I came to believe that toe walking was simply another coping mechanism used by the autistic child to delay the inevitable separation of the “parts” from “the whole” – the stools from the body.

If sensory information (from sight, sound, hearing, taste and smell) was not properly integrated, surely, that could be true when it came to such “physical” sensations as well as they related to “potty training” and the “urge to go”.

Physical activity had a way of preventing the stools from leaving the body. Truly, I could, honestly say that I had never seen a single child in my life who had ever pooped while engaged in physical activity. All children just naturally seemed to “stop, crouch and push”.

I had seen these same behaviors in Zachary… and, so often, had immediately placed him on the potty upon seeing “the sequence”. Yet, he simply refused to go – until I had put a diaper on him again. That diaper, I believed, allowed him to think “the parts” were still “with him”. No matter how long I waited when I put him on the potty, Zachary could always “wait me out”.

So, again, if the “stop, crouch, push sequence” was there, surely, Zachary could feel it was time to poop – so, he had to be refusing to do so for some reason. But, as soon as that diaper went on, often, within a matter of minutes, there would be the poop!

I, therefore, began to look at this issue, too, in terms of partiality. Like so many other issues that involved “the self” and partiality, such as finger pointing, cutting hair/nails, looking in the mirror, etc., many issues in the autistic involved removing a part of “oneself” from the whole – and poops and/or urine certainly fell into that “category” also!

Issues with potty training certainly would make sense if examined in terms of issues with partiality.

This would also be something very easy to investigate or research. It certainly would be interesting to see how much "toe walking" was exhibited by children who were potty trained verses those who were not or how much toe walking occurred before or after a bowel movement!

Of course, if you had parents like myself who were not "that concerned" (at least not recently) with the issue, that would be another factor to take into consideration. Zachary did very little toe walking, but he did "hold it in" when I knew he was ready "to go". Investigating this would necessitate a correlation between extent of toe-walking, time between "poops", whether or not parents punished or not or showed distress when children failed to use the potty properly. I was not saying that parents who had children who toe walked more were "harsher" on their children... some may indeed be... but, perhaps others just had children who figured out early on that toe walking could delay this separation of “the parts” from the whole for days, and as such, they simply refused to go to the bathroom for days rather than "go potty". A good graduate student would know the appropriate variables to look at in investigating this issue. :o)

I knew constipation was not the answer for Zachary... and his toe walking had all but disappeared... perhaps because I had been so "not concerned" with this issue anymore and had simply learned to tolerate the fact that "this was just going to take time" and so I had become very good at simply "allowing him to do in his diaper". Given all the issues that I had come to understand based on the inability to cope with "partiality" and understand the whole without first understanding the "parts", I came to look at potty training as it may related to this issue specifically.

Going to the bathroom was a "process" in and of itself, so perhaps that had something to do with it, too. However, as I thought more about this issue, as it related specifically to partiality, it all began to make perfect sense. Going to the bathroom literally involved releasing a "part of oneself"...literally losing "parts to the whole"... undoubtedly what could be a very stressful situation for the autistic child. Could this be the reason autistic children were "holding it in" to the point of often becoming so constipated? The reason they were so difficult to potty train? I now truly suspected that it may very well be and that partiality, again, was the key.

If this theory was correct, then the key would then lie in showing, again, how the parts fit into the whole... only this time, the parts that truly were parts to the whole had to be somehow identified as “not really belonging to the whole”. A difficult task indeed.

So, how do you do that? How do you explain to the autistic child that these "parts" were really not "parts of himself" and that it was ok to "let them go"?

Well, the thought came to me that Zachary understood the concept of "garbage" so I simply told him that when he ate (I pretended to be eating something and made "eating sounds" as I explained this concept to him), his body used up the food, but then, it had some "garbage" it needed to get rid of... I called it "Zachary garbage". I then told Zachary that this "garbage" was the "pee-pee and pooh" and that they needed to go in the "Zachary pee-pee and pooh-pooh garbage... the potty garbage". Amazingly, he grasped the "concept" right away... his first response was: "WOW" followed by "Zachary garbage". He thought the whole concept was rather funny and kept saying: "Zachary garbage". So I kept saying: "yes, mommy did not want to see Zachary garbage in your pants... you have to put those in the pee-pee and the pooh-pooh garbage".

I introduced this concept to him perhaps a month ago. He had been less stressed in terms of my insignificant attempts to potty train him, but, I honestly had not had the time to work this issue with him since I had been writing this book almost nonstop since the time I introduced the “garbage concept”. Unfortunately for Zachary, his mother had put more emphasis on sharing this knowledge with other parents than on making sure his poop and pee-pee ended where they needed to be. :o) You had to prioritize everything, and I had dealt with this one for so long, that waiting a little longer really did not matter that much to me. :o) If anything, the time I had spent writing had simply allowed Zachary to familiarize himself with the concept that this was "garbage" as opposed to an actual “part” of himself.

I was anxious to see if this concept would help train him once I was able to make more time and once again tackle this issue. :o)

Since potty training was such a huge issue for autistic children, as parents wrote to me and explained "how they did it", I would share these experiences with readers on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com in case the experience of other parents provided answers for others as well. Two such suggestions were provided below – note the common factor…

The reason I could see these particular examples of "what to try" work was because, based on the need for "order in understanding everything", I could see an autistic child wanting to "put it somewhere, where it belonged"... in the "garbage" or "bucket"....so, I thought these were definitely worth a try.

There was a common thread between the two suggestions that "worked" and were provided below: parents removed the diaper/pull up, etc.

If you just could not bring yourself to do that, you may want to try putting a removable "insert" in your child's underwear to make him understand the concept of "garbage" a little more (that would be my "last resort" to this issue)... something such as a sanitary napkin may provide a great "liner" for this particular function... it would help make the "mess" easier to clean if Zachary pooped in his pants. This would also help "solidify" the concept of "this is garbage" and "this garbage goes into the potty garbage". :o)

To social workers or therapists who disagreed with this suggestion for "psychological" reasons… well, I can only say that you probably did not have a 5, 6, 7, 8 or even 9 year old who was not potty trained and had probably never experienced just how difficult life could be with children who were this old and who still could not use the bathroom on their own. Many parents awoke several times during the night to change bed sheets for these older children. Having a child who was this old and not potty trained was more than simply a "potty training issue". There were issues in terms of the school system, in terms of self-esteem, etc. as these children were often laughed at or made fun of by other children, etc. And thus, if trying this "method" helped to potty train these children, then, I personally, believed it was worth a try and society needed to understand that rather than criticize.

Suggestion 1 – From Heather

What Heather did was to let her son go "bare butt" outside when she knew her son was due for a bowel movement. She put the potty nearby in the yard. Eventually, her son just "had to go" and so, he sat down on the potty, and went.

I would recommend putting a long t-shirt on your child to cover his bottom if you do this...just so that neighbors do not complain to authorities that a naked child is outside – better to save yourself that headache – we all have plenty more to focus on without bringing them onto ourselves. :o)

Suggestion 2 - From Karen – in her own words…

"We had gotten into a terrible habit of giving him a pull up to poop in for 2 years. [exactly what I myself am guilty of right now] That was tough to break. Finally I said no more pull-ups and he started going in his underwear so then I let him run around in the house without underwear and named the potty insert, which is removable, the "underwear bucket". He grabbed it held it under him and while half standing pooped into it. His reward was 5 president stickers (Presidents have been his passion since age 3). So we did that for 1 week. Then we made president pictures with each one saying a different statement about poop. On a visual schedule I showed on top: poop in underwear bucket 5 president stickers poop in toilet president saying

That afternoon he sat on the toilet and when he actually did it his eyes grew big with HUGE smile and he said "I love pooping on the toilet and splash it in the water". He then received 1 president saying and was so proud. (The stickers got old because he already earned each president so the 1 new president with a saying was like gold to him)."

I did believe that actual "physical sensation" could be an issue for some children, and I think more so with the issue of urine. I once read a parent tell the story of how his 9 year old autistic girl, not yet potty trained, had peed in bed during the night. This father explained how he and his wife often had to change the sheets 2 or even 3 times during the night. Upon waking his daughter and telling her she had "wet the bed", the daughter kept saying to her father: "no, I didn't". It was literally "as if" she could not "feel" the urine… even as it was right there, on the sheets all about her. Patience and understanding were indeed words to live by when you were the parent of an autistic child.

This issue of potty training in the autistic child was indeed a serious issue for parents who were for the most part, already very sleep deprived. To have to change sheets several times a night, surely, had to be exhausting and frustrating, but, the additional stress of knowing your child was laughed at by others, surely, was worse than the physical issue itself!

In closing, I wanted to caution parents to be careful in disciplining their children over these issues, because in all honesty, I did believe these children could simply not help themselves… either because they could not physically "feel" the wetness or because their brain made it such that they were terrified to lose a part of themselves… literally!

Thus, again the key may lie in helping the child understand the parts to the whole of potty training through the use of labels and coping mechanisms that may help. Perhaps a timer in the kitchen would bring enough order to teach a child to "go" to the bathroom upon hearing the timer go off.

As mentioned earlier, this was still an area I was struggling with but hoped to address in the fall of 2002. I just needed more time to spend on this one… but, if indeed I was correct in this issue and that "not going" was the child's way of coping with the apparent loss of a part to himself, then, perhaps there was finally a light at the end of the tunnel in that the issue was at least better understood now… and understanding the issue was half the battle!

I did spend two days letting Zachary run around the house with no diaper in late August and put his potty in the kitchen/living room area. Amazingly, with absolutely no prompting on my part, Zachary peed in the potty 5 times in 2 hours! He also referred to the potty as his "garbage cup" - words he came up with – how very interesting! The "pooh" ended up on the carpet, almost 2 days later – he had held it in as long as he could, but, still, this was progress. :o) I truly felt taking the diaper off would be key in overcoming this issue once and for all! I think I now understood why Zachary always seemed to need to have a pair of pants or shorts on too!

In early September 2002, I spent another day observing Zachary in terms of what cues he gave when he had a bowel movement coming. I had relatives visiting at the time. I noticed Zachary doing a little bit of "toe-walking" and pointed it out to my relatives, saying: "I bet the poop is coming". Sure enough, within minutes, he had pooped in his diaper… and the toe walking had mysteriously disappeared! Very interesting!!!

I Don’t Want To Be Hugged!!!

Why The Autistic Child Has So Many Issues With The Sense of Touch!

If there was one area that was an absolute heartbreaker for the parents of autistic children, surely this is it - the fact that an autistic child often will not even allow his parents to hug him, and will often, violently fight attempts by the parent to show affection to and/or comfort their child.

Prior to taking Zachary off casein and gluten, when he awoke at night, it seemed there was nothing I could do to hold and comfort him. He fought me constantly ... and at times, the harder I tried to hold him, the harder he fought.

I did believe diet was definitely a factor for many of these children and that the natural opiate (drug) effect of casein and gluten may indeed produce in these children hallucinations that were so vivid, so real, that the child perceived the "someone" trying to hold on to him may actually be an "extension" of that hallucination as opposed to a loving parent, causing great stress as the parent tried helplessly to hold his child in an attempt to comfort him. It was a well known fact that "drug trips" were not all "good trips" and hence, there was reason to believe that this may be one issue at play when it came to sensitivity to touch in the autistic child.

Since digestive enzymes helped to break down casein and gluten, perhaps this explained why Zachary's overall issues with touch had improved since I put him on these non-prescription supplements. I truly believed that by performing a digestive function the autistic child was unable to properly perform on his own, these enzymes helped reduce the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten as well as helping to reduce the negative impacts of highly phenolic foods that also appeared to be a problem for many of these children.

Although Zachary was on a casein and gluten free diet, I was certain he was exposed to hidden sources, especially of gluten and as such, I had great comfort in knowing these hidden sources (like soaps, etc.) were addressed by his enzyme supplements. For more on enzymes, see my section on: First Steps For Parents! What Can Be Done To Actually Help These Children?

Additional information, as it related specifically to Zachary was available on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com, under More on Zachary's Diet and the Journal of Zachary's Progress. On my website, I also provided a link on “things I would have done differently – if only I had known what I knew today”.

These links - available on my website - More On Zachary’s Diet, The Journal of Zachary’s Progress, Things I Would Have Done Differently, along with the Parent Nuggets© and the account of what I believed to be a very, very negative reaction to Cod Liver Oil (I suspect it contained mercury or other heavy metals), were all links that provided extremely valuable information for parents of the autistic, and as such, I strongly encouraged all parents to read

this additional, truly eye-opening information on my website:
http://www.autismhelpforyou.com/.

I strongly encouraged all parents to discuss with their children's doctors the possibility of a casein and gluten free diet and one low in phenols as well as enzyme therapy for their children. For Zachary, these interventions had made a significant difference. Although Zachary had made a great deal of progress on the casein and gluten free diet alone, I did believe his vision, auditory, and sensory issues as they related to touch were all significantly improved since I added enzymes to his diet in February of 2002.

As with so much in autism, however, I was of the opinion that "something else" was also at play in issues related to touch and the autistic child.

I say this because even with a casein and gluten free diet and enzymes, there were still issues with the sense of touch for many children, including Zachary. These "other issues" were also related to the autistic child's inability to properly process "the whole" without first understanding "the parts" that made up that "whole".

In my opinion, if a child had difficulty perceiving, understanding and integrating the parts to the whole, then the act of placing your hands on him or arms around him, by definition introduced a new "part" to his body... one he was unable to understand and cope with... one he was unable to separate in terms of "what belonged to him" verses "what belonged to you"... because once these "parts" touched and your hand or arm or hand was on him, you, the parent, became "part of his whole"... something he may be unable to deal with and process properly – another issue related to the "self".

So, what was the answer to this issue? It may be, again, as simple as the use of labels and explanations as to how the parts fit into the whole. For example, what I did with Zachary was I labeled "my hand" for him… as I had done so many times with my "finger counting" and "fraction" exercises. Before placing my hand on Zachary, I held it in the air, showed him the "parts to my hand" (the finger counting) and labeled it as "mommy's hand". Then, I slowly kept saying: "mommy's hand... as I gently placed it on him and said: "mommy's hand on Zachary". Labeling "my hand" verses "his hand" and clearly emphasizing the distinction as "my hand" was placed on him, in my view, helped tremendously with issues of touch in terms of helping Zachary define "what belonged to whom". I encourage all parents whose children had such issues to attempt this very, very slowly in order to give the autistic child time to familiarize himself with "each person's hand parts" as they were joined through touch.

The idea was to try to label absolutely everything for the child... your hand, your fingers, his hand, his fingers, etc.... as you joined the two. It may also help to count out fingers as you do this. I showed Zachary the concept of "my hand" a long time ago... I would count: 1 finger (as I held up one finger), 2 fingers (as I held up two fingers) and so on... all the way to 5 fingers. Once at 5 fingers, I would say: 5 fingers = 1 hand and then, I would wiggle all the fingers on my hand. To help with pointing, try counting the fingers as 1 finger = 1/5 of a hand, 2 fingers = 2/5 of a hand, 3 fingers = 3/5th of a hand, 4 fingers = 4/5th of a hand, 5 fingers = 5/5th of a hand... and ending with 5/5th = 1 hand. Before doing the fingers as fractions, try to get something similar to what I used in my "fraction" exercises to help the child understand the concept of the part verses the whole.

In my opinion, once the child could see "parts" or "fractions" as entities in and of themselves, I suspected this would greatly help with many, many issues related to the sense of touch... and I prayed it would help many parents to finally be able to hold their little ones... and to finally move up to that all precious label of "hugging". :o)

Clearly defining the hand as an entity in and of itself, the pencil as an entity in and of itself, clothes as entities in and of themselves, etc., should help with issues of touch. I also encouraged parents to look at my sections on Fractions and on Using Pencils for more on how to define the hand in terms of "parts to the whole".

I found I had to give Zachary time to familiarize himself with anything new in life... everything from clothing to pencils to new foods. In my opinion, this "familiarization process" he always went through was simply his way of trying to make sense of new "parts" in his world... yet another coping mechanism used by the autistic child. This familiarization process was necessary because if a child had difficulty perceiving the parts to the whole, then the act of placing anything on the child himself, be that clothing, a pencil in his hand, etc., by definition, introduced a new "part" to his body... one he was unable to understand and cope with... one he was unable to separate in terms of "what belonged to him" verses "what was a separate entity" in and of itself... because once these "parts" (the pencil and the hand, the body and the clothes, etc.) touched the autistic child, they became part of the "whole" – a part of him - that needed to be understood. Unless the "parts" were well defined, the autistic child would experience frustration and distress as a result of his inability to properly perceive and cope with the parts that made up the whole.

YUK! Issues With Specific Food Textures…

As with the overall issue of touch the same overall issue of the inability to deal with "partiality" could also lie at the root of sensitivities to specific food textures.

For example, in most autistic children, slimy foods were still very much an issue. Most autistic children, even those on enzymes, refused to eat most slimy foods. Why was that? I thought about this one a lot... and again it too, could be somewhat explained by the issue of "partiality"... of "the part verses the whole".

If you think about it, slimy foods do something no other foods do... they stick to the tongue and make it very difficult for the child to perceive "what is tongue" verses "what is food". The two get integrated into a "new whole" and this, I believed was the source of frustration for the child when it came to slimy foods. This also explained why other types of foods (i.e., French fries, any crunchy foods, etc.) were better tolerated by the child... they were much more "discrete" when placed on the tongue... the child could still tell "what is tongue" and "what is food". Of course, there were always exceptions... and this was true of slimy foods too... those foods such as puddings, for example, foods the child quickly learned tasted "good" were quickly labeled as "ok" even by the autistic brain and thus, the child could learn to overcome even certain "slimy foods" based on taste alone.

I must admit this was still a difficult area for Zachary. I had spent virtually no time on this specific issue. Once things slow down, however, I would try to help him more in this area by labeling foods as "slimy", as "sticking to the tongue" when I gave them to him to see if that worked. Again, I suspected a label of "sticky" and the use of "sticks to your tongue" may help a lot in this area. The keys to resolving issues with touch as they related to partiality were again the same... labeling, explanations and other positive coping mechanisms, perhaps such as counting.

Instead of placing foods on the tongue or trying to have Zachary eat them, I believed the best way to go would be to first show him how slimy foods “stuck to his arm”. I believed that could make it less stressful when the time came to actually make him eat these foods. Also, I suspected issues with smell were at play here. Labeling smells was something I had completely ignored/forgotten about until very recently… and smells, like anything else, introduced a new “part to the whole”, that also needed to be defined – and the challenge here was that “smells” were invisible! I had only recently started to always make Zachary aware of smells that were about him… trying to label as many smells as I could for him. I knew he understood the concept of “smell” even though smells were invisible “objects”, molecules invisible to the human eye, but, I wanted to at least mention this issue with the invisible in case it was an issue for other children. Perhaps making children smell “the steam” from foods was the way to begin addressing issues of smell (being careful of course to ensure the child was far enough from the steam not to be burned by it).

Listen!!!

Auditory Issues… Why Does The Autistic Child Have Such Sensitive Hearing?

Another common trait of the autistic was certainly that of their sensitive hearing. As with other issues related to sensory factors, this was another one of those issues where I believed perhaps several factors were at play, including the possibility of actual damage to those structures necessary for proper hearing to occur.

Zachary's hearing had improved greatly since on enzymes... it took a few months, but he was definitely less sensitive to sounds than he used to be. He was finally taking his "shopping earmuffs" off in stores and sounds, overall, did not seem to bother him as much... he could now better tolerate the humming of the lights or of the freezers in grocery stores. He was much better able to handle general "background noise" since he had been taking enzymes.

I also believed, however, that what so many parents perceive as a sensitivity to sound may not always actually be a sensitivity to sound but perhaps a sensitivity to "newly introduced" or "startling" sounds. There had been many a time when Zachary had placed his hands quickly on his ears. This happened especially when he heard a loud, unexpected noise, such as a broken muffler on a car or the turning on of a P.A. system in a large retail store. What I found to be a tremendous help with these "unexpected" noises was simply to label them. When a car went by that made a lot of sound, I simply said: "It's a broken muffler", or when the P.A. went on, I simply said: "It's an overhead announcement"... or something to that effect. In no time, the noises no longer bothered Zachary... he no longer had to put his hands on his ears when he heard these sounds... and when he did hear them, he would simply tell me: "it's a broken muffler", etc. So, again, labeling helped him cope tremendously.

For these "unexpected sounds", again, if you think about them in terms of the inability to properly process partiality, or input from the senses, that also made a great deal of sense. One adapted to the sounds about him as he walked or went about daily life. An "unexpected" sound, however, introduced a new element into the equation... a new "part" to the "whole" that had to be dealt with... that had to be integrated. Simply labeling sounds helped Zachary integrate them to the point that they were no longer troublesome. By labeling the sounds, once again, they took on an identity in and of themselves and were no longer seen as "a part" that needed to be decoded.

For example, recently, I noticed a sound that always rang loud in our house… the whistling of the kettle. I had not labeled this one for Zachary. I noticed he put his hands on his ears when he heard it. I simply labeled “that sound” as the “kettle whistling” and told him that that meant the water was hot. He immediately removed his hands from his ears and stated: “hot water”. It had been that simple to help him “decode” that sound… to make him understand it and what it meant!

In my opinion, the inability to properly process "parts" also explained why vacuums and hair dryers, for example, often seemed so troublesome for autistic children. If you listened to the sound of these objects, they were not constants but rather changed with motion in terms of the actual "aspirating sound" and the sound of the motor itself. The sound of a vacuum on carpet was different than the sound of a vacuum against the wall as one cleaned the edges of a room, or the sound of a vacuum on tile or wood flooring. If you added in the rolling of the wheels on these surfaces, the sounds made by the removing and adding of various attachments, you indeed had many "unexplained sounds" from this one object alone. Much of the same factors were true for the hair dryer. Its sounds changed with motion, speed selections (high, medium, low) and the surface off which the sounds themselves reflected.

The act of covering one's ears, in Zachary, was also due to his "not wanting to hear something"... yet another way for him to "ignore what he did not want to deal with". The most specific example I could provide of this had to do with the phrase "get to bed".

As I worked on the computer one night, before I knew it, it was approximately 9:30 at night. The children had quietly put in another video and knowing fully that they were well past their bed time, they were being rather quiet - truly "little angels" in order not to bring attention to the fact that they were still up. As I looked at the clock above my desk, I realized how late it was and said: "ok, get to bed". I got up and went the few feet to where the children were sitting. As Zachary saw me standing next to the couch and heard me repeat "ok, get to bed", he immediately put his hands over his ears and said: "no... no get to bed". :o) Of course, my heart melted as I laughed a little at his desperate attempts to stay up. I simply said: "You want to stay up? Then you have to ask and say: 'mom, can I stay up please'? ". Zachary repeated the question and I, of course, stated he could stay up a little longer. So there you had it... yet, more proof that putting one's hands over one's ears was not simply an issue with sound frequencies... it was an issue with sound "content" also. :o)

With Zachary, I found **the sensitivity to sound varied based on whether or not the sound was something he heard verses something he himself emitted. Zachary did not seem to "understand" or be sensitive to many things he was told… yet, he could scream very loud, high pitch screams that were extremely offensive to all others and not be impacted by his own sounds! So, in terms of issues with sounds, I found the best way to teach him many things was to have him verbally repeat a question and an answer. Once he did that, it was "as if" it had been committed to memory, whereas "incoming sounds" were much, much more difficult to "hear" or "understand"!**

I had noticed a variation of this in my autistic nephew, Andrew, as well. At 11 years of age, Andrew was quite verbal. Yet, if he was confused as he spoke and felt he had not said something "just the right way", the exact way he wanted to say it, just prior to "starting over" in terms of making his point or telling his story, Andrew made a motion to cover his ears. Again, it was "as if" what he had heard, even coming from himself, had been "wrong" and as such was somehow "offensive" to him and so, to "block it out" or "do away with what had been said in the wrong way", Andrew simply covered his ears. When he was now ready to "start over" and re-express what he had been trying to say, his hands "came down" and no longer covered his ears. I was, therefore, convinced that "content" of what was heard also played a role in explaining why the autistic covered their ears!

The key was again, in labeling as many of these differing sounds for the child - explaining that "this is vacuuming on a carpet", "this is vacuuming on a wooden floor", "this is the sound of sucking up dirt", "this is the sound of sucking up air", etc.

My theory that autistic children could not properly process or integrate the “parts” they received from sensory input also explained several other things when it came to sounds.

It explained why songs, movies, etc. could not be interrupted prior to completion. My theory also explained why so many autistic children loved songs... and could easily memorize them even though they had great difficulties in other areas of communication... songs have a definite beginning and a definite end. To interrupt the flow of the song and stop it prior to its completion, in a young autistic child, I believed would cause intense frustration for the autistic child as this would create a "partial" he was unable to properly process. As with so many other issues, in time, I believed autistic children adapted to such “interruptions” as they were exposed to “more of them” and as such, they learned to better deal with them. I found with Zachary, simply saying: "all done" prior to interrupting a song or radio station helped him to anticipate the abrupt ending and thus helped him cope.

Issues with the inability to properly process sensory input as it related to sounds also further explained why Zachary was so troubled by “open windows”. Open windows allowed more sounds to be heard and as such, introduced “more parts” to an already confusing world! For more on this issue, see my section on Biting.

The Deaf Child Syndrome...

The theory of issues with "partialities" also explained the "deaf child" syndrome. The "deaf child" referred to the fact that an autistic child could often be called by his name over 50 times and still not respond. It was "as if" he did not hear the parent at all. As stated earlier, issues with "**incoming sound**" were much, much greater than issues with sounds produced by Zachary himself in terms of actually "hearing them" and "understanding them"! Yet, when tested for hearing, everything showed up fine. This happened with Zachary as well when he underwent hearing tests...nothing abnormal was found. His hearing was fine.

Again, if you think about it, until "Zachary" had been labeled as "Zachary", he had no idea what that "sound" meant no matter how many times he heard it. Human voices were all about. Autistic children had come to accept those as "background noise" and so to hear someone calling out: "Zachary" would be no different than that person calling out "chair". To the autistic child, I believed, the human voice was something he had accepted as part of everyday life. I did notice, however, that certain voice tones were more troubling for Zachary. For example, I noticed he put his hands over his ears when he heard his uncle talk to him. This was not a voice he had been familiar with in the past and as such, it was somewhat "unexpected".

When Zachary was made to understand that "his name", "his own label" was "Zachary", then, he responded. Again, it had been simply a matter of labeling **him** as a separate entity as well – showing him he was also a "part" to the whole.

I believed parents made the mistake of assuming their autistic child "knew" his name... I would argue that for those who appeared "deaf", the issue was simply one of not knowing or understanding that they too, had "their label"... "their name"!

To teach Zachary his name, I simply said: "What's your name?" and answered: "your name is Zachary". I did this over and over until he grasped the concept of name. It did not take long for him to understand... especially since I showed him how "my name was mommy", how "his sister's name" was Anika, how the "dog's name" was Patches and so on. He had heard all family members use these names... and so, showing him the names of others around him helped him to grasp the concept that he, too, had a name. As he finally understood the concept of a name, he laughed as he said his name was "Zachary Patches" instead of "Zachary Brohart". He knew this "got a response" from mom, as I jokingly said: "no...no...no, you're not Zachary Patches, you're Zachary Brohart" and to him, that was funny. But, finally, I knew he understood the concept. Once he grasped that, I taught him how to write and say his full name. He finally knew "**his label**" and could easily respond when called.... and finally, "my deaf child" was gone! For more on the issue of the "deaf child" and the concept of self, I encouraged all parents to also review my sections on "Look At You! The Autistic Child's Inability To Look In The Mirror" and "The Danger Of Pretend Play In The Autistic Child" as these sections provided what I believed was critical information when it came to the autistic child's concept of "self".

Also, since Zachary experienced what I believed was a severe reaction to cod liver oil (in all likelihood due to its mercury or heavy metal content – see pictures of this reaction on my website and in the Appendix to these materials), his hearing sensitivities had greatly increased just after this incident. Nothing in Zachary's diet or environment had changed. He had been getting ready for bed when I put cod liver oil on his skin. Within 10 minutes, his ears were beet red… he slept restlessly… and by 4:30 am, he was having what I believed was a full allergic reaction – this incredible rash and extremely stressful experience lasted only 24 hours (so, I knew it was not poison ivy, etc.). This reaction, I truly believed was the result of the cod liver oil I had put on Zachary! Such a reaction, in a child that could be very sensitive to mercury or other heavy metals, would be very much in line with the theory that mercury and heavy metals in vaccinations were a real issue for these children in terms of the actual damage they could cause. There was no doubt in anyone's mind in our family that Zachary's hearing was much, much more sensitive the days immediately following this reaction (this was in late August of 2002). Sounds that had not bothered Zachary in a long time, bothered him again. He was making progress each day, but this was a very noticeable setback for him. The pictures of this reaction were truly "a jaw dropper" for parents and I encouraged all parents to view them on my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. As a result of my suspicions, I decided to get the contents of that bottle analyzed and will post them on my website once received. I, honestly, in my heart, did not know what else could have possibly caused this 24-hour reaction – other than the cod liver oil!

Strength Of The Autistic Child In Auditory and Motor Learning...

A Yet "Untapped" Tool In The Life Of The Autistic Child...

And Why Learning Need Not Be Visual Only!

It had long been said that autistic children were visual learners. I believed they could also be excellent auditory learners as well, as long as the "lesson" provided a sense of completion... for example, calling out each letter and letter sound was how I taught Zachary phonics (see Phonics section under Teaching Language To The Autistic Child)... in a matter of days. He learned his phonics not by sight and reading the letters, but simply by me calling out the sound for each letter... starting with "A" and working all the way through the alphabet to "Z". Once Zachary saw the "continuity" in what I was doing... and that he knew the alphabet started with "A" and ended with "Z" it was no trouble at all to go through the entire alphabet... since he wanted me to "complete the task"... to get through all of it... stopping in the middle, however, was a problem, but only at first. Once he identified each sound with a letter, labeled each sound as an entity in and of itself, he was fine with "mixing" the letters around, etc. Zachary's understanding of phonics was amazing in that once he himself could repeat the sound and associate it with a letter - that was all that seemed to be needed to "learn" the sound. Again, issues of sensitivity to sound, in terms of incoming sounds verses sounds he himself produced had played a role in learning phonics. It was "as if" Zachary committed the phonics to memory once he **himself** had produced the sounds!

What I did not realize until I was almost completely done with this book (literally, 2 days prior to the completion of this work) was that although it appeared only sound had been involved in teaching Zachary his phonics, I now knew motion had also been involved… the motion from his Alphabet Train Video. I was now convinced that in the autistic, the teaching of language was best not via visual stimuli, but rather, via sensory information that involved motion. The reasons for which I say this will become evident to the reader as he progresses through these materials. I did, however, want to provide valuable information as it related to teaching language based on motion. This was a workbook my sister-in-law had used with her autistic son to teach him language. At 11, years after this method had been used, he still made use of these motions in deciphering language.

I had never been one for "reinventing the wheel" and as such, I wanted to share with all parents the information for The Phonics Handbook, that book my sister-in-law used to teach her son language via motion – a book I now saw as key to much more than "just phonics".

The Phonics Handbook, by Sue Lloyd, published by Jolly Learning was available by calling: 800-488-2665 in the US or 0181-501-0405 in the UK.

The ISBN for The Phonics Handbook was: 1 870946 08 1.

There were also other handbooks and videos available for those who were interested. These included:

Phonics Video, twin pack	ISBN 1 870946 66 9
Finger Phonics Books 1 – 7	ISBN 1 870946 31 6

I had only, personally seen The Phonics Handbook, but I provided these others as well as they were listen on the back of the materials I had. Anything that would involve using one's fingers though to teach language, was probably something to look at!

The other thing I could suggest in teaching language to the autistic was, of course via the use of puzzles and videos – since both involved motion. The Alphabet Train in the Language Section had truly helped Zachary with learning the alphabet. It was a video he adored to this day… providing, motion in the form of spinning letters, sound as the letters were called out and the entire video was set to the music of Mozart, visuals as the letters were placed on a train and the sense of parts being made into a whole as each train car was loaded with individual letters. Given all this sensory information Zachary was best able to "make the connection" necessary in order to understand this all too critical first cornerstone to language!

Since the autistic loved puzzles and trains, potentially, both these concepts could be used to one's advantage in teaching many concepts… I was already working on a couple for time and money based on very specific ideas I had in terms of how these concepts could best be taught… and had many ideas for teaching sentence structure, etc. based on that too, but, truly, when it came to learning, teaching the autistic child via puzzles, trains, motion, and indeed, perhaps even smell, was the way to teach language to these children! The phonics as I provided in the language section could then be used as a good reinforcement tool, but, based on what I had come to understand (literally 2 days prior to completing this book), I now believed the best way to go was to teach phonics via motion!

Once the connection between letters and phonics had been made, the two key critical basics to language had been decoded and Zachary could quickly move forward from there. Zachary loved to spell… he especially loved just "hearing the spelled out words" and often called many out for many to spell… he then repeated the spelling of the word. I did not have to spell out each word on paper. Zachary simply listened intensely as I spelled words for him. In no time at all, he was asking me to spell new words he had heard in order to "solidify them" in his mind... to understand the entity, the new word for what it was... a new part that could now be integrated into the whole.

The other reason I believed that partialities and decoding of one's world were at play was because of a small experiment I did with Zachary. This was the "duck dog" experiment mentioned in Chapter 16 of my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism.

When I first came to the conclusion that "order" was somehow involved in underlying issues for the autistic child, I decided to do a little test. Since I believed the autistic child's world to be one of the autistic child attempting to "decode everything" to understand the whole, one of attempting to find absolute exactness in understanding how the parts fit together to form the whole, I wondered if Zachary would be puzzled if he heard something that was "out of the ordinary".

I pretended to be a duck. I started flapping my wings and saying, “Zachary, look, I’m a duck...quack...quack...quack...”. When I knew that he had seen me “as a duck”, I continued flapping my wings, only now, I began to bark. Almost immediately Zachary showed frustration. He started to “butt me” with his head and said, “broken dog”. There were those "words to cope"... the word "broken" being used to deal with a part of his world he simply could not make sense of and as a result of his frustration, Zachary physically tried to stop the frustrating situation by actually hitting me with his head. As soon as I stopped the duck-dog thing, he was fine. Later, I simply labeled this "mommy's duck-dog" and Zachary no longer had an issue with the simultaneous barking and flapping of wings. :o)

Thus, I could not help to conclude that although there were most likely some “truly sensory” auditory issues at play... issues helped by digestive enzymes that helped to rid the child of the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten (including trace amounts in children who are casein and gluten free), and issues related to vaccine injury to the physical workings of the auditory system, I believed that, as with vision, with hearing, too, there was more here than met the eye... that the actual way in which the brain processed "partialities" or "specific sounds" in life was definitely at play... and that any "unexpected sound" (including a barking "duck-dog") became an immediate source of frustration for the autistic child... until that sound was labeled and seen as an entity in and of itself. Truly, auditory learning and learning involving motion, especially, as it related to labeling parts to the whole were the greatest untapped tools available to the parent of the autistic child. :o)

Breaking Eye Contact ...

More There… Than Meets The Eye!!!

When it came to eye contact in the autistic child, many a parent would attest to the fact that maintaining eye contact with an autistic child was a difficult task indeed.

Autistic children had issues with vision and many seemed to be helped by enzymes and cod liver oil (use only a brand that has been tested for heavy metal content... check with manufacturers). Most parents on message discussion boards seemed comfortable with a brand called Nordic Naturals, but, again, I advised all parents to do their homework… and check each time you buy a product as they can change over time. The website for this particular company was: http://www.nordicnaturals.com/consumer/products_codliver.html.

Zachary recently experienced such a negative reaction to cod liver oil that I will **never** again give him any cod liver oil. I encouraged all parents to read the account of what I believed to be a reaction to cod liver oil, and the possible mercury it contained, on my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. The pictures I provided of this reaction would truly be an eye opener, and "jaw-dropper" for all parents. The brand I had was purchased from a local health food store and was made by a company whose website stated the oil was indeed tested for heavy metals. Zachary's reaction was so severe, however, that I have decided to have the bottle's contents tested (results will be posted on my website once I get them). I encouraged all parents to read my section on our personal experience with Cod Liver Oil and to be aware of what I believed was a very real and serious issue for children with autism.

Note: The particular bottle I had, I had used in the past and was about half way through it. Previously, Zachary had been fine with me rubbing the contents of this bottle on him. I had seen no reaction to it in the past. I wondered, however, if the fact that I was on the "last half" of the bottle was the reason he reacted so badly… I suspect that if his reaction was as a result of mercury or heavy metal content in that bottle, that the "last half" would most likely contain the bulk of these metals as they settled to the bottom. Although the manufacturer's website indicated their products were tested for heavy metal content, I later discovered that often, this testing was done by "third parties". That could be an issue in and of itself too! All this was just a theory, but certainly one that would explain why this happened. I just could not in my heart attribute this reaction to anything other than the cod liver oil! Time – and testing - would tell! If I was wrong in this conclusion, I had no problem with admitting that, but for now, this was my "best guess" as to what had happened to my son – and I was now a very observant mother!

In the past, I had used cold liver oil because the vitamin A in cod liver oil helped remove issues with "sideways glances" while enzymes seemed to help many, many children, including Zachary, give better eye contact.

As with so many other issues with "the senses", however, I truly believed that in terms of breaking eye contact, there was more here than met the eye!

What continued to puzzle me for a long time was the fact that even with things to physically help restore the functioning of the eyes (i.e., the cod liver oil I had used in the past and possibly the enzymes), I still felt Zachary had great difficulty maintaining eye contact. He had made some progress, but then, he always seemed to slip back somewhat. I knew it was not that he could not physically look at me. There were plenty of glances into each other's eyes that I had so cherished. So, if it was not completely a physical issue, that the "capability" to make eye contact was indeed there, then what was it? Why did Zachary so regularly and so completely want to avoid eye contact so often?

It did not take me very long to understand this behavior when I considered it in terms of issues with "partiality". Breaking eye contact was simply another coping mechanism for the autistic child. If you think about this in terms of the autistic child's inability to deal with the partial and to properly process information from sensory input... again, it all made perfect sense.

For example, the act itself of looking someone in the eyes involved "looking at 2 eyes"... that in itself was difficult for the autistic child since he could not deal with "partials" ... and the 2 eyes were simply 2 parts of the face... that in itself was a problem for the autistic child and was enough to make him want to break eye contact. But, the "part" that I had missed for so long when it came to eye contact was the fact that breaking it... with anything...a person or object… was also a coping mechanism for the autistic child. The child broke eye contact with anything that was "partial" or offended him...in the sense that it had not yet been “decoded”… be that his mother's eyes or a book. Not able to deal with the "pages"... the "parts of the whole book", the child simply chose not to focus on a particular page, but rather, often simply turned all the pages quickly, shut the book and tried to run away!

I had started to pay more attention to this issue of eye contact recently. I believed it was important to label each eye for the child... the left eye and the right eye. I believed it may also help to say that: "the left eye is to see things on the left" and "the right eye is to see things on the right"... and "both eyes are used to see everything - together". Again the use of labels was critical and for the autistic child, these labels had to be very, very specific when first explaining exactly how "parts" fit together to form "a whole". Just labeling these 2 things as "eyes" would not do it... you had to label **each** eye and explain its **purpose**. This was also true of all other body parts having a left and a right – although the eyes, given their proximity to one another and their “motion”, obviously posed a greater problem for the autistic child. See section on Motion also.

Look At Me!!!

Why "Looking Through You" Is Simply Another Coping Mechanism...

This issue with the inability to properly process partiality also explained why the autistic child always seemed to be "looking through you" rather than "at you". As with the “deaf child” who did not understand “his label”, if you think about it, when a deaf child “looks through you”, it was most likely due to the fact that he did not understand “another person’s label” either. A “person” in the child's environment was but a "part" to the "whole" ... if the child was unable to integrate "that part", "the person", then, that person was "not seen" in the sense that the child simply refused to “ignore” that sensory input of which he could make no sense. Each person, after all, came with his own physical appearance, his own voice, etc. This, combined with the desire to break eye contact because "2 eyes" - "two parts to a whole" created a stressful situation for the autistic child indeed made for a difficult task when it came to making a child "look at you".

Just as the "child" needed to have "his label", so too, did I believe, he needed to understand the labels of those around him… "the part" like "mommy" or "daddy" or "a friend" … labeling these, would greatly help the child in this area of "looking through you".

With Zachary, I found his greatest areas of difficulty involved both partiality and motion. **Parts to the whole - input that involved motion - were always the most troublesome in terms of being properly perceived**. See sections on Motion and Safety.

Blank stares also now made more sense. The eye, by design, needed light in order to "see", but, much of our sight was also dependent on motion. In fact, the eye itself was an object in constant motion, forever adjusting to light as it moved. In addition, the very act of "seeing" involved motion. Your eyes were not "blank stares" as they observed objects... rather, they were constantly in motion. In a normal person, to do what an autistic child did in terms of "blank stares" was a very difficult thing to do. To simply "stare" at something, without moving your eyes was indeed almost impossible to do. Yet, in the autistic child, "blank stares" were commonplace. Why was that? Why was an "activity" I considered so difficult to do - staring at one spot - something the autistic child engaged in so much? Was this simply another coping mechanism - the autistic child's attempt at doing away with motion or any other stressful situation? I truly wondered! After all, when Zachary had recently had what I believed to be a very bad reaction to cod liver oil, blank stares once again appeared... when they seemed to have previously been almost non-existent! Perhaps "focusing" in this manner was simply a way of putting all one's energy into "coping" with a particular situation, such as the stress involved in an allergic reaction! I truly wondered! Blank stares were perhaps simply the result of intense focus in trying to “break the code”… to understand how various parts fit into a whole.

So, herein was what I believed was the critical issue with eye contact... the fact that the autistic child used "breaking eye contact" and “blank stares” as actual coping mechanisms to not have to deal with what was perceived as "stressful" - if you did not physically see the "parts" you could not make sense of, then as the saying goes: "out of sight, out of mind"... and stress levels were thus greatly reduced for the child. In my opinion, there was something else to “blank stares” though… the intense focus in autistic children when giving blank stares made me believe they were somehow attempting to “retrieve information” to cope with the situation at hand. Eye contact - something so critical in teaching, yet so difficult for the autistic child!

So, what was the answer? Not surprisingly, again, I believed labeling was key in helping with overall issues of breaking eye contact as this related to the autistic child's coping strategy.

I, personally, had recently spent more time with Zachary on this specific issue. I decided to label everything for him when it came to "his eyes". What I decided to do was to not only label each eye as "this is your left eye" and "this is your right eye", but to also physically show him the purpose of each eye. Therefore, I covered his left eye, for example, and said, "your left eye is to see on the left... if I hide it, you can’t see on the left". As I did this, I positioned myself out of his line of sight for the left eye so that he could no longer see me. I then did the same thing with his right eye. Then, I finished by uncovering his eyes one at a time and saying: "left eye plus right eye means I can see everything". After doing this a couple of times, I could tell Zachary understood the purpose of having a "left" and a "right" eye. In a very short time, I could already see that this helped him to better tolerate the "parts" (the eyes) to the whole (the face) and I was hoping that this would also help with his issues with eye contact in general... that he would come to understand that he needed both eyes for a reason... to see everything. :o)

The autistic child needed to be a visual learner when the visuals "did not offend", but perhaps needed to be an auditory learner as well, in instances where the visuals were just too much to cope with.

So, how do you maintain eye contact on those objects such as the pages of a book that a child needed to focus on to learn? The key may be in drawing attention to the "ordered" parts... perhaps the numbers on the page - the child may then be able to proceed more easily. Counting was a coping mechanism the autistic child generally loved... thus, it may be that simply drawing attention to page numbers, showing the pages "as parts to the whole book" would suffice.

Perhaps we needed books that were labeled showing the parts and the whole for the child... so that instead of just one page number at the bottom of the page, you had something like this:

1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10

with more of a "whole" provided by counting, and yet the current page number, 4, showed more brightly to show "this" was the current page and that we had more to go. I tended to think such visuals would help the autistic child want to “keep going” through the entire task of reading a book due to his desire to “complete the task” and get to “10”.

I encouraged any parent who has "found a trick" to maintaining eye contact with both people and things to share their insights by sending me an email via my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. I truly believed parents held within them observations and techniques, perhaps even unknowingly, that were surely key to further removing the shackles of autism. Perhaps as more parents came to understand autism in terms of the inability to properly process the whole without first understanding the partial, many more "tricks to the trade" could be uncovered by parents in order that, together, we may help as many children as possible with so many issues. :o)

Given eye contact was so critical to learning, this was certainly one of many areas where I did believe that behavior therapy could be necessary provided the therapist understood these issues with partiality and the inability to properly integrate information from the senses! Simply teaching eye contact with a therapist saying: “look at me” would not be enough... you had to teach the “parts” to why eye contact was done, and to teach eye contact with "things" too... books, papers, blackboards, objects of any kind necessary in teaching.

Behavior therapy now became much more necessary for these children because the key was to teach each child how to go about integrating all aspects of his life for himself… to teach that child the necessary means by which they could themselves decode their world – a huge task indeed!

To see "other things" I did to help Zachary increase his eye contact, please refer to my section called "Exercises I Do At Home".

The Importance Of Colors In The Life Of The Autistic Child...

The Pot Of Gold... At The End Of The Rainbow:

Shinning Light Where There Once Was Darkness!

I only recently came to understand the importance of colors in the life of the autistic child. Yet, colors, too, were a huge piece to the puzzle. I had posted some of my observations on autism on a discussion board and one of my list mates, an autistic adult on that board responded by explaining that he had learned to read without understanding the alphabet. He did not understand sound/symbol relationships until he was into his 30s. As a child, he perceived letters as colors. He could not spell until he learned to ignore what the teacher was saying because labels the teacher taught for letter sounds made no sense to him. He learned to "picture" text and use "referencing" to communicate... retrieving a mental picture of "how" that word had been used in the past. He would then "copy the word" from visual memory. He stated how he broke text into parts, yet, had never actually understood the label as it related to the symbol. This adult did not think my theory was correct, yet, when his comments themselves were examined in terms of partiality, it was clearly obvious that everything he had said was 100% in agreement with my theory.

There were many interesting things to note in terms of the response provided by this autistic adult.

1. The reference to perceiving objects as "colors".

2. The fact that this perception was "as a child"... and that it was now used "in the past tense"... meaning that it was no longer the case that this adult perceived objects as colors... or at least did so a lot less as an adult.

3. Sound/symbol relationships were not understood.

4. "Referencing" communication was used to understand words/ideas - this topic I will cover under my section on "Language".

5. The idea of breaking everything into parts was also clearly expressed by this autistic adult... the whole idea of trying to "break the code" was there, however, so was another important aspect... the idea of creating one's own code in order to deal with issues of partiality – in order to understand the parts to the whole!

The importance of colors was truly an area I, personally, had completely missed until this autistic adult made reference to colors in replying to one of my messages on a parent discussion board. This autistic adult's comments on color absolutely fascinated me... and the more I thought about it, the more it all made perfect sense. The importance of color had been there throughout Zachary's life... I simply had failed to recognize it for what it was!

Color… other than a mother's voice, it was perhaps the first thing a child truly came to perceive in life. From the first few days of life… it was there, all about… something beautiful, something interesting to look at… something fascinating. Children, undoubtedly, perceived objects very much as colors when very young… certainly this could be true until they came to the realization that one object could actually appear in many colors. As such, what a perfect way to begin to understand one's world… to color code it… much in the way adults used color coded files to keep their affairs in order, so too, did I believe a child, from the very start, color coded his world!

Given that boys were usually more often color-blind than were girls, I wondered how this, indeed, played into the equation in terms of the autistic child's overall level of impact in terms of how he was affected by autism. For example, would a color-blind child be more severely impacted because a "coding method" was no longer available to him? I suspected this could actually be the case. The more I thought about colors, the more I truly came to see their importance in the life of my own son, Zachary!

It had been Zachary's Room Of Colors that had triggered his language, as clearly expressed in my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. I thought Zachary simply thought "this was a cool room"... I had, however, completely missed the actual importance of "colors" in his life... colors as a means of coping with life! A picture of Zachary's Room of Colors was provided below- **a color picture of this room was available in the Appendix to these materials**!

This "Room of Colors" had come to me in a dream... a dream so vivid and so real for me that I truly felt it had been sent to me from God himself... that was how powerful the image of this room in my dreams had been. As such, upon waking in the morning, I immediately told my husband "I had to paint... to reproduce the room of colors in my dreams". It took me three days of constant painting to reproduce this room. Each wall had a specific color, the yellow alphabet wall, the red numbers wall, the green shapes wall, the purple wall with orange closet doors, the blue ceiling... and the pink carpet. :o) This had been my daughter's room... she and Zachary had always slept in the same bedroom... a bedroom that now became my room for working with Zachary. Each corner of this room provided its own unique color combination... it was truly like being in the middle of a "Rubik's cube". I would later buy a Rubik's cube for Zachary... understandably, it quickly became an object of fascination for him. :o)

As I thought more about the role of colors in Zachary's life, more pieces fell into place. Two of his favorite videos - even to this day, after 2 years of watching them - were the one I called “the alphabet train” and The Celebration of Colors videos, by Babyscapes^{TM}. The alphabet train (**Miracle of Mozart, Teaching Your Child… ABCs**) was the very video I spoke about at the opening of the "Teaching Language Based On A Building Blocks Approach" section... and it absolutely amazed me that even after 2 years, Zachary still absolutely loved that video on letters. The letters popped up in different colors and spun around... so, if colors and spinning were coping mechanisms in the autistic child, this could certainly explain why Zachary had been able to "pick up" on the concept of the alphabet so quickly. This was a very, very visual and motion packed video... and an excellent one for any child... but, again, it absolutely amazed me how Zachary had never become "bored" with it... he simply loved it as much today as he did on day one and it had been 2+ years!

For parents who would like to get that video, Babyscapes^{TM} can be reached at 888-441-KIDS or you can visit their web site at: http://www.babyscapes.com/ourvideos.html . This company had excellent videos I had used for letters, numbers, shapes, and colors (they had one for phonics, too, but I had not used that one), etc,... and again, these were by far, by far, Zachary's favorite videos... and most of them involved a ton of color and a lot of spinning things.

This video (Miracle of Mozart Teaching Your Child… ABCs) that had fascinated my son for over 2 years now had all the critical parts to it: 1. Colors for each letter, 2. Spinning letters, 3. A Train (the video was about an "alphabet train"... and, generally, autistic children loved trains... why? In my opinion, it was because they showed so well how the parts (train cars) fit together to form a whole... a train.... and in this case, each "car" was loaded with a letter...the train ended when the alphabet ended and, 4. The whole thing was set to the music of Mozart... another huge plus for autistic children! It was the **perfect** way to teach how the "parts" made up the whole.... how letters were simply parts of ... the alphabet! - the perfect way to teach that all critical first building block for language.

While on a message discussion board, a parent mentioned that "PEC" (Picture Exchange Communication) had been an absolute life saver for their child... and another stated that try as they may to teach their child the alphabet, nothing seemed to work.

Those who used the PEC system will confirm that communication could occur through the use of PEC (Picture Exchange Communication) or other means, even without understanding the alphabet. Well, that was certainly true... as had been demonstrated by many autistic children who could communicate via pictures. However, was that "communication" the optimal way to go? I did not believe that it was! In my opinion, teaching the alphabet had to come first, then, pictures could be used to help with the labeling of specific things.

The statements by parents that their children somehow learn to read without understanding the alphabet brought up another thought... "how exactly had parents tried to teach their children the alphabet?" - How had parents who had children who could read "failed" to teach them the alphabet? Here, I used the term "failed" only in the sense that the children "failed to understand the concept - the symbols behind the letters"... I was in no way saying that parents "failed" their children in any way... only that the children, somehow "failed" to understand a "concept" but yet could master the task of reading. Being the parent of an autistic child myself, I understood completely how much all parents went through... I understood the stresses, the frustrations, the disappointments and the joys behind every small step in the life of an autistic child and his family. Yet, this was truly an amazing and intriguing thing for me... for the autistic child to be able to read without understanding the concepts so critical, the building blocks behind reading and overall communication! As a result, I now believed that more research was indeed needed in exactly **how** children were taught the alphabet... into how they succeed in learning it as well as in how they fail to master the concept of the alphabet. Only then would we truly be able to devise the tools that truly worked for these children when it came to teaching the basic building blocks of communication!

The parent statement in the opening comment to this section on "colors" stated that he had not understood the relationship between letter or "symbols" and sounds until he was almost 30... yet, he had figured out how to read on his own! How could that be? How could a child learn to read, yet fail to understand the alphabet, how could one read and cope with life and yet not understand the concept of "symbols" as "representations" of "other things"? This was all truly fascinating to me. Yet, as I thought about it some more, again, more pieces fell into place!

The fact that this autistic adult did not understand the "concept of letters" as "symbols representing something else" did not mean that, as a child, he still was not constantly striving to "break the code". This autistic adults statements truly indicated that this indeed was exactly what he was constantly trying to do...trying to "break the code"... to figure out the pieces or "parts" that made up "the whole".

My fascination with this concept of the autistic child thinking of things as "colors" consumed me for the next several days after receiving the comment from the autistic adult as it was provided in the opening of this section on the importance of colors in the life of the autistic child. I had been thinking a great deal about this whole issue of the autistic perceiving objects as "colors" and the thought then occurred to me that not only did I use Zachary's room of colors, colorful videos, etc., to teach him the alphabet, but I remembered that in actually trying to teach Zachary "colors" themselves, I had found the task extremely difficult as was explained in my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism.

Zachary had a very difficult time learning colors...at least in expressing them to me. I worked and worked with him on that... but, for the longest time, no matter what I did, Zachary just did not seem to "get it"... So I thought!

I could not understand why something that seemed like such an "easy thing" was so difficult to teach... after all... red was red, blue was blue, green was green, etc. What was so hard about that? Given what I now believed to understand about the importance and role of colors in the life of the autistic child, it was my opinion, that the concept of "colors" was difficult for Zachary to grasp because he himself had been making use of this concept as a coping mechanism... to make sense of his world – in his way!

I believed that when autistic children could not understand specific concepts (such as letters), when they could not "break the code", they simply "come up" with their "own code" - one that apparently involved the use of "colors as a coping mechanism"... "colors as a code to understanding their world". This was in complete agreement with the autistic adult's statement at the opening of this section on the importance of colors... it now explained why the concept of "colors" was so difficult for Zachary to grasp as I tried to teach it to him. I suspect he had been using this concept himself... in his own way... and perhaps "my way", "my colors" simply did not match his "code of colors - his code to his world".

As such, if "what I was teaching" was not in line with perhaps what he was thinking, with how he understood things, I could certainly see that this would create difficulty in how the "concept" of colors was understood!

Now that I looked back, and thought in terms of the failure to properly process sensory information, in terms of "order" and "partiality", I thought that teaching "red, blue, orange, yellow", etc., was not the way to go when it came to teaching colors. If I had to do this over again, I would start with just one color. For example, I would cover "blue", "navy blue", "royal blue", etc., before moving on to the next color. The autistic mind was so accurate and so precise in its thinking, that I suspected Zachary may have "coded" hues of colors himself... and if I then introduced these "hues" of blue as something different than what he knew them to be in his own "coding system", then I was potentially, introducing an unknown... potentially interfering with "his code" and "his understanding of the world based on that code".

You see, if I introduced "this crayon as 'red' " and then showed this one as "green", and this one as "blue"... that was what I was teaching you...red, green and blue. And so, that had order… a code to it. But, if I tried to introduce "another blue", or "another red" then, I had introduced a confusing "variation" for my child... a variation he may already had used in "his own" coding system... perhaps in a "different way" and as such, for me to "label this" as something other than the way "his code used it", could indeed result in a lot of frustration.

So, I think if I had to do this again, I would start with variations within a single color, labeling each one (i.e., "royal blue", "navy blue", "light blue", "dark blue") before introducing another color... and I would label as many hues within one color as possible before moving on to the next color. If colors were indeed used as a coping mechanism by the autistic child, as I truly suspected they were, then providing as many colors as possible should further enhance that coping mechanism. Again, just a thought, based on "order" and the need to “decode” one’s world, but, I was fairly sure this would make teaching this concept much simpler and may have the added benefit of helping the child further cope with his environment. :o)

When I thought back, there were so many times that color had played a role in Zachary's life and I simply did not see it. Whenever I worked on anything, on the computer, on paper - anything - if it involved colors, Zachary always seemed to be "right there", looking over my shoulder to see what I was doing. He particularly loved seeing me edit font colors by using the "color wheel" provided under the "font, colors" option in most computer programs. He loved to see me "make my own colors" as I used the mouse to scroll around a color palette that allowed me to change "how much of each color" I wanted - moving from reds to oranges in the color hues provided, from blues to greens, etc., ... thus changing the color "composition" and creating a new color by myself. That was absolutely fascinating to Zachary.

He was also fascinated by videos that showed how "red + blue = purple", how "blue + yellow = green". He wanted to know the "equation" for all colors... calling some out to me... to see if confirmed they were right. Some were, some were not - at least not in my mind - , most, obviously, I had no idea. :o) In calling out these equations, was Zachary revealing "his color code" to me? I could not help but wonder!

The composition of colors was indeed an interesting subject. According to this link, http://acept.la.asu.edu/PiN/rdg/color/composition.shtml, how color was perceived depended on the light reflecting upon the object. How interesting! That indeed seems to imply that "colors" were perceived differently based on the light source.

If that were true, this could certainly also help explain why "changes in routine" could also be so difficult for some autistic children. As places changed, so did their sources and intensities of light. Could this be one of the reasons fluorescent lights were so troubling for so many autistic children? Could their brightness have a serious impact on how colors were perceived by the autistic child? I used to think it was possibly their "flickering" and their "humming" that was the issue... but perhaps, again, here too, there may be more than met the eye. I knew that although my car, to me, appeared to be a "cream color", to Zachary, it was "yellow"... we kept "going over" the issue of the "right color", but perhaps there was no "right color"... perhaps we simply perceived the car’s color differently... and as such, we were both right! :o)

For those of you, like me, who had trouble thinking of more than one type of red, etc., my best suggestion was to buy the big box of "Crayola^{TM}" crayons. That would certainly provide a good starting point in helping to color your world and that of your child. :o)

R O Y B G I V

The colors of a rainbow: red, orange, yellow, blue, green, indigo, violet.

Colors... for the autistic child... these were truly the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow – the key to understanding so much in their world!!!

There was no doubt in my mind that colors were important to children. I had so often seen this in my normal daughter Anika - now 10 years of age. When Anika participated in her numerous swim meets, I noticed that often, it really did not matter to her "how she placed". She was, however, very interested in obtaining the best possible assortment of "beautifully colored ribbons". She usually did not care about the "placement" as indicated on the ribbon... she was more concerned with their beautiful colors... as were so many of the other children in these meets! As I thought of this, I truly saw just how important colors were to all children - but, now, I believed that was especially true for the autistic! In my opinion, for the autistic, colors provided a very powerful means of coding their world in order to better understand it!

Thinking of or understanding objects based on colors was an interesting subject for all parents of the autistic. The ability to sense objects as "colors" was called "**synesthesia**"... as I only recently learned from another parent who provided a link on this topic. This link, I provided as a starting point for parents who wanted to learn more on this subject.

http://www.school-for-champions.com/senses/synesthesia.htm

As I studied the subject of colors, I came to understand a few more things and how colors could be used to one's advantage in teaching the autistic. The way the human eye was made, cones for "day vision" involved in color were located in very specific parts of the eye. Red and green cones were located in greatest concentration in the center of the eye, whereas blue cones were concentrated in the peripheral area of the eye. Yellow, I learned was the best color to reflect light. As such red, green and yellow were the best colors to use in teaching the autistic.

In closing this section on colors, there was an important point I wanted to make. If my suspicions were correct and the autistic child "coded his world" via colors, I wondered… once that world was coded in his mind, would that child stop wanting to actually "decode" life as it truly should be understood… thereby further slipping into his own world. Although I firmly believed colors could be used to one's advantage in

teaching the autistic child to decode life, I also believed that if a child was left alone to decode life for himself, that perhaps, this "code to life" created by the child himself, indeed could lead to the child withdrawing further and further into his own world and leaving the "real world" behind. :o(

Difficulty With Certain Concepts… But Strength In Others…

The Concept Of Same Verses Different…

Although I did believe that color may indeed play a critical role in the acquisition of language, before we actually get into my section on "Language", I want to first touch on a few "other things" that were also explained in the autistic child based on my theory of the autistic child's inability to understand the whole without first understanding all the aspects of the "parts" that made up the whole… without first understanding all sensory input involved in the understanding of that "whole".

Like colors, these were areas that were either areas of difficulty or strength for Zachary, and as such, I wanted to address them here.

As I worked with Zachary on the concept of "which ones are the same" and "which ones are different", I noticed this concept also was a difficult one to understand... especially the "different" part. I worked with him quite a while on this concept of same verses different. But, it was only as I truly came to understand issues with partiality that I came to also understand why this particular concept was difficult for Zachary to grasp.

The concept of "same verses different" necessitated that something "not belong" and as such, for an autistic child who was trying to "put things together" to figure out "how they do belong together", this posed a special challenge... for, **by definition, one "part" simply did not belong**. This easily explained why this was such an area of frustration for Zachary for so long.

I found what helped him to get past this issue was to make him understand that "same" meant "equal" and that "different" meant "not equal". Since he loved equations, that helped to solidify the concept of "same verses different"... they were now taught as "equal to" or "not equal to"... and that simple change made all the difference in how well he understood the concept. :o)

Uncanny Ability To Remember Specific Facts About Specific Topics

There was another characteristic so common in the autistic… the fact that so many of them had an uncanny ability to remember countless facts related to a particular subject (i.e., the name of all Presidents, in the correct order, etc.). This too, was explained by my theory on the proper processing of partialities and the need to "break the code" to life. If you think about it, if an autistic child could break "any code" to life, it would stand to reason, that as he "broke that code" and was encouraged to do so by those around him, that his focus in this particular area or "code breaking" would take on a much greater emphasis in his life. Any code that was broken in any way and helped the child to understand even the smallest part to his world - as meaningless as that "small part" could be to those around him – to the autistic child, any "code breaking" to anything in life, surely had to be something he would want to engage in completely.

This also helped explain why these children could remember so many countless facts when it came to specific topics. Given that "some code" had been broken, and the importance of "code breaking" to these children, it stood to reason that once any code was broken, it would be very much committed to memory… indeed, I believed that "burning of information" into one's memory would be much greater than one would normally see in terms of memorizing something!

Code breaking… truly the key to so much in life… and for the autistic child, the first way to "break the code" in so much, was via a building blocks approach to language!

Teaching Language In Autistic Children...

Based On "Building Blocks" With Specific Order

As a watched an alphabet video with Zachary on 1/20/02, and I saw each letter flash across the screen, I thought to myself, hum..."Zachary knows his letters and indeed can read a bunch of words, yet, he is still absolutely fascinated by the alphabet and counting videos". I thought to myself that surely over time, these alphabet and counting videos would lose their appeal, but, they had not ... not after two years of watching them. As I watched Zachary, he still enjoyed these videos so much. What made the alphabet and counting so intriguing? It took me a very long time to figure it out. After a few months, the answer finally came... PARTIALITY! The alphabet and counting provided building blocks on which so much of "the whole" in life were formed. They were the "lowest" levels of language and mathematics... the lowest common denominators to so much more in life.

The more I pondered this puzzle of language and the autistic child, the more all the pieces fell into place. From this point on, I will be discussing "language" specifically, although this concept was equally applicable to teaching mathematics, or any other subject... the concept was always the same... teaching things based on a "building blocks approach" from the very lowest level up.

As I continued to ponder the question of language acquisition in the autistic child, I started to really observe everything as it related to language. I knew Zachary's problem somehow had to do with "order"... so, I thought of the alphabet as it related to order and specifically, to the "parts of a whole". Now things began to make sense when it came to the acquisition of language in the autistic child.

Just what exactly "was" the "acquisition of language" or of "communication skills"... it was the "breaking of a code". And that was the key to it all... the alphabet was at the core of communication... autistic children saw this code everywhere... and until they could "break the code", their world would continue to be one marked by great frustration.

Breaking The Code!

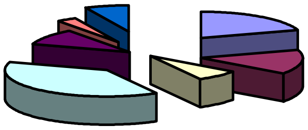
Due to the importance of this one page, I decided to repeat it here as it related to the acquisition of language.

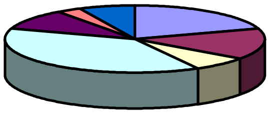
Perhaps the best way for parents to think of everything presented in my materials as it related to the need to understand "the parts" before "the whole" could be understood, was to think of all these issues in terms of the autistic child's need to "break the code".

By this, I meant that in order to understand almost everything in his world, the autistic child first had to understand how every aspect of every part fit into the "whole". This was true in everything from language to emotions, socialization to process completion, sensory (visual, auditory, touch, etc.) input processing to issues with potty training. All these things - be they behavioral, social, emotional, or sensory - first had to be broken into their respective "parts" for the whole to be understood.

Thus, for the autistic child life consisted entirely of "breaking the code" or breaking things down to their lowest level. Once each part was understood, the whole could then be "put back together" and understood for what it was. Until that happened, everything in the autistic child's mind would be perceived as:

A when it should be perceived as B





The key, therefore was in helping the autistic child "break the code" to get from A to B... and again, this is true in absolutely all areas of life for the autistic child! :o)

There were many things that the “attempt to break the code” could explain in terms of language. Perhaps one of the most concrete and simple to understand, however, was that of the autistic child’s fascination with captions/credits at the end of a movie.

Fascination With Captions... And "Breaking The Code"...

The autistic child's absolute fascination with movie captions/credits could easily be explained by my theory that the autistic child needed to first understand the "parts" before he could comprehend "the whole".

Letters were the first building block to understanding language. Time and time again, however, parents had stated that their children could communicate but still did not understand the concept of language, specifically, of the alphabet. Communication, they said could, occur through the use of PEC (Picture Exchange Communication) or other means, even without understanding the alphabet. Well, that was certainly true. However, not understanding the "concept of letters" yet, did not mean that the child was still not constantly striving to "break the code".

So, if you think about captions, several issues could now be addressed. The best way for me to explain this was via the use of the example of "military decoding". The military was constantly trying to "break the code" of various organizations. I believed that this was also what the autistic child was doing... trying to "break the code". I then wondered, well, if this was true, why would the fascination with captions at the end of a movie still be there for children who did understand the alphabet... who had broken the code, and understood the basics to the concept of language.

It took me very little time to come up with the answer. Did the military decoder stop reading coded messages once the code had been broken? No, if anything, he reads them with more passion... now understanding the basics and continuing to look for "the big picture" in order to piece more and more together… much in the way autistic children continued to look to decode things in their memorization of often worthless facts. I once knew a child who could tell you the make, model and year for every car ever owned by everyone he knew. Other children could tell you "all the facts" related to baseball players, etc.

Much like the military decoder, so, too, did I believe was the autistic child looking to "further decode" as he captivated himself with captions... trying to understand "more and more of the code" to help make sense of his world. The autistic child knew their was "some kind of message" in all those captions... and they scrolled by so quickly that when he attempted to "decode" captions, his entire focus was on that task, explaining his very much fixated look and the often physical motion of moving up as close as possible to the television screen.

If this thing called "the alphabet" was a code that helped explain so much in his life, of course, he would grasp every opportunity to further "break the code"... and to autistic children who were so often so very intelligent, captions provided an interesting and challenging code to be broken. I, therefore, think that, as boring as it was, parents should take the time to "pause" the VCR and explain these "caption codes" to their children... especially if their child had already mastered the concept of the alphabet. By explaining that these were the names of "people in the movie" or "people who made the movie", you could perhaps prevent captions from becoming an overtaking source of fascination. In my view, it was absolutely critical to make them understand that this was, for the most part, truly "worthless" information as far as they were concerned and that the **only** purpose of captions was to let you know who had been involved in making a film. I encouraged all parents to take the time to provide this explanation for their children, and to do so as often as necessary in order to prevent "captions" from becoming "all consuming" in the life of the child. Understanding the "idea" behind captions was all the autistic child really needed to know. **Parents had to do everything they could to help the child break the code as well as identify for the child those things that were meaningless in breaking the code to life!** :o)

Given all this, what happens when the autistic child was unable to "break the code" - specifically, as it related to language. The answer was quite simple. Either the child remained **silent** or, in his constant attempts to "break the code" attempted to understand communication and in doing so, engaged in **echolalia** and "**ordering language**" - something that had, in the past, been referred to as "nonsense language".

Echolalia And "Ordering Language" (Once Called: "Nonsense Language")

What some used to refer to as "nonsense language", I chose to refer to as "ordering language" and I encouraged all parents to refer to this behavior as "ordering language" from now on... because that's what it was. It made perfect sense once you saw it from the child's perspective... it was not "nonsense" ... and in fact, when examined in terms of the inability of the autistic child to understand the whole without first understanding the parts, it made perfect sense and was truly a testimony as to the resourcefulness and absolute determination that could be found within these children!

In my opinion, echolalia and ordering language were simply variations of the same coping mechanism used by the autistic child to deal with stressful situations as they pertained specifically to "breaking the code"- to understanding language. The child was simply trying to "order" his world, to "order" what he had heard.

When I had first started phonics with Zachary, he engaged in "echolalia" in that, again, he repeated for himself every letter. It was becoming more and more evident to me that there clearly was a difference between "incoming sounds" and sounds he actually produced himself and as such, his best learning occurred when he himself made the sound! This certainly explained issues with echolalia and ordering language. Language was "better understood" if Zachary uttered it himself!

Echolalia, the parroting of everything one heard, had long been associated with autistic children. It was my opinion, that echolalia was simply an "immediate", "on the spot attempt" at "breaking the code" of language. By constantly repeating what was said, the child was trying to also "figure it out" as well as, I believed, commit the "utterances to memory" for future reference purposes. It was a more "immediate" verbal coping mechanism in the sense that the child was trying to cope with what was happening at that particular moment... what he was hearing "right now".

Ordering language, on the other hand, was a coping mechanism used to help "sort" those things heard in the past or still in the process of being "decoded"- but perhaps not pertaining to the current situation at hand. I saw this as a "less immediate" coping mechanism. It was one the child used as he went about - thinking - and trying to break that code that had yet to be understood. It was important to note that "ordering language" could be related to something the child "heard" during the day, or something "he saw" for example. Ordering language was simply a verbal utterance of "what" the child was trying to decode at the specific time the "ordering language" was heard. Hence, parents should take these utterances as "cues" of things to work on at that specific time to help their children "break the code". There was no doubt in my mind that autistic children somehow processed things "differently" and as such, ordering language could be quite frustrating for the parent who had a very difficult time making it out - at least at first. But, with practice, it did get easier.

Another example of this "ordering language" that truly helped me understand it, was something that happened one day when Zachary was working on the computer next to me. I usually said: "sit down" when I told him to sit in his chair to start working on his computer. On this day, he was already sitting, but, he was very slouched, almost to the point of falling off the chair. So, of course, I said: "sit up, please". When I said that, he replied: "stand down, thank you".

He was making "opposite associations" in trying to understand his world. If the word "up" went with sit, then, obviously, to him, the word "down" had to go with the word “stand” and likewise, the word “please” had to go with “thank you”. Obviously, to counter such reasoning, I must admit was rather difficult for me at first. I simply decided to "show Zachary" the act of "sitting up" and to then show him that you could not "stand down". Instead, I showed him "lay down", "stand up", etc.

Zachary had been trying to “combine words” to figure out how they fit together in order to provide for himself a “reference” he could draw on in the future. These attempts at figuring out how words fit together and how they could be used in the future, I came to call “**reference communication**” since Zachary created for himself “references” of how words could be used for future use!

Siblings could be a great help in figuring out the "ordering language" and what the child was saying. On many occasions, I found my daughter Anika, age 10, to be much better able to understand her brother than I was. She understood his utterances as they related to videos or computer programs... when Zachary said something and I just did not understand, often, Anika would say: "mom, he's talking about.... in this computer program". She was more familiar than I was with many aspects of his activities. She had watched the same children's videos, and worked on the same computer programs, and so, often, her insight as to what he was saying was simply invaluable. :o)

Ordering language was a coping mechanism used by autistic children in attempts to "break the code", but, I had come to understand that "ordering language", indeed, had a dual role as a coping mechanism. The first role of ordering language was just that - it helped the child "order" his world - it helps him understand it! The second role of ordering language, however, was that it also helped the child to cope when things "fall apart", when life simply was too stressful and the child needed to "bring things back" to a level he could understand. In this sense “ordering language” was used as an "order fix" by the autistic child when the world all about was too stressful to handle.

For example, when stressed out, Zachary reverted back to words like: "green truck", "a fan, a fan, a fan", or "circle, square, triangle"... these were all things that I could now identify as "coping words" from Zachary's perspective. A green truck was a concrete object he could visualize... with its spinning wheels and colors. A fan, too, was something else he could visualize - spinning - making the partial whole as the blades of the fan disappeared as it turned. Circles, squares, and triangles were specific shapes... they never changed, they were constants and so they provided "order"... or "an order fix" as I called it... a way for the autistic child to reduce his own stress levels by reverting back to "an ordered world" or to those "parts" of the world he understood and by doing so, by "reverting back" to something he understood, the child reduced his own stress levels and was allowed to remain "in control" of the situation. Thus, ordering language also provided a coping mechanism as it allowed the child "to be more in control" of his world. A few concrete examples will better help readers understand this and to also understand why I came to the conclusions I did on this issue.

When Zachary used to be very frustrated at first, before I figured so much of this out, he often made use of one small phrase throughout the day... for what seemed to be no reason at all, out of nowhere, he would say: "green truck".

What was he doing or thinking when he said: "green truck"... out of nowhere? I had often wondered about that. I had now come to see that there were several things going on. Zachary had always been fascinated by wheels... no doubt because of the spinning effect they provided (see section on Spinning). While on the highway, if Zachary ever got upset, all I had to do was position myself next to a large truck and let Zachary look at the wheels for a while... they provided an "ordering fix" for him. Obviously, I could only do this where there were two lanes going in the same direction. Luckily, in the suburbs of Chicago, there were plenty of those "multiple lanes" - of course, those drivers behind me did not always appreciate my doing this. :o) A truck soon became a favorite coping mechanism... as did colors. I was recently told by an adult autistic that - as a child - he perceived objects as colors. This was all very fascinating to me. For more on that, see my section on The Role of Colors In The Life Of The Autistic Child: The Pot of Gold At The End Of The Rainbow©.

If the autistic child indeed perceived objects as colors, the use of the phrase "green truck" as a coping mechanism now all made perfect sense. These two words provided for Zachary two very strong coping mechanisms all rolled into one phrase. The color, in my view so important to the autistic child and his understanding of the world, and the spinning... the making of the partial whole... provided by the image of a truck - these two things, when combined, indeed provided a powerful coping mechanism... an actual image the child could put into his mind to help him cope with the frustrations of life - on demand!

When spinning or other coping mechanisms were not available, Zachary simply resorted to saying: "green truck"... providing for himself yet another perfect "order fix" - a simple way to "de-stress" when life just became to unbearable or stressful!

An example of how ordering language was used as a coping mechanism, a means of "ordering the world" occurred on the day Zachary tried to figure out "Walk" and "Don’t Walk" signs.

Zachary and I had gone to the store to buy something one day. As we crossed the street, I made it a point to show Zachary the "Walk" and "Don’t Walk" signs. He repeated: "Don’t Walk" since that was flashing at the time. At the end of the day, before he went to bed, Zachary started saying: "Walk... Don't Walk"... and repeating that over and over again. He was "ordering" what he had learned during the day... and in this instance, understanding this concept could literally save his life. It was at that time that I truly understood the importance of ordering language.

I often worked on spelling with Zachary... a subject he loved. I often asked him what word he wanted to spell. Even though he was just under 4 and 1/2, "big words" did not scare him. One day, he asked me to spell one of his favorites, "wheelbarrow" (around that time we gave him many wheelbarrow rides :o))... so, I wrote this word , on one of our many chalk boards. I then spelled it out with him. This day was really no different than most as we worked on various things throughout the day like potty training, spelling, playing on the computer, etc. As with so many other days, it was soon time for Zachary to go to bed.

I had often taken Zachary to bed with me - what so often started as a desire to simply calm him down for the night usually ended with his staying with me all night. Too often, it was I who fell asleep first. :o) On this particular morning, I noticed something - when Zachary awoke, the "nonsense language", which I have since then come to understand as "ordering language", started right away.

The following morning, the very first thing he said when he awoke, was.... "wheelbarrow... w...wheelbarrow". Again, this clearly showed that his "waking state" was certainly focused on "ordering" what he had learned recently. I had, in the past, seen him do the same thing with "walk vs. don't walk", with the "entire alphabet... a is for apple, b is for bed, etc., all the way to z... and do that twice, using different words for almost each and every letter before he could settle down for the night - at that particular time, when Zachary would "go through the alphabet saying words for each letter", we had just started to work on phonics.

An excellent spelling program that involved auditory learning was that provided by the following company: http://www.writing-edu.com/spelling/. For $99.00 parents could get 5 spelling CDs for levels A, B, or C. The package included: 5 AUDIO Compact Discs, 1 set Flashcards, 1 set small "zoo" cards, and Intro Video and Teacher booklet. This was a fantastic way to teach spelling! :o)

I had commented in the first book I wrote, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, that, once, I observed Zachary almost in "neural overdrive" as he laid on his bed one night, trying to settle down. In this first book, I commented on how it appeared to me as though "**Zachary was trying to order his world" before going to bed**...a function, at the time, I believed occurred primarily at night... as we slept... that as we slept, our brain somehow "ordered" or made sense of everything we had learned or processed during the day.

Then, another thought/observation came to mind. The incidence of "ordering language", at least for Zachary, was noticeably higher at specific times of the day - first thing in the morning, just before bed, and during stressful, non-orderly activities throughout the day. At the time, **I definitely believed that Zachary's problem could lie in the fact that his**

brain may not be functioning as it should to "order things while he slept" and thus, he had an intense drive to consciously perform the "ordering" function while he was actually awake!

Now that I understood the need to "break the code" in the autistic child, I saw the need to "order" things in waking and sleep cycles. If the need to "order" the world was so all-consuming during waking hours, could this also explain difficulty in sleeping in the autistic child? Could it be that the brain truly was in "overdrive" even while Zachary slept? If this were true, then, it made my belief that for the autistic child - "Rest Is Work Too©"- even more true - because **perhaps for the autistic child, there was much more going on during sleep (and waking hours) than should be normally occurring when it came to "understanding the world", and the "ordering" of what had been learned and/or processed during the day!** I could not help but wonder. **Was his brain in overdrive at night... processing more than it should in terms of "ordering his world" or was this function of "ordering not even occurring at night" and as such Zachary, himself, had to perform it consciously during the day? ... or, was it the opposite... that the need to understand the parts before the whole could be understood necessitated that the ordering function be the primary function during BOTH day and night?** I had no way of knowing. All I did know was that Zachary had an almost innate defense mechanism that forced him to perform the "ordering function" during the day, while he was fully conscious or awake. His entire life seemed to revolve around his need to "break the code" - in everything!

Given what I have come to understand about ordering language, I strongly believed that it should be allowed. In the past, I had thought this behavior needed to be "broken" or made "extinct". At that time, however, I simply did not understand ordering language for what it truly was... I still saw it as "nonsense" language... I still saw it as simply "an order fix", much like a "drug fix"... I did not see it as an "order fix" in the sense of it being an actual coping mechanism to make sense of one's world.

As such, I would, personally, **never** discourage the use of ordering language in an autistic child, but rather, I would encourage all parents to use look at ordering language as a cue of something "to work on", of something "to decode" or explain. Upon hearing any ordering language now, I immediately looked for the opportunity to show Zachary how "what he was trying to order or decode" - that part - fit into the whole. :o)

As the Zachary learned more and more via labels and explanations each day, I found "ordering language" now almost nonexistent. It showed up a little at night before bed, and maybe a couple of times during the day... that was it. The utterances were so few and far apart that most people would probably never even notice them now. :o)

Given the importance of this coping mechanism in the autistic child, I, personally, would not try to stop or prevent it in any way! In my opinion, as the autistic child learned to cope and to understand his environment more and more, this ordering language should greatly diminish, and eventually, will most likely disappear altogether. :o) But again, the key to reducing and/or eliminating ordering language in my opinion, was simply in helping the autistic child see how all the parts fit together to form a whole... in everything. As with everything else, when these coping mechanisms "come out"... I encouraged parents to look for the source of the child's frustration and to help the child deal with that frustration through the use of labels, explanations, fractions, coping mechanisms like counting, etc... those things that provided productive coping mechanisms in that they helped the child to break the code! :o)

I would ask all parents to begin talking in terms of "ordering language". Personally, now that I truly understand "ordering language", the term "nonsense language" is offensive to me. The fact that this was not understood in the past, from our perspective, resulted in a label of "nonsense language" being tagged to children who, in reality, made perfect sense. The fact that parents, researchers, doctors, etc., did not understand this for what it was resulted in our associating very negative labels with these children - making them to be seen as having "broken minds", when in reality, it was simply a matter of our lack of understanding. But, as with everything in autism or any other illness associated with "mental dysfunction" - it's all in the label - and quite frankly, I was tired of our children being seen as "broken persons who made no sense at all"- because everything did make sense - when you saw it from their perspective – in spite of the fact that a very critical function within them, the ability to integrate sensory information, was truly “broken”!

Before we continue with other topics as they relate to language in the autistic child, I wanted to provide for readers "what I used to believe" as it related to "nonsense language". The reason I provided this was because there was a critical lesson here to be learned by all parents and professionals.

Luckily for our family, I quickly realized the importance of "ordering language" and it was because of this "realization" - that "this particular type of language was so **critical** to the autistic" child - that I wanted to provide an example of what could happen when a negative label was given ... simply because we failed to understand the autistic mind and chose instead to show it as a "broken mind" by associating it with a term called "nonsense language".

The implication of "a broken mind, as reflected in the use of the term ‘nonsense language’", to adults, almost by definition made it so that we "wanted to fix it" - especially if we were the parents of that "broken mind". That fix, could take on many forms... behavior modification or other "manipulation" methods that were based on reward - and, often, punishment - systems, the exposure of the child to countless tests, scans, etc., and perhaps most dangerous of all, that fix could take the form of medications... medications given to a mind that was not understood - and if the mind was not understood, how could medication "fix it" in the first place? Did not the fact that the autistic mind was not understood, in and of itself pose a dilemma in terms of the "effectiveness of that fix"? How could one fix with drugs something that was not understood in the first place?

I knew tests, scans and medications were "out" for us as a family. For better or worse, we had made a decision early on not to go that route. I would thus try my hand at a little behavior modification. I had studied psychology through graduate school and felt I knew enough to give this a shot on my own. I knew this was not the case for all parents, however, and as such, I wanted to caution all parents to read and inform themselves and consult with any professionals they could before undertaking any behavior modification program for their child. I understood enough of what was involved to tackle this. There could be many negative results to behavior modification techniques... indeed there were many techniques out there – most of which, I personally, did not agree with. I chose to stay away from anything that involved punishment in any form. Patience and understanding - those were the keys I would use in my "behavior therapy".

I used no negative stimuli, no negative reinforcements, there were no discrete trials, no use of fear or threats, no goal of a conditioned response, no practice schedules, no reinforcement schedules, no "steps" to work through via reward systems... my "behavior modification" consisted simply of seeing "what Zachary would do if all of a sudden, his nonsense language no longer made sense". All I was looking for in Zachary was to see "how he would react" to what I did... nothing was required of him other than listening to what I said.

My goal was simply to get rid of "nonsense language" .. to see if I could somehow make it go away. I knew that there was a reason for Zachary to use specific "utterances" we knew as "nonsense language", but I did not fully understand why particular words were used, together, out of nowhere and seemingly making no sense. It was difficult to explain, but, what I was trying to do was to get to whether or not this truly was "nonsense language"... if it was, then, any "nonsense language" should produce some kind of response... I hoped I would see "my nonsense language" be used by Zachary too. But, if it was not "nonsense language" and there was more to it than I understood, then, my "nonsense language" should not be "used" by Zachary at all. Would Zachary see what I did as just more "silly things mom does" (see Exercises I Do At Home for more on that :o)) or would **my** "nonsense language" make sense to Zachary and would it actually be language he too would want to use and repeat? That was what I wanted to determine!

Well, if "nonsense language" actually "made sense", I thought to myself, I now needed to do something that would make "nonsense language" - not make sense!

So, how do you go about doing that? I found the trick to it... but, it was a very difficult thing to do... requiring a lot of "on the spot creativity"... and at first, that was quite difficult for me. After doing it a few times though, it became a lot easier. What followed was an example of how I tried to "break nonsense language" in my son, Zachary. At the time, Zachary was about 4 1/2 years old.

When Zachary exhibited his "need for an order fix" as I had called it in my first book, as it related to "nonsense language", I went into action as soon as he had completed his first "nonsense phrase".

It was critical that all readers understand that at this time, I still saw the "need for an order fix" much as a "drug fix" ... not as a coping mechanism! This was a critical difference in terms of how I now refer to "ordering language" as an "order fix". Back then, when I did these exercises, I thought the "fix" from "ordering things" was almost like a "drug high" for these children... that it somehow triggered something in their brain that they just "could not get enough of". I knew that may sound crazy, but, that was what I thought at the time... and that was the "frame of reference" I worked with as I did these things with Zachary. Let's face it, there have been many "silly theories" out there as they relate to autism... like the one adopted by so many "experts"... the old "cold mother" theory. :o) That was how we moved forward in our understanding of everything... you proposed a theory, you proved it right or wrong, you kept the proven and then moved forward in search of another theory or explanation to what was still not understood or proven to be true. Of course, unfortunately, as with so much in life, theories were often presented as “fact” and that was always a dangerous trap to fall into!

Luckily for Zachary, in no time at all, I was able to "disprove" my original "order fix equals an almost drug fix sensation" theory and see what the issue really was. It was an "almost drug fix... but not in the physical sense... what these children could not get enough of... I soon came to understand... was that within the "ordering function" for them, lay the key to "breaking the code" to so much. :o) That was where the "fix" came from... the "ordering function" provided for Zachary a "fix" to understanding his world. It turned out that the "ordering function" provided a "fix" but it was a different type of "fix" than what I had originally thought... but, "a critical fix" nonetheless. :o)

When Zachary exhibited his "need for an order fix" - which, at the time, I thought produced a pleasing sensation much like a "drug fix" would produce for a drug addict -, via “nonsense” language, I now took his very utterances – at that moment – and “used them against him” if you may call it that. For example, if Zachary was using “green truck” , one of his favorites, I started saying something like: “yes… did you ever see a green truck going down the road with yellow dots, purple stripes, orange feathers, with a squirrel on top and a dog driving?”

I made it so “unusual” that Zachary actually had to really focus to “picture it”… he just stayed silent for a few moments, trying to “picture” what I had just said. I could "tell" that was what he was doing... trying to "picture it" in his mind. Then, after a little while, he would give me another word. If it was “a fan” or something else that “spun”, I made sure “my nonsense sentence” did not include anything at all that could reinforce the “order fix” he was trying to give himself.

So, I would never use words like: “did you ever see a fan turning…” because the use of the word “turning” could in and of itself provide “the fix” as he visualized what I was saying. So, instead, I said something like, “yes… I have a broken fan…it’s upside down on the floor and there is a bee on it that has a green hat and a brown shoe”.

The idea was also to make sure I did not use “similar phrases” for the same utterances. So, when Zachary used “green truck” or “a fan” again, I had to come up with something else…it could not be something I had already said in the past... it had to be "totally new nonsense language on my part". To break the nonsense language, I wanted it to be “something totally new each and every time” he used specific words to get an order fix. Let me tell you… that was hard work… for both Zachary and me!

There were times when I saw Zachary’s need for “order” also involve an actual, physical need to “withdraw” in his own space. For example, Zachary had the video/story “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” by Eric Carle and so, he understood the concept of a “cocoon”. As he played one day, I noticed he was physically making himself a “cocoon”, wrapping himself in a blanket as he literally said “cocoon”. I played along and said, “yes, you’re in a cocoon”. Zachary was pretending to be a butterfly. He then came out and flapped his wings like a butterfly…it was great to see him pretend like this.... I knew pretend play had always been an area of difficulty for autistic children. [Today, I have huge reservations when it comes to pretend play. I encouraged all readers to read my section on "The Dangers of Pretend Play".]

Later, I noticed, that Zachary used the word “cocoon” as an “order fix” too… almost as if he “sensed” the comfort of an enclosed cocoon. So, when he used “cocoon” that way, I started breaking the nonsense language again… saying, “yes, there is a caterpillar in my cocoon, and it is green with black squiggles, and it wants to come out and eat an apple”. I saw Zachary actually trying to “picturing the caterpillar” I had just described as I used my fingers to pretend I was the caterpillar coming out to look for an apple. Zachary thought that was absolutely hilarious and he started laughing. I always tried to make any exercise I did with Zachary fun for him too… granted that was not always possible as he got very frustrated because I had really “hit a nerve” with what I was doing... I knew his stress and frustration at times told me I was on the right track...but, I did try very hard to keep things fun and interesting... knowing fully well, that in most cases, what I did would undoubtedly lead to frustration and stress for Zachary. But, again, that was what told me I was on the right track! If I got no response at all from Zachary, then I knew this thing with "order" was not "it" - the answer I was seeking!

In looking back now, and analyzing this in terms of how it related to the autistic child's inability to process the whole without first understanding the parts that made up the whole, I had mixed feelings in terms of having done these exercises with Zachary as they related specifically to language. These concerns were expressed in the section, called "Defined By A Negative Label... And All That Implies :o(!".

Before getting into that section, however, I wanted to analyze a little further what happened as I went through the above exercises with Zachary. I must say that in all the times I did this with Zachary, I had never once seen him try to "order" my "nonsense sentences". He made no "nonsense language" as it related to **my** nonsense language. So, I believed he simply saw these as more "silly things mom does", but he did not, obviously, feel the need to "order my nonsense language", my "utterances". That told me that, at least for Zachary, something was "different" about **my** nonsense language... and indeed it was. **My** "nonsense language" actually **was** nonsense... **his** "nonsense language" made sense... because it was "ordering language"!

As such, **my** nonsense language, although funny to Zachary, was something he chose to ignore in relation to **his** "nonsense language"... he knew for a fact that **my** language was simply silly... yet, I, and indeed everyone else, had not been able to recognize that his perfect "ordering language" actually made sense - and that for his world to make sense, this was a **critical** coping mechanism!

Indeed, in my ignorance, I had tried to destroy perhaps one of the most critical coping mechanisms available to the autistic child... his attempts at "breaking the code" as that code related to communication!

Not surprisingly, since the autistic child was so dependent on the "breaking of a code" to understand everything in his life, once the code was broken, he would show great strength in those areas that were very ordered and based on a building blocks approach… those things such as math and language, etc.. This was also true in terms of physical activities such as putting puzzle pieces or train parts together … two areas of intense fascination for the autistic child… two activities that made parts become “a whole” once the parts were “put together”. These activities, in and of themselves, trains and puzzles also provided a coping mechanism for the autistic child in that they helped to “order” the autistic child's world and to “get rid of the parts”... the sources of frustration.

It should also come as no surprise that the autistic child, by the very fact that he needed to “break the code” to understand his world, would be very weak in areas where there was no apparent code to be broken… areas such as socialization, conversation and to some extent, process completion. The key to these areas, surely, was in “providing some kind of a code” for these activities… a list of “things” that go together, numbered activities, etc., to help the child understand the overall situation. Concrete examples of “things to say” or “things to do” would undoubtedly be necessary to gain strength in these areas. As such, role playing was critical for the autistic child to understand areas such as socialization. Conversation and Process Completion, luckily, could be somewhat broken down into “codes” or “parts” too. Conversation included "parts" in the form of subject information, verb information, object of the verb information, etc. Process completion involved sequencing of tasks, thus, lists or numbered activities could be used to one's advantage in teaching processes.

ABCs To "Breaking The Code" Of Language

When you look at the alphabet, there were certain constants there... each letter had a specific "look", a specific order in the alphabet itself (i.e., C always came after B but before D), and, one or two specific sounds.

As Zachary sat there and watched his alphabet videos, videos that were now close to 2 years old, I remembered that 2 years ago, Zachary's absolutely favorite software program was Dr. Seuss' ABCs (By A Broderbund Company). We had paid about $14.00 for this software. Zachary could sit there and either listen to a narration that went through each letter of the alphabet, big and small (the "Read To Me" option) or he could click on the interactive part of the program that also went through all of the alphabet, big and small (the "Let Me Play" option). Each letter had a little "script" that went along with it. For example, on letter "A", it said: "Big A, little a…what begins with A? … and then it gave a lot of words that began with "a"…all of these words appeared on the screen, along with a picture of each item/word and so Zachary could read along as well as see "what" that was - thus, the label was associated with a visual object. The "Let Me Play" option allowed Zachary to discover all kinds of fun hidden things that related to the specific letter on the screen. This was a fantastic program for any child. It took about twenty minutes to get through the "Read to Me" and Zachary used to love sitting there and listening to it. Zachary could listen to it three times in a row in one sitting. He also enjoyed the "Let Me Play" option tremendously.

Zachary used to watch ("Read To Me" option on the CD) or play ("Let Me Play" option on the CD) this program over and over and over again... and he absolutely loved it. I would say he watched that video or played the software for a good month or two. It was right around the time Zachary started to play with this software that he was confirmed to be autistic by a pediatrician.

Within a month of Zachary's confirmed diagnosis, I had a dream - a dream of "a room of colors". So powerful and vivid was this dream that when I awoke in the morning, I told my husband he had to watch Zachary... that I had to paint - and so, I recreated the room of colors I had seen in my dream. It had taken me 3 days of constant painting. A picture of Zachary's Room Of Colors was provided below as well as in color in the Appendix.

Colors were also key in triggering language/communication in autism. This had indeed been true for Zachary.

When Zachary was diagnosed with autism, he was approximately 2 1/2. At this point in his life, Zachary spoke but a few words... and he did not know the alphabet... so I thought! The very day I completed Zachary's Room of Colors and the paint had dried, Zachary entered the room. I had gone into that room to "admire it" and make sure the paint was dry at 6:00 am. Little did I realize that Zachary had followed me in there.

Upon entering the room he went up to the "alphabet wall", touched the letter "H" and said: "AAAAACCCHHHH". He then went up to the "A" and said: "AAAAAAAAA". I was in absolute shock. I had no idea he even knew his letters... he barely said 5 words and had given absolutely no indication that he knew any letters. Indeed, like so many other children, he had lost almost all speech. At the moment this happened, you could have knocked me over with a feather... that was how absolutely unbelievable this was! Within a few days, Zachary had not only showed me he knew the entire alphabet, he also knew his numbers, his shapes and a few other things as well. Within no time, I could label anything simply by touching it and saying the "label" for that thing. I touched the carpet and said: "carpet", touched the window and said: "window". Anything I now "labeled", Zachary could repeat right away, and he knew it. One "labeling" was all it took ... and Zachary seemed to remember the "labeled object" for good! Those first true signs of Zachary understanding communication, of his understanding the alphabet and all that "labeling" had started in May of 2000.

As I watched the alphabet video on 1/20/02, another thought crossed my mind. I knew for a fact that "order" somehow played a role in many of the issues with autistic children. If autistic children had a problem with order, perhaps they needed to start with the very basics in everything... the "parts" to the "whole"... including the basics behind speech...and that meant the alphabet. I had come to understand the need for a building blocks approach to language in January of 2002. It would not be until several months later, however, that I would see this need to understand the building blocks, the "parts" to understand the "whole" actually applied to everything in the life of the autistic child. It finally all came together when I truly realized that "partiality" (a subset of order) was really the issue for these children... not "just order". Again, it now all made so much sense!

The fact that a "building blocks" approach was needed for language certainly explained why some children had acquired language while others had not. Some had been taught language by parents who perhaps only stumbled upon the proper "order", while others had failed to do so.

Most children acquired language by having parent first begin to "label" things for them. Labels were critical to all children in acquiring language... in making associations that "things had names"... and "things" were then seen as "parts" to other things.

There was a saying, that “the whole was defined by its parts”. For the autistic child, this was indeed a critical observation! Until the child could "define" the parts, he could not determine the whole. Therefore, in as much as a word was made up of "parts" - letters -, it was critical that the autistic child **first** understand the concept of letters to then be able to progress to the next level in speech - labels and phonics - then the next level - actual written words - then the next level, the definition of words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.), then, the next level, etc. Whereas for a normal child what came first were labels, then conversation, then the alphabet, words, etc., for the autistic child, that order was somewhat reversed. Before there could be conversation, there first had to be an understanding of "where" the parts to conversation came from. Hence, in the autistic child the proper "order" for language acquisition was that of: the alphabet, phonics, words, words defined as sentence parts, and so on. More on the proper "order" for the autistic child was provided below. Suffice it to say for now, that the alphabet was first in the line of things that needed to be learned - the first domino that allowed all others to fall into place.

Thus, the key to teaching language to the autistic is simply to build from the lowest building block up in the correct order!

Like with many autistics, Zachary's speech had started with first echolalia and then "ordering language". But, I had not recognized these for what they were. In my eyes, Zachary's "real speech" - speech I understood - had begun with the alphabet...and then phonics... not with words or "reference communication" as would be the case for a "normal child". Indeed, Zachary's first form of "reference communication" had been the alphabet... having finally "broken the code" of the alphabet, he now had a "reference point" in terms of these symbols and what they meant. Each reference point had a label, each letter had a name of its own... and that first point of reference provided that first critical cornerstone that had laid the foundations to support all future language!

Zachary had been almost completely silent until I had painted my "room of colors". Only when he saw the "room of colors", did "what he had seen" on the computer and on TV provide the association he needed to start "uttering" letters. Again, I wanted to emphasize to parents that I truly believed color was also key in triggering Zachary's language and as such, I strongly encouraged all parents to review my section on the importance of color in the life of the autistic child. By painting my "room of colors" I had taken these "letters" on the computer and brought them into his reality by actuality painting the letters on the wall... and painting them in various colors. The letters became "part of the wall". It was as if, all of a sudden, "he saw them"... and when he did, he started saying them, one after the other. In thinking about the inability to process the parts without first understanding the whole, you would think that the "letters" would not be perceived as "part of the wall"... that, indeed, like the "parts" to so many other things, they would cause a sense of confusion and not be understood. So, what was it that had been so different about these particular letters... why had they all of a sudden been "seen". The answer, I truly believed, was in the fact that each letter was painted in colors. Colors were truly a "pot of gold" at the end of the rainbow in the autistic child's life as they provided for him a coping mechanism... a means by which, I believed, the autistic child somehow generated his "own code" of the world in order to make sense of it.

Once the code of letters and colors was broken... and I did believe in the possibility that it was a 2-part code, involving both letters and colors, communication could then begin... in its many forms... phonics, labels, etc. The first building block, the necessary cornerstone, the cornerstone to support the entire "structure of communication" had been laid! Not only were letters labeled, but they were now understood to be "symbols" representing something else... each letter represented a specific sound that could now be pronounced... the sounds of the alphabet itself (I was not talking about phonics here... just the actual "alphabet sounds"... as you would hear them if you just recited the alphabet). The "letter symbols" had now been "labeled" ... and Zachary was able to easily generalize that concept to "other things"... numbers, shapes, physical objects, etc.

In Zachary's "room of colors", numbers and shapes had also been painted... they were made "part of a whole", part of the wall and, again, they had been painted in colors. An important thing to note here was that Zachary actually knew the letters and I did not even know it. I had wasted a lot of time by thinking/assuming he did not have this knowledge.

If I had to do it all again - if I were a parent whose child had not yet mastered the concept of the alphabet, I would seriously consider doing colorful letter representations from the very start... and if that did not work within a week or so, I would go back to the drawing board and look for what else was missing in the equation. Zachary also had an alphabet train video that provided the concept of parts making up a whole (train cars put together to form a train). This video provided a lot of spinning letters. Undoubtedly, that had somehow helped too. My point here was simply to emphasize to parents not to waste time on things that were not working. We had a tendancy to underestimate autistic children because they could often not communicate back to us. As I discovered, however, that did not mean that certain concepts, such as letters, were not already known. And, as such, the key was in "getting the child to utter what he did know". If something was not working... do not wait months to throw it out... to try something else or look for "what's missing" in your tool set!

I was not much for singing in those days... but, I could certainly see how the "alphabet song" (also on this Dr. Seuss CD) could be used to teach the alphabet since autistic children responded very well to music... and a song, in and of itself also helped with issues of the parts making up the whole since by definition, a song had a beginning, a middle and an end... and the alphabet song was not "complete" until it was "all sung"... thus, this child's song showed how parts (i.e., letters) fit together to form a whole (the alphabet). In actuality, I did not know if Zachary "really" learned the alphabet from the song, the actual going through of the alphabet on this software package, or his alphabet train video... all options were there - I was just thrilled that he finally knew it.

So, for parents having a difficult time with obtaining any speech in their children, I would suggest trying the "alphabet song" first, then showing the child the alphabet on a poster that provided each letter in various colors ... where the child could see all the letters in the correct order at once... a "border" type poster would probably be best.... just one long line with letter after letter (as opposed to a more compact poster where "you run out of room and have to go to the next line).

I had taken the letters and "made them part of a whole" - a physical wall - a new entity, and I had used colors - something I now believed to be so critical for these children. That whole could have been a song... or an alphabet border poster. But, my "whole" was a wall. If you think about it, a "wall" was an easier entity than say, a book, for an autistic child to perceive, if I was correct and their issue was one of an inability to process the partial. To the autistic child, a "book" was made up of "parts"... pages, cover, back, stories in text, pictures, etc.... and to the autistic child, perhaps for him to "perceive" and "understand" the "whole" when it came to the alphabet, he needed to "see it all on one page"... just as on the wall in my room of colors with no “other things” to decode (such as words, pictures, physical parts to a book, etc.). Thus, **how** the alphabet was taught was critical. I did definitely believe colors needed to be involved and that the "whole" needed to provide some continuity (such as a song, a border poster, etc.). Do I know the exact combination yet... no... but, I do believe I understood some critical pieces that needed to be there... and that now, it was really a matter of parents putting these suggestions together to find the optimal method of teaching the alphabet. It may be that a combination of methods were needed... colors, songs, videos, etc. But, one thing was certain, I did believe that there was a "key" to the proper way to teach the alphabet to an autistic child and as such, this was one area that needed great study since it was truly the one key to unlock all communication!

This theory as to the fact that there was a "right way" and a "wrong way" to teach the alphabet to autistic children certainly explained why some children acquired language and others did not. Some of us may use tools to teach the alphabet that showed the entire thing all at once... like a poster... while others try to use books... a constant source of frustration for the autistic child who has not figured out that a whole (a book, or the alphabet) was made up of its parts. Some parents used a pen... with a single color... others used wooden puzzles with multiple colors. The fact was that there was enough variation in "how" parents tried to teach the alphabet to truly explain why some children "got it" and others "did not

For Zachary, once the alphabet was learned, and each letter had been associated with a symbol and a sound (as in the alphabet song), the concept of "a label", a "symbol" representing something had now been solidified. All of a sudden, I simply had to label something once, and Zachary remembered the label... he remembered "the association" of "this label" for "that thing". I easily took the concept of a "label" for each letter "off the wall" and started to apply it to everything in life.

Phonics

I was convinced that the autistic child had an inability to process partiality and as such, unless the "parts" of the "whole" were understood, the "whole" (i.e., words or utterances) could not be understood.

A "normal" child learned that a "dog" was this funny thing with fur and a tail. That, if mom pointed to "a dog" and said: "dog", the lesson had been learned... the label given, the association made. For a "normal child", the association was simple. But, I was of the opinion that for an autistic child, the "association" as to "what a dog was" could not be made until the "word itself - the label of dog" was first figured out. I was not saying that each label must first be understood before an association could be made. What I was saying, however, was that in the beginning, as the autistic child was just embarking on his journey to learn language, the concept of "where a label came from", first had to be understood.

Once the concept of "a label" was understood... then, the child would easily learn any label given. To understand where the "label" came from, the autistic child first had to understand the phonics behind the label... the sounds that made up the label. To understand the phonics behind the label, the autistic child first had to understand that letters had sounds. To understand the concept that letters had sounds, the autistic child first had to understand that letters were symbols that represented something... and that this "something" was the code that needed to be broken!

To say: "dog" to an autistic child who did not have an understanding of "the code" behind language (the alphabet) provided for him only an utterance he could not understand. This utterance...."dddddogggg"... what did that it tell the autistic brain? In my opinion, not much! There were "sounds" there, but to the autistic child they were "meaningless sounds" since he had not been taught "the breakdown" of each sound, what it was, what it "said", what it "meant", "how to put the sounds together", etc. But, if the child was first taught the alphabet, A, then B, then C... there was order there. Then, the child could learn "A" says "a" (as in apple), sometimes "a" (as in cake), "B" says "buh", and so on, then, there was order there, something the child could relate to... and not only was order provided but in understanding the alphabet, the code was literally broken to unlock all other aspects of communication!

I spent a great deal of time just "labeling" everything for Zachary... that had its good points and its bad points. The good was in that Zachary had the opportunity to identify "more parts of his world". The bad was in that I was so focused on having him "talk", that I failed to see the "concept" had already been learned...the concept of labels... and so, once learned, he was ready for the next step. I did not see that until much, much later. I spent a great deal of time just "labeling" when I should have been moving on to phonics!

It was fine to label as many things as possible... but once the "concept" of labels had been learned the child would easily learn "all the labels" when they were uttered... and so, the focus now needed to turn to "the next step"... to not stay in the "trap" of simply labeling. It was wonderful to hear Zachary say each and every new word, but, for him, saying new words was not the issue once that "task" or "concept" was learned... the issue was to move on and show how "that part" fit into the next step in communication and the rest of the whole... to eventually move toward actual conversation. Zachary could grasp a concept very quickly... and so, it was always important to remember going forward, to "move on" and not stay fixed on one task once that task or concept had been learned (as in this case, "labeling").

It was probably close to 8 months later that I, personally, came to the realization that Zachary was able to "move on" to go to the next logical step in language... phonics. This was one of those: "If only I had seen this sooner... he could have moved on more quickly" issues for me, and I suspect many parents.

I had parents tell me that even though their child knew his letters, schools often recommended not bothering to teach phonics until in the appropriate grade. Parents whose children were in pre-kindergarden and knew the alphabet for example, were told to wait until kingergarden or even first grade before tackling phonics. I could not disagree more!

Once the autistic child had mastered the alphabet, parents needed to move on as quickly as possible to phonics. Waiting for "other kids" was ridiculous. The autistic child needed to move forward as quickly as possible in those areas of strength... where the code had been broken, because unlike other children, he would be much more challenged than his peers in areas that did not have an "obvious code" - areas such as socialization and conversation.

While "normal children" were still learning the alphabet, the autistic child who had mastered it at an earlier age could then use "that time" to focus on areas of weakness instead of being bored reviewing something he already knew and more importantly, falling further behind in areas that were already more difficult. I saw absolutely nothing wrong with pulling an autistic child out of class when his peers were learning concepts he already knew... and putting him in a class with younger children to work on issues with socialization, etc. Schools may not particularly like this suggestion, but, this was not a matter of what was "more convenient" for the school... it was a matter of "what was in the best interest of the child"!

I had wasted a lot of time by not "moving on to phonics" and I hoped that other parents would avoid making this one mistake I very much regreted in terms of how I worked with Zachary on language issues! I finally did realize my mistake, however.. and there was no "more" time to be wasted "feeling bad" about that... it was time to move on...for both Zachary and I.

With the concept of "symbols" learned - symbols as “things” representing letters, shapes, numbers, I then decided to focus on phonics. Note that this "next step", in our case, did not involve "pictures" or flash cards of any kind. Pictures were still only part of the concept of symbols... and once that concept had been taught, even if only with the alphabet symbols, the next step to language in my opinion, was phonics.

Picture symbols could be used to expand the child's knowledge of symbols, but in my opinion, once the alphabet was recognized as "a code" and the concept of "this represents this" was learned, it was time to move on to the next concept – phonics! Undoubtedly, in autistic children, communication could occur without an understanding of "the alphabet" first, as had been expressed by many parents who said their children could read but had no concept of the alphabet, but without that understanding progress was far less effective since the "code" to communication had yet to be broken.

Systems using "words" or pictures on cards were not the best way to start teaching communication to the autistic. Sure, over time, you could certainly make a child memorize that the letters c-a-t spell "cat", especially if reward systems were used and have the "association" made, however, I think it was much, much more productive to go the way of the alphabet and then phonics...based on a very specific teaching method that involved teaching the alphabet as a "whole" via the use of colors, etc., because for the autistic child, in my view, it was a matter of simply teaching "the concepts" behind language - of helping the child "break the code" - and once the code was understood, the child would understand all "picture/word associations" - 10 pictures or words would be no more easy or difficult than 1000 because once the "concept" was learned, the autistic child could easily generalize it to understand "all similar things"... in this case, all picture/word associations! I was convinced there was a right way and a wrong way to teach the concept of the alphabet. This was what I had found to be true in my own son, Zachary.

Zachary knew his alphabet, now our focus would be phonics!

I wondered about the best way to teach Zachary phonics for about 5 minutes... and again, I think I just "stumbled" upon the best way right from the start.

So, how do you teach phonics to the autistic child? Surprisingly, for Zachary, it had been much simpler than I would ever have imagined. It had not been that hard and I did not need a lot of expensive materials to do it. It had been quite the opposite actually!

I now knew for a fact that Zachary knew his letters, so I simply took each letter and went through the alphabet saying: "A" says "ah" (as in apple), sometimes "a" (as in cake), "B" says "buh", C says "cuh" sometimes ssss (as in city). Note: I never told him the "as in" part I provide here in brackets... I just provided **the letter and the sound**… if more than one sound existed for the letter, I would say the first sound, join it with the word "sometimes" for any additional sounds: So, for example, I would say: A says ah, sometimes a. That's it.... nothing else... no other words, no associations (for example, "as in apple"), etc.... just the sounds for each letter...THE SOUND ONLY - THAT WAS IT! I gave "the letter – the sound" only – the lowest level to phonics – with no "word examples"!

In no time, Zachary could rhyme though the entire alphabet providing me with the appropriate letter sound(s) for each letter. Below, I have provided in table format how I taught Zachary his phonics verbally.

There were a ton of materials out there to teach children phonics... and some were rather expensive. However, any person who knew how to read knew the letter sounds... and so, I provided those I used for Zachary in the tables below. Teaching the concept of "letters having sounds" was all that I wanted to do... and that, I could do without a book or fancy materials.

Below, I provided each basic letter sound for readers as well as consonant blends and digraphs most often used. These provided more than enough to get any parent started with phonics. For vowels... I did not provide the "label" of short verses long until much later... I ended up trying to do that later on... although I found that once Zachary knew the sounds, it really did not matter if he knew "this was a long a or a short a"... most adults do not even know that. :o) For those parents who did not know the difference between short and long vowels, the mystery was simple: if the letter sounded like the "letter of the alphabet"... that was the long sound for the vowel - the other was the short vowel sound! In terms of Zachary knowing the difference, this was not a "biggy" in my book as far as having to teach that right away. Teaching the label of "short" verses long could come later... after all, anything having to do with "labels" was quickly learned by Zachary, and so, I knew this would not be a huge stumbling block later on.

Basic letter sounds were as follows - remember, I would not "say out loud" anything I provided in brackets.... **I said just the letter and the sound** - that was all I provided for Zachary... with a "sometimes" if there was more than one sound. This was key to Zachary quickly picking up the concept of phonics. Also important was to note that for Zachary, I taught phonics "by ear" not "by sight".

By that I mean that I did not use flash cards or other materials (paper, blackboards, etc.) of any type... I **sounded** out each letter sound(s) for him. The reason I believed you had to "sound" out the phonics was because, again, flash cards, pictures, associations, etc. brought additional "parts" to the situation whereas letter sounds were just that... basic sounds - so there was no "additional interference", no unnecessary distractions to the lesson being taught!

Also, keep in mind that most phonics materials out there may not teach phonics "in order of the alphabet"... taking each letter, in the order it appeared in the alphabet, and providing that letter's sound(s) one at a time - in the correct order. Doing phonics the way I did them below, in alphabetical order, provided for Zachary that continuation of the parts making the whole... the alphabet letters making a sound... later on, I could easily "mix them up" for him.

For parents who wanted to try teaching their children phonics, I encouraged you to practice a little with the chart below before actually undertaking the task. You wanted to be fairly "fluid" as you start calling out the letters and their associated sounds. I learned that the "hard way" and found it confusing even for me to keep this straight before I had gone through this a couple of times... I wanted to keep the long and short vowel sounds, for example, always in the proper order... always saying the "short" sound first, and then the long sound. I knew that would later help Zachary understand the difference... that the "long sound" was always the "second one mommy said for that letter", for example.

Although I had not personally used The Phonics Handbook by Sue Lloyd (ISBN 1-870946 08 –1) in the sense that I did not teach Zachary phonics using this method involving motion, in writing this text, I did look at the Phonics Handbook for “the basics” in terms of “sounds”, “blends”, etc. As such, although I just used the “letter + sound” approach to teach Zachary phonics, the information provided in this section based on “sounds to use” and “what the basic sounds were” in terms of things like blends, etc., was very much information from materials provided in the Phonics Handbook, by Sue Lloyd.

For those parents interested in purchasing this excellent guide, the reference for The Phonics Handbook was as follows:

Lloyd, Sue, The Phonics Handbook, Jolly Learning, Ltd, 1996 (ISBN 1 987946 08 1).

As I reviewed the information in this book as I wrote this text, I soon came to realize that this text was indeed a fantastic tool for the autistic. As such, if there was one “book” I felt to be “the best” for teaching language basics in children with autism – without a question – this was it!

Thus, even though my materials “looked different”, much of the content in the information provided in this section was based on materials put together by Sue Lloyd in her Phonics Handbook – a handbook that in my opinion, was one of the best tools on the market for teaching language in all children, but in my opinion, one of the very best tools especially for teaching language in the child with autism or any other person having difficulty in either producing or understanding language. Thus, although my materials were “different in look”, much of their content in this section was based on the work of Sue Lloyd. I had not used the “motion” in her teaching materials with Zachary, but I had used the basic “phonics information” in terms of knowing for example “what blends to teach”, etc. and as such, much of her information was included/integrated in what “I had done”. Granted, I had used other phonics materials also, but, without a doubt, if I had to “go back” and “start over” with Zachary, I would have made greater used of materials presented in this text.

What you want to know to say before you say it for the child...again, most of these words come from Sue Lloyd's Phonics Handbook (ISBN 1-870946 08 1). I encouraged parents to use words their children especially loved (i.e., for Zachary, I used "t is for truck".	How it should come out when you say it for the child... make the appropriate letter sound based on the example to the left!
A says "a" (as in apple), sometimes "ay" (as in day)	A says "a", sometimes "ay"
B says "b" (as in bat)	B says "b"
C says "k" (as in car), sometimes "s" (as in city)	C says "k", sometimes "sss"
D says "d" (as in drum)	D says "d"
E says "e" (as in egg), sometimes "e" (as in bee)	E says "e", sometimes "ee"
F says "f" (as in fish)	F says "f"
G says "g" (as in girl), sometimes "g" (as in George)	G says "g", sometimes "j"
H says "h" (as in hat)	H says "h"
I says "i" (as in pig), sometimes "i" (as in I)	I says "i", sometimes "I"
J says "j" (as in jump)	J says "j"
K says "k" (as in kite)	K says "k"
L says "l" (as in lip)	L says "l"
M says "m" (as in man)	M says "m"
N says "n" (as in nest)	N says "n"
O says "o" (as in off), sometimes "o" (as in open)	O says "o", sometimes "oh"
P says "p" (as in pig)	P says "p"
Q says "q" (as in quack)	Q says "qu"
R says "r" (as in rat)	R says "r"
S says "s" (as in snake) sometimes "z" (as in because)	S says "s", sometimes "z"
T says "t" (as in top)	T says "t"
U says "u" (as in up), sometimes "u" (as in you)	U says "u", sometimes "you"
V says "v" (as in van)	V says "v"
W says "w" (as in water)	W says "w"
X says "x" (as in fox)	X says "x"
Y says "y" (as in yellow), sometimes "y" (as in sky)	Y says "y", sometimes "i"
Z says "z" (as in zebra)	Z says "z"

I sounded the letter sounds out for Zachary a few times... always working my way through the **entire** alphabet. Since Zachary knew "of the alphabet", he understood its parts... he understood the alphabet started with "A" and ended with "Z"... and so, I wanted to provide the continuity from A to Z without stopping in the middle. In fact, if I did stop in the "middle" Zachary got upset and I had to continue until the entire alphabet had been completed. Within a day or two, I then started to ask him to tell me the sound... and he could! I would call out the letter and say, for example: "A says... " and he would complete the phrase by providing the appropriate sound... if there were more than one sound for a letter, after he said the first, I simply added "sometimes...." and he completed the phrase by saying the second sound. Soon, he could do so even when I "mixed them up"... he had learned the lesson... each letter had a specific sound(s) associated with it... that was all that mattered. Once the concept was learned, it was understood and the concept of "letters having sounds" could now be generalized to "combined letters"... or words! Once Zachary understood and knew the basic letter sounds, more sounds could then be added... in the form of short words and later basic blends and digraphs. Basic blends and digraphs were provided below. Again, I taught these sound in the same manner as shown above.

Once Zachary knew his basic letter sounds, these came easily - the concept was the same... each letter had a sound, so it was just a matter of putting the sounds together. For digraphs (like "ch", all I had to do was say: "c, h says... and say the sound"... that was all it took! The basics blends taken from Sue Lloyd's The Phonics Handbook included:

bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, fr, gl, gr, pl, pr, sc, sk, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, tr, ch, sh, th, wh, kn

So, for all of these, I proceeded just as I had with the letters... For example, I would say:

K N says N (as in knee)

Note: I could have easily used the concept of equations to teach this same thing, but I saw a problem with that. For example, if I said:

K + N = N

Zachary would catch on to that too... but, the more I thought about that, the more I thought equations should be kept for learning math as much as possible... for me to introduce the concept of an equation here may confuse him down the road... that was still too far ahead for me... but, something I did want to mention. So, my preference was to use: KN says N.

Then there were a few more complicated sounds to learn - again, this information was based on that provided by Sue Lloyd in The Phonics Handbook.

What you want to know to say before you say it for the child... again, these were words from The Phonics Handbook by Sue Lloyd – I provided these for example purposes only and encouraged parents to use words they knew their children seemed to "really like" or "already knew".	How it should come out when you say it for the child... make the appropriate letter sound based on the example to the left!
AR says "ar" (as in car)	AR says "ar"
CH says "ch" (as in chair)	CH says "ch"
EA says "ea" (as in read -past tense), sometimes "ea" (as in pea) - basically the same two sounds as the letter "e" above	EA says "ea", sometimes "e"
EE says "ee" (as in bee)	EE says "ee"
ER says "er" (as in her)	ER says "er"
IE says "ie" (as in pie)	IE says "aye"
OA says "oh" (as in goat)	OA says "oh"
OI says "oi" (as in coin)	OI says "oi"
OO says "oo" (as in foot), sometimes "oo" (as in moon) (both a short and a long to this one)	OO says "oo", sometimes "oo"
OR says "or" (as in for)	OR says "or"
OU says "ou" (as in ouch)	OU says "ou"
NG says "ng" (as in song)	NG says "ng"
QU says "qu" (as in quack)	QU says "qu"
SH says "sh" (as in ship)	SH says "sh"
TH says "th" (as in that)	TH says "th"
UE says "ue" (as in cue)	UE says "you"

Finally, certain sounds could be written in more than one way:

For example, for each of the ways in which the sound could be written, I would say to Zachary:

ER says "er".

IR says "er".

UR says "ur".

So as to not confuse a child too much, however, I recommended either introducing these on separate days, fairly far apart or using an equation system as shown in this table. Again, these "basic sounds/words" were taken from materials put together by Sue Lloyd in The Phonics Handbook.

SOUND	CAN BE WRITTEN AS
ER = IR = UR	ER, IR, or UR (as in never, bird, fur)
AW = AU = AL	AW, AU, AL (as in jaw, August, talk)
OI = OY	OI, OY (as in coin, boy)
OU = OW	OU OW (as in loud, cow)

Note that the important thing in the "equation" was to emphasize to the child that the sound was equal even though the spelling was different. Zachary could easily grasp that concept.

This provided enough on "phonics" to get all parents started on the task of teaching phonics to a child.

As mentioned earlier, the one thing I had not noticed until almost the completion of this book, was the fact that in teaching phonics, although I had not realized it at the time, motion had also played a part… in that Zachary had learned his letters via his Alphabet Train video… a video that involved considerable motion. Thus, in my view, the alphabet had to first be taught using motion, and color, and then phonics would come easily!

I had not personally used The Phonics Handbook to teach Zachary his "first phonics" – the "basics before blends", although I did go back later to use the information provided in this text to supplement what I had done. My sister-in-law had used this method and for her child, it had worked wonders. So, for Zachary, I knew that "the motion method" described in this text had not been involved in teaching him phonics. Clearly, for Zachary, the "sounding out" of phonics had been how he had learned "basic phonics" at first. Yet, the more I came to understand, the more I saw why The Phonics Handbook and its "motion method" was absolutely key. The critical link between The Phonics Handbook and the "alphabet train video" was that of MOTION! The Phonics Handbook used hand motions to teach sounds…the Alphabet Train video used motion to teach the concept of letters and their names. Motion – I was convinced was – like sound – a KEY element in teaching both the alphabet and phonics and I suspected, that in teaching the alphabet, color had also played a critical role for Zachary!

The one thing I did forget to mention in my first book (Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism) as it related to phonics, was that I also used a video called: Learn To Read With Phonics/Mrs. Phipps and Snoothy. One website that sold this video was http://www.videolearning.com/S0702.HTM. This company sold over 15,000 videos. The one I was talking about was item 10-7060. This was an absolutely excellent video for teaching letters and phonics. On this video, letters were written out carefully to show the child exactly how the letter was made (upper and lower case) and each letter's sound was then clearly given. Zachary did watch this a few times, but he really got the idea behind phonics simply by my calling out the letter sounds as done above. The video was simply something I used to reinforce the concept of phonics while I got to relax a little. This video costs $30.00. You may want to check with your local library ... or local schools. If they do not have these same products, they probably have at least something similar… Zachary knew all his letter sounds before watching this video simply based on my “sounding them out”… but, this video was good in that it also carefully showed how to make each upper and lower case letter too! So, the phonics video had not been involved in his actually “learning” the phonics.

Finally, once Zachary knew these sounds for "letters", I could then move on to the next step... WORDS! Another great resource from Mrs. Phipps for this topic is:

Learn To Read: Volume 2 This video dealt with soundable words, repeated vocabulary, word groups and word families. Five stories were acted out by children as Mrs. Phipps sounds out each word as it appeared on the screen, read the sentence, and then allowed time for the children to read. This was item no. 01-4203 (65 min. $ 29.95). Although I had not personally used this one, another parent of an autistic child suggested it as an excellent video, too!

Buying resources such as these can get rather expensive. As such, I encouraged parents to split the cost of such materials among support group members, etc. and to “create your own library as a group”. I also would not “stock up” on a ton of resources until you knew your child had mastered the first levels that needed to be mastered before moving on to the next and buying the “resources” for that.

Words!

Words were easy to teach once phonics had been mastered. I just wrote a simple word, like "cat" or "dog" and ran my finger under each letter as I put the "sounds together" for Zachary. I remembered how Zachary's face totally lit up when he finally understood exactly "where words came from"... these symbols, letters bunched together or "words" that were everywhere in his world... he now understood. Another huge piece of the "language code" had been broken for him. He finally understood how it "all fit together".

After the concept of words had been taught, I worked with a few flash card sets simply to reinforce reading ability. I found at first I greatly underestimated Zachary's potential in terms of reading. I, like all parents, started out with words like cat, dog, etc. I soon realized that Zachary was capable of much, much bigger words. That realization came to me when I awoke one morning to the sound of Zachary reading a label in my bedroom... a label he saw on the television... with perfect pronunciation, he read: "Panasonic". Again, it was just a matter of learning the concept... and once the "concept" was learned, he could easily generalize it to any word and moved forward quickly in terms of his ability to read.

So, from then on, I knew "big words" were ok too. As long as Zachary knew the phonics, he could pretty well make out the word. I now used flash cards to teach new words. A company called Frank Schaffer Publications made the flashcard set I liked the most. You could buy various sets of flash cards (I had 3 sets) with the word on one side and the picture on the other. The sets I had were for 1) action words (product no. FS-3214), 2) picture words (product no. FS-3205), 3) blends and digraphs (product no. FS-3210). These were excellent products for the autistic child. I simply picked them up at a local school supply store. Any school supply store should be able to order these products as this is a fairly large school supply company and it was very well known. I looked for their website, but could not find it off hand. If someone did find it, please forward it to me via my website and I will provide it for all parents on my website.

With these flash card sets, Zachary greatly rejoiced whenever he could make out a word and I would flip the card over to show him the picture. Seeing the picture when I flipped the card for the word he read acted as "the reinforcement" to go on. I did not have to use food or anything else to get him to read once he understood the concept that letters had sounds, and when sounds were put together, they made words... and words labeled things. That all important label provided what he so desperately needed to begin to cope with so much in his environment... and for Zachary, "breaking the code" provided plenty of reinforcement in and of itself!

Zachary's face showed an immense fascination when I put the "letters" and "sounds" together to "make things".... "words". It had been like seeing a little light bulb turn on when he figured out that letters had sounds, and sounds, put together made words, and words provided labels for things... and these labels helped understand "everything else". I literally saw the amazement in his eyes and the joy in his face when he figured that out with the first word he read: C-A-T. That critical "connection" had once again been made!

In no time at all, almost overnight, he had developed the ability to read! In looking back, I spent a great deal of time, just labeling things. A whole new world had opened up. I was so happy that Zachary was finally "talking"... or so it seemed!

Talking In Labels and Commands ... "Reference" Communication...

The Autistic Child's Preferred Ways to Communicate!

What I failed to realize for a long time was the fact that **all** of Zachary's speech now simply consisted of labels (words) and/or commands. He knew "what certain things were" and he had figured out that basic commands always produced the same outcome... commands like: "juice please", or "let's go". There were also the "yes" and "no". Because he could respond with "yes or no", I made the mistake of taking this for "conversation" for a long time. His world became one that consisted completely of labels, commands and one word answers...these I came to understand were just variations of "labels"... not actual conversation Conversation was still very much absent.

I now truly became aware of the fact that, for Zachary, "talking" was in "labels and commands". I realized that like labels, specific commands represented or "produced" very specific outcomes. "I want water", "open the door", "let's go walking", "car ride"... as did "yes" and "no" - all of these things produced very specific results... and the results were always the same. Thus, all these things, to Zachary, were no more than variations of "labels". It took no time at all for Zachary to figure out the fact that like labels, commands and "yes" or "no" always produced the same outcome... it had taken me much much longer to actually see that for Zachary, these were just extensions of "labels". Labels, commands and one word answers quickly became his "preferred" mode of communication... not only did they produce a specific result, but he could "get things" through commands and "have someone else do the work"... positive reinforcements indeed... for more than just the autistic child! :o)

Labels, commands and one word answers provided for Zachary concrete things and as such, he quickly learned to "tuck these away" for future use... what I have come to term "reference communication"! Reference communication was something we all do, but, for the autistic child, "reference communication" can become a huge tool as the child continues to "decode communication", as we will see under the language section addressing how to teach conversation and the concept of a "sentence" to the autistic child.

Reference communication played a **critical** role in terms of helping the autistic child understand **"Safety Issues"**. I strongly encouraged all parents to read this section, for in areas of "safety", incomplete or inaccurate reference communication can be a matter of life and death!

Conversation

As I read more on parent discussion boards, it soon became evident that although Zachary knew a ton of words, the fact that he spoke in labels and commands meant he was still “non-verbal” in that actual communication still was not there. I soon realized that the term “non-verbal” was a term that meant many different things to many parents. In my view, “non-verbal” should mean that a child only had a few words or none at all. “Non-conversing” was a more appropriate label for children like Zachary – children who had a wonderful vocabulary but still could not carry on a conversation. As much as I hated all labels, at least this one was more appropriate.

I now needed to figure out how to "get" actual conversation from Zachary. Coincidently, another factor would fall into place just at the time I needed it to.

Zachary had been on a supplement called TMG (a Kirkman Labs product) for close to two years now. Kirkman Labs specialized in products for the autistic. This particular supplement was supposed to help trigger language in autistic children, and I did suspect it did do that for Zachary - initially. I ended up running out of TMG in early July of 2002, just as we were leaving for a trip to visit relatives in Canada and, at the time, I decided that since Zachary was now on enzymes, I would no longer use the TMG and see how that went. TMG had a pretty strong dose of vitamin B in it and from parent discussions on the enzymes and autism Yahoo group, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/enzymesandautism/, I came to see that many parents felt their children could no longer tolerate TMG and other mega-dose vitamin products once their children were on enzymes. Enzymes helped to better break down food and supplements taken in by the autistic child, and as such, fewer supplements seemed to be necessary.

To my utter amazement, within a couple of days of being off the TMG, Zachary actually started to show more conversation... more actual responding to questions using more words. I could not believe it and thought it was just me... until others noticed it too. I did not know if this was just a "fluke" or if there was more to this... but I did know, that for Zachary, conversation started after I took him off the TMG. I wondered as to why that could be. I had never seen any studies on the long-term use of TMG and the result of then "going off the supplement"... so, I really had nothing to go on... just this one observation... in my own son.

Like other parents, I suspected that the enzymes did indeed allow Zachary to absorb more of his supplements and that perhaps now, he was actually getting too much Vitamin B. I had also removed the Super Nu Thera from Zachary's supplement list, again, based on comments from other parents who stated that "mega dose" vitamins had negative effects on their children once they were placed on enzymes. I had learned enough the hard way... so when the enzymes went in... the Super Nu Thera went out... it was only a couple of months later that the TMG ran out. I had placed Zachary on a regular cfgf (casein free, gluten free) multivitamin and so the TMG had been providing an extra dose of Vitamin B he probably no longer needed once on enzymes.

Again, this was simply a theory based on what I observed in my son - but literally within days of being off TMG, Zachary started to show signs of the ability to hold a conversation... it could have been a "fluke", "a coincidence", but I had no way to know either way.

At the time of the writing of this text, Zachary has been off TMG for about 2 months and his conversation skills were truly improving. This was the point at which we were. But, we had made progress even in the last month and so I wanted to share with parents my ideas/thoughts in this area as well... in terms of how I was tackling the whole issue of conversation based on what I had come to understand in terms of the autistic child's inability to process the whole without first understanding the parts that made up that whole.

The challenge with conversation was that it was random... it had no order. So, how do you even begin to bring order to something that had no order? How do you break down the "parts" to a sentence, for example, so that a very young child could understand how the "parts" of a sentence "fit together" to form a sentence and that sentences were then put together to form conversation.

I had noticed for a long time that if I asked Zachary to repeat a sentence, he could repeat the first few words, but then, the rest got all "garbled" as he tried to recall and repeat it. Why was that, I wondered?

Well, if you think about this issue of language in terms of the autistic child's inability to process the partial, what I believed to be the root cause of almost all their problems, then it all started to make perfect sense.

Letters, sounds, words... all of these, in and of themselves provided a "label" of some kind. For example, "A"... this was the letter "A"... that letter was now recognized as an entity in and of itself once it had a label specific to it and it only. The same was true for sounds and words... they provided "labels" for things and became entities in and of themselves... the "part" had now taken on a whole and so, it now became very, very easy for the autistic child to communicate in labels because these "names" for things define specific objects... whether those objects were "wholes" or "parts" of something else... the label made objects entities in and of themselves.

For example, the label "1/2" took a "partial" and made it "whole" ... the label 1/2 made the fraction, "the part", an entity, a "whole" in and of itself... something that could stand alone and be recognized as "1/2".

If indeed the autistic child had trouble with the processing of the parts making up the whole, as I firmly believed to be the case, it made perfect sense that a "sentence" would only appear as a bunch of incomprehensible "parts".... that until the child was shown the labels to those parts and shown how the parts fit together, that conversation would not come easily.

I thought a lot about this issue - how could I make such a young child see the "parts" to a sentence? To show the "parts" to the sentence, I would have to somehow "compartmentalize" the various "parts"... to allow Zachary to see individual parts first, and then to see them come together to make a sentence. So, how do you do that?

I came up with an idea... but I must admit, for quite a while, I debated as to which step should actually come first... the labeling of words as nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, etc., or the physical representation of a sentence in compartments to show the "parts of the whole". I had not thought about teaching the concept of a noun, verb, etc. to a 5 year old... and so, I simply decided to go with the concept of "compartmentalizing" the sentence visually for Zachary. I knew Zachary quickly grasped labels and so I felt the "concept" of breaking the sentence down into its parts visually should come first, and the labels to those parts, second. Once the "parts" were "there" visually represented, I could then worry about labeling them accurately later on. Partial labels would be enough for now.

As with everything, when it came to working with Zachary, I always went with my instincts as to which way to go. I had figured out a long time ago that the "voice" within me was there for a reason... and mothers, in particular, seemed to have been given a fantastic sense of instinct when it came to caring for their children.

The reason I decided to go with visual compartmentalization before providing labels for words (such as nouns, verbs, etc.) was very much in keeping with my theory that the true problem was first and foremost one of processing the parts to the whole... and that once those parts were understood in terms of how they related to the whole, labels would come easily. If my theory was correct, an autistic child would not be able to "label word types" (i.e., a noun, a verb, etc.) until he first saw how the words made up the whole... the sentence... and for the autistic child, the best way to do that, was via a visual representation and compartmentalization of "a sentence".

So, how do you put a sentence into "compartments"?

Sentence Compartmentalization Via Bubble Graphs

The answer was in what I called "bubble graphs". This concept was based on something I myself had learned when I was in 4th grade. I modified the concept to make it more applicable for the autistic - specifically! I did not believe this concept was still taught in schools, but it was a fantastic way to teach the "parts" of a sentence... for any child - autistic or not!

Before we get into the concept of bubble graphs, I wanted to emphasize to all parents to read my section on the importance of colors in the life of the autistic child. I believed that colors and shapes added extra elements or "parts" to bubble graphs that further help solidify the "compartmentalization of a sentence" for the autistic child... and as such, I would encourage all parents to make use of colors and shapes if they decided to try this. Note that sentence parts should have the same color and shape. For example all information related to the subject should look the same in terms its shape and color used. This in my opinion, helped to group that sentence part into a whole of its own... apart from the rest of the sentence. As such, I decided to use the following shapes and color codes with Zachary:

Red oval = subject info (article, subject, adjective), blue square = verb info (verb, adverb), green rectangle = object of the verb info or object of the preposition (depending on how technical you want to get at this stage – answers who, what, when, where, why, how – here, it was “how” in the sense of, for example, pulling with something verses the “how” you would see as an adverb, such as “pulled slowly”), brown hexagon = preposition info, purple cross = conjunction info.

Note: There were two types of bubble graphs presented for each sentence in the examples below… part “a” and part “b”. There was a tendency to move on to “part b” quickly – perhaps simply because these bubble graphs were so much fun to do – but, as with everything in teaching the autistic, I believed the concept presented in “part a” had to be well understood first, before moving on to “part b” and actually trying to “break out” the bubbles for labeling purposes. The key in everything was always to make sure the lowest building blocks were well laid before moving up in terms of going on to the next concept. If the lower building blocks were not properly laid the foundation to teaching language and conversation would not be as strong and as such, I wanted to caution parents against the inherent desire to “move along quickly”. I found I came much better at gauging Zachary’s pace in this area… I did not want to move too slowly (as I had done with labeling), but I did not want to move too quickly either (as I had done with teaching money – see Teaching Money section for more on that and how I think this needs to be taught)! :o)

Using The Bubble Graph Concept...

To Show How The Parts (Words) Fit Together To Form The Whole (The Sentence)

I used the following three sentences in working with Zachary - the first being the simplest, the last, the most difficult.

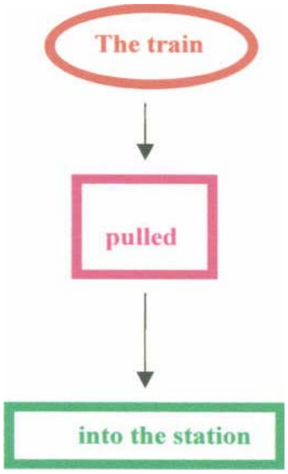
1. The train pulled into the station.

2. The long train pulled slowly into the station and was loaded.

3. The long steam train pulled slowly and carefully into the station and was loaded with logs, cars, trucks and coal.

The first sentence would be represented as follows in a bubble graph:

1a. The train pulled into the station.



Before I went any further, I provided a basic list of prepositions and conjunctions for parents as basic review. Teaching this concept to Zachary necessitated I have a basic understanding of grammar... nothing complicated... just the very basics! :o)

Prepositions And Conjunctions

Prepositions include: above, across, after, around, at, before, behind, below, beside, between, by, down, during, for, from, in, inside, into, of, off, on, out, over, through, to, under, up, with.

Conjunctions include: and, but, or

An excellent reference/workbook for parents was that of Wanda C. Phillips' "Easy Grammar" series: http://www.homeschoolbooksource.com/EasyGrammarDailyGrams.html. It provided a basic overview for grades 2/3 that went over key grammar concepts. But, any basic grammar book would do if parents felt they needed to "brush up" on grammar.

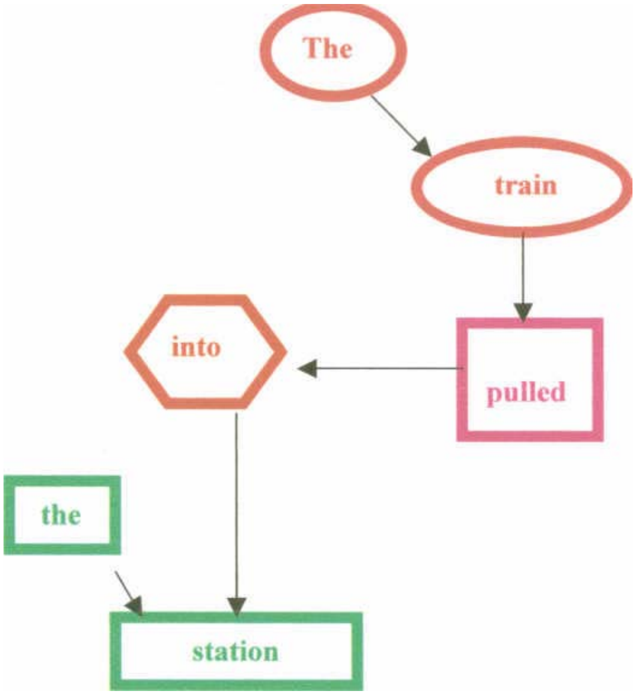
There were several key things the "bubble graph" representation did for the autistic child. Actually, this concept could be used for any child… and as such, would be an excellent way to help integrate the autistic into classes with their peers.

This graph took the sentence and broke it into pieces... its parts!

Note: When I was young, all we used were "bubbles" or ovals... I varied that concept a little, because I thought that a different shape and colors for each "word type" or "sentence part" would be more useful to the autistic child. Variety in shape and color, I believed, would truly help reinforce these concepts.

Also note that I showed "ideas" as parts to the whole. For example, the concept of "into the station" was left together... it conveyed **one** idea... and answered one question: The train pulled where? Into the station. This should greatly help with further sentence analysis in terms of actual labeling, etc., later on. Likewise, at this point in time, the subject information was all left into "one bubble"... the words "the" and "train" belonged together. By doing this, I hoped to help Zachary group ideas or concepts. I could then pull them out when it came time to label the "types of words". For now though, in order to understand conversation, what mattered was the understanding that sentences were simply small “parts” lumped together and that each “part” consisted of an "idea".

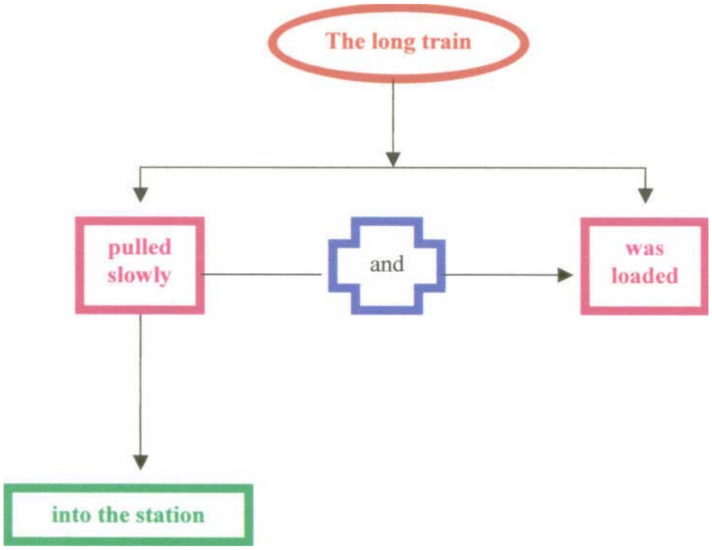
When the time comes to label the parts, this sentence would look as shown below in 1b… again, I believed “part a” had to be mastered before moving on to this level.



What the bubble graph concept did was that it provided a means by which the child could mentally compartmentalize a sentence as it was being said... and I hoped that this would help Zachary, and other autistic children to remember what had been said more easily during actual conversation or teaching. The concept was really quite simple and it was one I could build on as the sentence became more and more complicated and as the Zachary grew and learned more about grammar... about the concept of prepositions, conjunctions, phrases, etc. The key for the parent was just to start doing as much "labeling" as possible... to start with the basics and then to expand from there!

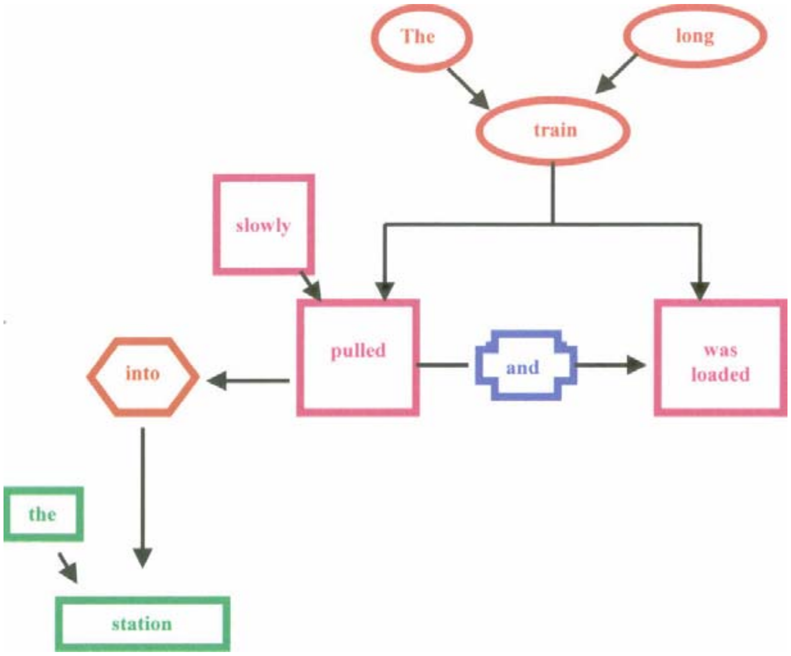
For example, in sentence no. 2, the sentence was slightly more difficult. Here, I added an adjective (long), and adverb (slowly), a conjunction (and) and another verb (was loaded). In spite of the greater difficulty, however, the concept remained the same.

2a. The long train pulled slowly into the station and was loaded.



So, this was basically, the same concept as in sentence 1... with just a few more words added. As far as the "and was loaded", this was where I was taught the "second verb" should go when I was a child. However, if that was too confusing for Zachary, I would not, at this point, have had a problem with moving the arrows to go from "into the station" to "and was loaded" instead of in between "pulled slowly" and "was loaded". The idea was just to get Zachary to "grasp" the ideas in the sentence. To try to develop conversation, I just wanted to ensure the concept of "compartmentalization" of parts (words/phrases) to the whole (the sentence) was understood.

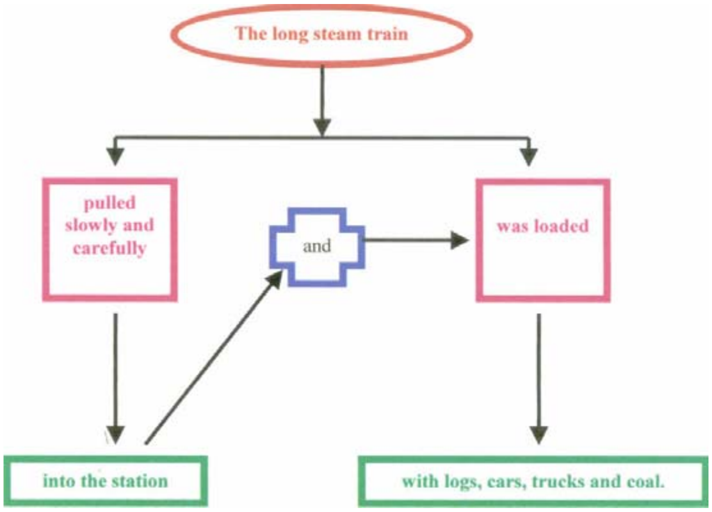
Expanding sentence 2 for the "labeling stage" would give us 2b as shown below (again, this only needed to be done much later... when Zachary was fully comfortable with part "a" of graphs 1, 2 and 3 - and understood the concept of compartmentalizing "ideas" very well):



Now, each part of the sentence could be labeled for Zachary. Again, labeling, in my view would come after the concept of "ideas" within a sentence was learned. In school, most children probably learned this stuff in 2nd or 3rd grade. Since Zachary was only 5, I figured I had time (although, at the time I started doing these exercises with him, again, my enthusiasm got the best of me – again!). But, as I was practicing all these graphs with him, I tried to make sure I labeled for him as much as I could as we work (keeping it to subject info, verb info, object of the verb info was the best way to start). If I saw I was getting ahead of what Zachary could grasp, I simply had to slow down on the "full breakout" and work with the simpler "grouped" ideas graph (the first graph for each sentence). It really depended on Zachary as to how fast we would get to the "full breakout" and "full labeling" of articles (i.e., the), nouns (i.e., train), adjectives (i.e., long), verbs (i.e., pulled), adverbs (i.e., slowly), prepositions (i.e., into), and object of the verb (i.e., station... with associated adjectives, articles that go along with "station").

Now for sentence 3. This was, again, the same concept - just a little more complicated.

3a. The long steam train pulled slowly and carefully into the station and was loaded with logs, cars, truck and coal.



Note that no matter how difficult the sentence became, the "ideas" were grouped together, to facilitate comprehension and provide that "compartmentalization" of sentence parts I believed could help Zachary with actual conversation as it helped him understand the parts to the whole.

NOTE: As I did these examples on a chalkboard and worked with Zachary, I noticed he became confused with the sentence flow... that was easily fixed by a simple arrow change... now the arrow flowed exactly with the sentence... from "into the station" to "and". Zachary easily grasped the concept of bubble graphs. He was truly fascinated by it and enthusiastically answered with the correct answer when asked: "what goes in this bubble?"... so, I was sure this concept would work well for him! I had done this sentence with Zachary the day I first introduced the concept of bubble graphs to him. As usual, I always had a tendency to “get ahead of myself” when I saw how well Zachary grasped certain concepts. I literally had done all 6 of these bubble graphs with him in a matter of an hour or so. As with everything, the "complexity" of the sentence made no real difference because once the concept was learned, it could be applied to any sentence. I did encourage parents to start with simple sentences first, as I did however, to let the concept be understood in its easiest form first and to really work with “ideas” first as opposed to what was shown in part “b” of each example. I planned on “going back” a little to make sure Zachary truly understood the “subject” verses the “verb” info, etc., and I knew that right now, he did not have that understanding… although he certainly loved making these graphs. :o)

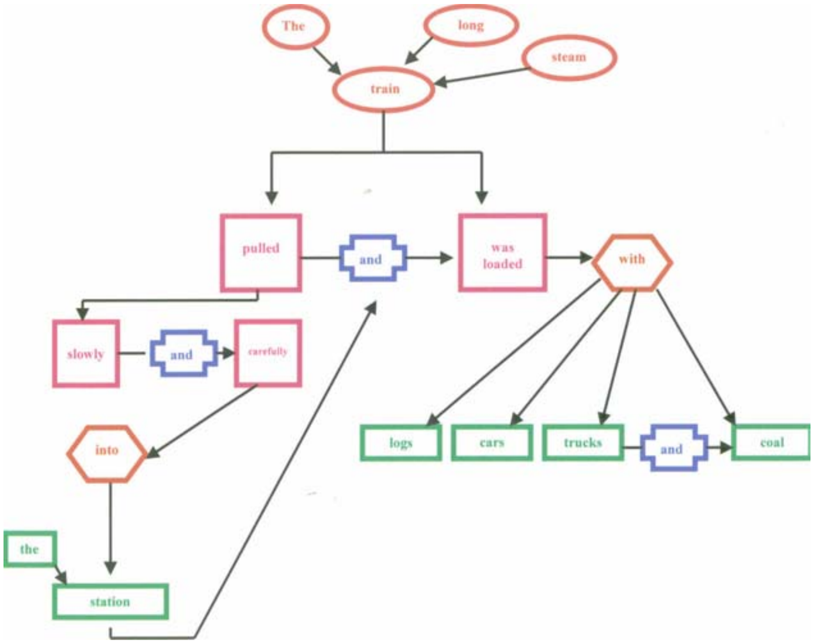
Zachary did have a fantastic memory though…a week later, Zachary was able to recall the entire last sentence from memory, in perfect order with no visual whatsoever! Truly impressive for a child who could barely recall a sentence when it was spoken to him in “conversation” right now… but, I knew this concept would ultimately help him with overall conversation issues! Thus, if I could teach him to do this for all sentences as he heard them, to automatically "compartmentalize them", I believed this would greatly help with his comprehension of language and his ability to actually hold a conversation and respond in "bigger sentences" than one or two word sentences as had been the case in the past. :o)

The idea for parents here was simply to experiment and do what worked best for your child. The above, 3a, was better for "idea comprehension" and "sentence" comprehension in terms of "flow" than was 2a ... and "idea comprehension" was the first objective! The exact label (see 2a for “proper” label of that arrow going to “and” as it had been taught to me as a child) could come later once Zachary understood the concept of sentence parts and what each represented. He had after all, just recently only had his 5th birthday – so I still had some time to get these concepts across. :o)

Finally, for the "full blown" labeling stage, sentence 3 would appear as shown below in 3b.

3. The long steam train pulled slowly and carefully into the station and was loaded with logs, cars, trucks and coal.

Note the changes I made to the flow here. This was slightly different from the way I was taught to break a sentence down into its parts, but, I believed this worked better for the autistic child... at least in the beginning. Actual proper labeling was not that big of an issue in that once the concept of "ideas being grouped" was understood (part "a" to examples 1, 2, and 3) it was much easier to "tag the label" to the idea. Autistic children strived on labels. Shifting the visual representation of “parts” in and of itself did not change the actual “label” of those parts, and hence "shifting them around", in my view, was not that big a deal. Once the concept and the labels were put together, it should be much easier to shift things as needed based on what seemed to work best for the child.



Again, note that I had switched the arrow between "into the station" and the word “and” leading to the next verb in order to facilitate Zachary's comprehension. When Zachary was ready for exact labeling, that arrow could be moved to its “proper spot” as in 2a... but, at this stage it was fine like this since it helped keep the ideas or “parts” together and helped with sentence flow, allowing Zachary to focus on the concept of “ideas” to language/ conversation. The shapes maintained the concept of "groups" of similar things (i.e., all red oval items referred to the subject, all blue square items referred to the verb, etc.).

Providing this consistency in labeling via the shapes and/or color would greatly help Zachary as he moved from "idea groups" to "labeling of words within an idea".

So, to recap, I would suggest doing "bubble graphs" with "ideas" lumped together first and ensuring that concept was well grasped (graphs 1a, 2a, and 3a type stuff) to help the child with "categorization" of sentence parts and ideas and then, later down the road, I would get into the full blown "labeling" (graphs 1b, 2b and 3b) of sentence parts as shown above. Note, there was nothing wrong with starting to label, subject items, verb items, etc., almost right away as long as the child was grasping the "categorization" of each group of "ideas" (i.e., the subject info, the verb info, etc.). Indeed, Zachary actually showed great interest when I actually "blew out" the bubbles for labeling purposes. The entire concept of bubble graphs fascinated him... understandably so... since before him were the keys to unlocking yet another code for language... sentence parts!

Once the "ideas" or “parts” were captured visually, the actual exact labeling of sentence parts could really take place, and in my opinion, truly move the child forward in mastering language and conversation.

As with everything, when the child was ready for the actual "labeling" of everything that "labeling" of specific sentence parts needed to take on a specific order to help the child see how the "parts" (word types, such as noun, adjective, verb, adverb, etc.) fit into the "whole" (the sentence). Each word type (i.e., noun, verb, etc.) needed to be specifically defined. For example, a noun was a person, place or thing.

Providing labels to sentence parts would further help Zachary grasp the concept of language. This was a good reference for teaching language basics.

http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/grammar.htm

The concept of bubble graphs as shown above could then be expanded specifically to teach grammar or actual word types such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.

For example, for nouns, a bubble graph could be made to show "nouns" in the top bubble with that bubble having arrows to three separate bubbles below: persons, places or things. Each of those bubbles (persons, places, things) could then be made into bubbles of their own with examples of each below in yet more bubbles. For example, under a "top bubble" for "person", you could add arrows to a bubble below with the words: mother, father, sister, brother, doctor, teacher, Zachary, Andrew, Anika, etc. The same could be done with "places"... with words in the lower bubble including things like: beach, park, home, school, Chicago, Arizona, work, etc. Likewise, the same concept can be used for "things".

The concept of the bubble graph was a very powerful tool for the autistic child in helping him to break the code to the meaning of sentences and "how they worked". If I found that Zachary was having too much trouble grasping idea groups, I would simply try to start by labeling the various word types and seeing if that worked better instead (i.e., making bubbles to define nouns, etc. as explained above).

For the absolute genius in labeling sentence types, this was a fun link that would surely keep any little genius from being bored!

http://www.virtualsalt.com/rhetoric.htm

Note that in labeling actual sentence word types, I had a specific order in mind.... first the noun... then anything related to the noun... like the adjective (big, fast, etc.) or the article (the, a, etc.). I would not move on to the next "type of word" (i.e., a verb), until all types of words relating specifically to the first type (the noun) had first been identified (i.e., the adjective, the article) and their association to the first type of word, the noun, carefully shown and defined.

Finally, the next step would be to take the same sentences you had previously used and to "move them around" to show how simply changing the order of the words could change sentence meaning as well. Again, I would use the bubble graphs to do this.

If you think of the "building blocks" approach... it was my belief that language should be taught as follows to the autistic child:

1. Start with the alphabet (using songs, colors, border type posters, etc.)

2. Show the child that letters had sounds.

Note that I did not say: Tell the child each letter had "a" sound. That would be incorrect since some letters had more than one sound. To say each letter had "a" sound would introduce confusion for the child when "another sound for that letter was taught"... and I believe that once "labeled" as "each letter had "a" sound", you would have a very difficult time undoing that label showing only "one sound association". That was why I felt my approach to phonics had worked so well with Zachary… I gave him all the sounds for each letter at once, simply using the word “sometimes” between the letter sounds! By introducing all the basic sounds for one letter all at once, I did not “surprise” Zachary by trying to introduce “additional sounds” for the same letter. So, the key was to say: "letters have sounds"...and to say that a letter can have 1, 2 or maybe even 3 or 4 sounds… and to simply join those sounds with the word “sometimes”, as explained in my section on Phonics.

I would work on showing the child the sound(s) for each basic letter by saying them out loud... going through the entire alphabet each time. That provided continuity for the child. In addition, it was less stressful. To stop in the middle of the alphabet may prove stressful for a child who could not cope with partiality, what I believed to be the root of almost all problems we saw in autistic children. With practice, the child would see the "label" to each letter and sound association, and as with everything, that "sound" would become an entity in and of itself and so, as time went on, it became easier to go through sounds "out of order" and to mix up the alphabet. From the time I started to teach Zachary sounds, to the time I could mix the letters up took only a matter of days.

3. The next step would be to show the child that you could put letters together, to make new sounds (digraphs) and that sounds could be put together to make words...and that WORDS provided LABELS for things!

4. Next, I would show the child that you could put letters/sounds together to make words. Once Zachary knew his letters and sounds, it was simple to "put them together" for him... to simply write a word and have him read it by saying: "What does that say"? or "Read that word" and putting my finger under each letter as I showed him to read the first few words. After just a few, he was off and running...

5. Next, I would provide a "visual" representation of the "parts" of the "whole"... the words that made up the sentence by use of what I called a "bubble graph" as shown in 1a, 2a and 3a.... and eventually moving on to 1b, 2b, and 3b after the child had grasped the concept shown in 1a, 2a and 3a.

6. Next, I believed would come the labeling of word types within a sentence... a noun, an adjective, a verb, and adverb and so on... in a very specific order, as noted above.

Order I would suggest: noun, article (i.e., the, a), adjective, verb, adverb, object of the verb or preposition (answers who, what, when, where, why, how), phrase (idea), preposition (with, under, into etc.), and conjunctions (i.e., and - words that join ideas or phrases). Show that ideas could be put together to make a sentence. Sentences should be labeled as complete thoughts. Sentences could be put together to make paragraphs. Paragraphs could put together to make a story, show a lesson, provide information or for pleasure/fun. Lessons had to be defined as teaching you facts, morals or could be just for "fun". Each one of these things would need to be labeled and defined as its own entity, with its purpose made as clear as possible for the child (i.e., the paragraph, the sentence, the lesson, etc.).

7. Next, I would change the order of the words in the sentence... the order of phrases within the sentence to show how changing order can change the meaning as well! :o)

8. The next step to actually getting to conversation was to help the child "visualize the bubbles" away from the paper/board - as conversation was taking place. This could be done using your finger and "drawing/placing/pointing to the bubbles in the air - as you spoke". This provided a visual reinforcement for the child that "conversation was simply sentences with parts"… and should help take the concept of “bubble graphs off the wall or chalkboard” to apply it to daily life!

9. The final step would be in helping the child focus on the "important parts" of the sentence... to explain that "when people talk, the important stuff was usually at the beginning or the end of a sentence" and that you had to "answer" the person. To answer, would mean to answer the question, or reply to the last part of the sentence. Role playing would greatly help in this area. For example, I often asked Zachary a question and then provided the answer to… and then, made him repeat it.

For example, if I asked Zachary: What are you doing? If he did not answer, I answered for him and told him: "say... I am watching tv mom"... and he usually then repeated the answer for me. Much as with echolalia and "ordering language", this helped him to "order" appropriate responses for future use - reference communication, as talked about earlier.

Zachary was just starting to initiate conversation... right now, he answered my questions. He was getting slowly better at using more words in his replies. I had also noticed that he was now using more "statements of fact" in his conversation as opposed to labels and commands. For example, he was finally saying: “I am tired” and expressing emotions or “how he felt” more. Since autistic children had such limited speech... and speech development was often so lengthy, it was easy to fall into the trap of "conversation" simply taking on the form of "questions" initiated by the parent/caretaker. Parents, like children, needed to work at increasing the variety in terms of the types of language used... to move away from "just questions" to "exclamations, statements of fact, etc." I, personally, found this hard to do after having spent so much time always "questioning" Zachary.

Although I, myself, was just really at this stage of moving from labels and commands to actual conversation with Zachary, I found that he was quite receptive if I did the following: When he asked for something, I took it the next step by asking him for the "object of the verb"... in other words, I always tried to ask him to answer the "who? what? when? where? why? or how?" behind everything he wanted. When he said something, no matter what it was, I tried to "tag on" one of these questions to expand on the idea.

A simple: "give me that" on his part was followed by a "what do you want that for" on my part. "I want juice, please" on his part was followed by a "where are you going to drink that juice?" on my part. It was easy enough to switch the "who?, what?, when? where? why? and how?" around to create a little variety in speech. For example, I could also respond: "how do you want your juice?" or with "when do you want some juice?". At this point, I pretty well always had to answer for Zachary, and make him repeat the “answer”, but that was fine since I knew this helped build that “reference communication for him”. Anything to help further the idea just one more step would eventually go a long, long way toward helping actually get to conversation. :o) Using this concept in reading books, and pointing out the "who? what? when? where? why? how?" as the book was read should also help a great deal in making this whole concept of phrases as ideas, or parts to a sentence a lot more concrete.

Obviously, since I was just starting to do this myself, Zachary still struggled very much with my doing this... so, I always helped him along by giving him the answer and having him repeat it. This did a couple of things. It helped reinforce the concept of "what is the object of the verb"... and therefore, this helped him "understand the ideas" or "parts" to the sentence and made my paper examples of bubble graphs now become practical, concrete examples of speech that he could use for future reference. Once I could get Zachary to think this way, I believed conversation would flow much more readily and that comprehension would be greatly increased (although I did believe he truly understood a lot more than I gave him credit for :o)).

The key to all language, however, in my opinion - was labeling and the definition of purpose for each type of word or phrase! The more parents labeled and explained, the more the child would understand - the more he would "break the code" and the greater his progress would be... in all areas!

Given what I had come to understand, as provided further in this document, I also believed that motion was critical in terms of actually understanding language and the meaning of words. Thus, "moving bubble graphs" would be the best way to teach the "concepts" behind language (via software, videos, etc.).

In terms of teaching language, there were a few other key areas that I also wanted to address in terms of "how" I would teach them based on what I had seen in Zachary.

Teaching Synonyms, Antonyms, Homonyms, Homophones and Acronyms

To The Autistic Child...

Synonyms and Antonyms

Much like the concept of "same" and "different", the same stumbling blocks were true in teaching the concept of "synonyms and antonyms".

I knew this had been another area of struggle for Zachary. I found that the key was in "which words" I used to teach this concept. Zachary understood the concept of "equal to", so, when teaching synonyms or antonyms, or the concept of "same" verses "different", the words "equal to" or "not equal to" went much further in getting the point across than saying for example, "means the same thing as". "Means the same thing as" had no meaning to Zachary... for him, all things were "this" or "that"... so, the difficulty was in breaking that understanding that something could only be "one thing"... that only "one word" could represent "one thing". The best way to do that was to use the words: "equal to" or "not equal to"... that made it clear and provided the "order" Zachary needed to understand the concept.

Once he learned what words could mean the same thing or could mean opposites, I could expand his vocabulary even further by using "equal" or "not equal". By the way, the concept of opposites worked well for Zachary... so, responding to "what is the opposite of ..." would not be difficult for Zachary. Again, however, it was an "all or nothing", up verses down, open verses closed... so to teach “more” antonyms, I believed there would be greater success in expanding vocabulary by perhaps switching between the use of "not equal to" and "opposite of".... in the same way that "equal" should be used along with labeling something as a "synonym". Proper labeling was critical! One or two word labels were best to teach concepts. As with everything, I found it critical to try to teach the "in between", the "parts" or "variations" to each concept… to use examples that showed degrees of "sameness" or of "difference".

Words That Teach Quantity, thus, were another excellent tool (see section on Words That Teach Quantity).

The key to teaching so many concepts, I found, was simply to use "equations" to teach variations of the same concept. This, I believed, was the critical key to overcoming issues with incomplete reference communication – especially as it related to issues of safety (see section on Safety).

In teaching the concept of "same verses different"... I took pictures that looked alike, but not quite... showed gradual increases in "sameness" or in "difference"... changing "one thing at a time"... adding "one difference or sameness" at a time... and using the Word To Teach Quantity as I went along... saying for example: "This one is just a little bit different" and pointing out the difference on the picture. I labeled the difference for Zachary by verbally expressing the difference.... then, once Zachary had reached the exact same picture as the original picture, I would say: These are exactly the same... emphasizing the word, "exactly". Again, was all in teaching the "in between" and labeling the "in between" for the child!

Homonyms

Homonyms were words that were spelled the same way but had different meanings. For example, a pool of water and the game of pool (played on a pool table). I had not had to do much with these yet, but I did anticipate that they would pose a problem. I was sure that the use of equations would help, but, again, using the same word to mean different things would undoubtedly cause issues for Zachary. This was simply not an issue I had really had to deal with so far. Perhaps in this case, pictures would be best used... with the words written below them. I had done many flash cards with Zachary. Perhaps the key here would be to teach these separately. For example, not to teach the 2 meanings for 1 word spelled the same way on the same day... but to actually space out the 2 definitions... providing one on one day, and perhaps the other a week or two later. I think time and pictures would be the best tools to use in teaching this concept that one word could mean many things.

For the autistic child, homonyms would definitely cause confusion if taught on the same day... because for the autistic, everything needed to "make sense" and have its own label... and here, the " one label" was used to mean more than one thing. Thus, the "parts" could be defined based on a specific label alone... and as such, I believed that with that label must come something else... perhaps "a picture", or some other association in order to help solidify the concept that one word could mean many things.

Homophones

Homophones were words that sounded the same, but were spelled differently. An example of homophones was: to, too, two – or sun verses son. Here we had words that sounded the same, but that meant something different. With homophones, I thought that teaching these words on different days would again be key. Things that were “the same” (here the same in terms of sound) but that mean something different should not be taught “together”… I just thought that would introduce too much confusion for the autistic child, although, due to the different spelling, I believed teaching homophones would be easier than teaching homonyms.

I believed that once homophones were taught (preferably separately), that the autistic child’s accurate mind would simply memorize these as “different” words even though they sounded the same due simply to the fact that they were spelled differently. In this case, the parent’s tool of choice was again, definitely “time”… actually teaching these on different days. Again, the use of equations in the form of “two = 2” or “too = also” should help. Another example would be the use of son verses sun... again, the concept was the same, sun = something in the sky that was yellow, whereas son = mommy and daddy's boy.

Acronyms

In working with Zachary, I also noticed that acronyms were a problem for him. For example, as he worked on the computer, I noticed that Zachary would always say: "hit oak" when he saw the word "OK" on any computer program. So, he could not read the letters to the acronym... he read the acronym as he would read any word... and with "ok"... that produced the sound of "oak".

I had only started to work this issue. In using bubble graphs as discussed in my language section, I once made use of the song Twinkle Twinkle Little Star as an object of the verb. Rather than writing out the entire title in the bubble graph, I simply wrote: "T.T.L.S." and pointed to each letter as I said the song title. Zachary had seen the title spelled out in the sentence and so it was easy enough for him to make the association. This was the only time I had ever really worked this issue with Zachary. I honestly did not think this concept would be that difficult a concept to teach as the use of equations (i.e., "equal to"), visual representations and actual verbalizations as to what the acronym meant, together, should greatly help the autistic child understand this concept. I found that in teaching acronyms that “periods” between the letters were better than just letters in terms of getting the point across.

Finally, in teaching Zachary anything, I found that some of the best coping tools I could provide were "Words To Cope" and "Words That Teach Quantity". Both of these greatly helped me to reduce Zachary's stress levels when things simply became too frustrating.

Words To Cope©... Words Of Encouragement...Words To Help Understand...

In working with Zachary, I found specific words to be a great help for him. When frustrated, he came to use these himself to deal with frustration.

For example, if something was particularly frustrating, I would always say:

"it's ok...it's ok..." or "try again...", or "you can do it..." or "all done", etc. When things did not work exactly the way he wanted... for example, when a stack fell over, I would say: "it's broken" or "it's too tippy". To help him separate a part from the whole (for example - a band aid on the skin), I would say things like: "it's stuck". Again, that helped him cope with the fact that something that did not belong "was there" and that better helped him cope with the "partial" (i.e. the bandage) and helped him accept it as part of the whole... as something it was ok to have there. Using "all fixed" also helped in many, many situation. These were just simple examples of words I used that I found very helpful to Zachary... you could use them in many, many situations to help your child cope with the partial he had so much difficulty with. "Bye-bye" was another one... a word to help "complete a visit" for example... much like "all done". "All done", I found helped tremendously in going from one situation to another... helping with transitions... helping to see completion of one task and time for the next.

Words like: "it's stuck" or "it's broken" were especially important to Zachary. Given his inability to cope with partiality in anything until parts were labeled and made entities in and of themselves, I could certainly understand, why these two short phrases, in particular, were among Zachary's favorite in helping him cope with stressful situations. Things that to him did not appear to belong were just “stuck” or “broken”, until they could be better explained and understood.

Also - again - helping him to "understand the problem" was a great help. For example, if Zachary wanted to stack a lot of big Legos and they tipped over, I would say: "make it sturdy" and show him how to do that as I reinforced the base of his stack and said, "see, now it's study". Soon, as I kept saying "make it sturdy", the frustration pretty well went away and he could cope much more easily with the situation when the blocks tipped over.

So, the key was to provide "Words To Cope©" when frustration presented itself. Other words I used were: "it's ok to be different", or "it's ok to be silly", or "let's make it different", or "let's make a funny pile", etc., ...as I showed him how to make things different, or funny, or silly, etc.

Another key phrase I used was "try again". Zachary really caught on to that concept...whenever I gave him something he did not want to eat, now, he would say: "try again"... it was so funny! He did the same thing when I tried to engage him in activities he did not want to do, etc. I guess you could say that's his "favorite saying". When he could not do something on his own and needed my help, he caught on to the “you can do it” phrase I used with him… only now, he said: “you can do it, mom”. :o)

I made all these simple words/phrases part of my daily vocabulary...they helped increase flexibility... and that was key! These concepts were concepts parents used everyday with their children, to various degrees, and I suspected, this also helped explain why some children coped better than others... it was all in the labeling, the use of the "right words" and in explanations (i.e., of purpose, etc.). :o)

Words That Teach Quantity...

Another great tool for teaching the autistic child!!!

I used many words to teach the concept of "the part" verses "the whole". The words below were but a few to get parents started on teaching quantities or “in between” situations. In addition, when teaching a specific thing, a specific concept, the "degrees" within that concept needed to be taught... the part verses the whole in everything. This was applicable for teaching in all areas of life for the autistic child. These words helped the child understand a multitude of concepts in terms of how the “parts” fit into the “whole”.

a couple	each	how much	none	some
a few	empty	in between	not quite	somewhat
a piece of	enough	just about	one	sparse
all	equal to	less than	only	too little
all but	every	a little	part of	too much
all done	exactly	many	partial (ly)	totally
almost	few	much	plenty	various
any	full	multiple	scarce	very little
as good as	group	nearly	several	very much
as much as	how many	no	sole	whole

Teaching The Concept Of Money

One area that could positively make use of labels was in the teaching of the concept of money. Once the concept of “symbols” representing something had been learned, this concept could be applied to teaching many things to an autistic child.

Teaching money was definitely one of those occasions to show Zachary how the "parts" made up the whole and how “things” often represented “something else”.

It had taken me about $10.00 in change to make the prop I needed to teach money. I hoped to make both the "time" and "money" tools I created available as posters for parents to use.

The idea behind this was simply to give Zachary an exact visual of how money "fit together" in terms of a "concept"... that 100 pennies = $1.00 , 10 pennies = 1 dime, 2 nickels = 1 dime, 1 nickel = 5 pennies, 2 nickels = 1 dime = 10 pennies = 1 dime = 1 nickel + 5 pennies = 1 dime = 2 nickels... and so on. Note that I did provide some repetition here because I found that as I went through the "board", Zachary had great enthusiasm if he could "answer" something previously learned in terms of "what equaled what" (i.e, 2 nickels = 1 dime) and that helped keep him interested in the task... anticipating knowing yet another answer as we moved along!

I found Zachary's interest to be absolutely overwhelming the first time we did this task - as I helped him "decode something", but to go to "almost no interest" by the second try. As such, with almost everything, I always had to "put things away for a while" and take them out again later. Having gone through the “initial trials” of teaching money to Zachary, I was now convinced that the best approach would be to take my “poster” and to break it down into unit equivalents that could be provided as flashcards. For example, one flashcard would show: 1 dime = 10 pennies = 1 nickel + 5 pennies = 1 dime. I planned on doing this for all units of money, showing as many “equivalents” as possible on one card.

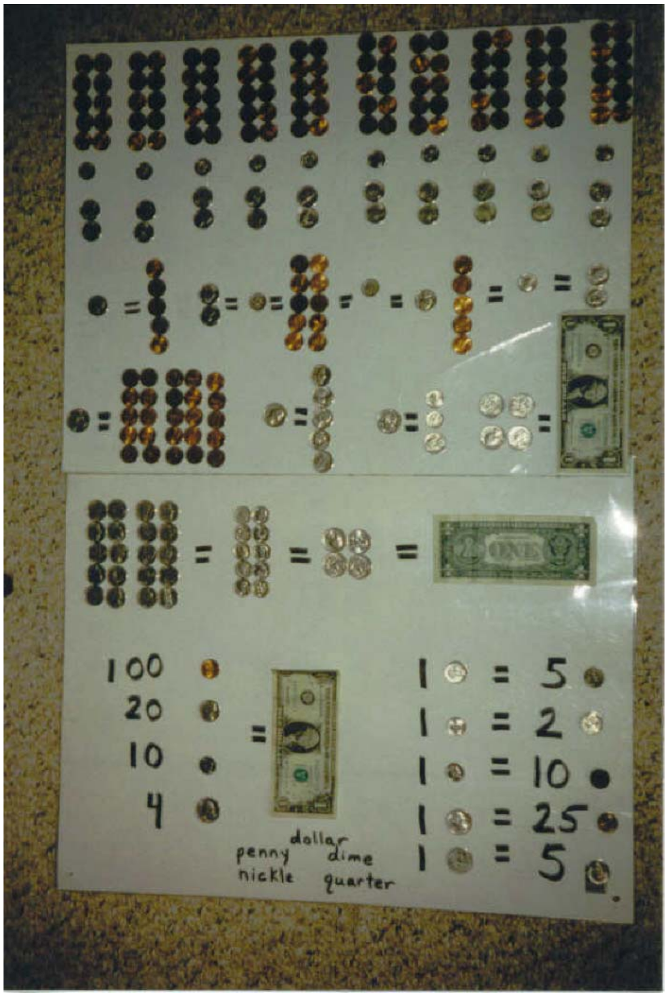
The board below represented a **final** view of what to use to teach Zachary the concept of money. Since interest needed to be maintained, just showing this entire board at once would not be the way I would start if I had to do this all over again. I would take "each section" or unit of money and actually work on that section or unit with "real money" or flashcards and use the board as another tool to reinforce the concept once I had taught "each part" with actual money. This was one of those issues I was still working and, unfortunately, I could only share my experience to date in terms of how I did things, what worked and what did not work in terms of traps I fell into.

In working with Zachary I found that just verbally giving him the equations also worked well. For example, I would say: "10 pennies = 1 dime " and later, I would say: "10 pennies = " and I would wait for him to provide the answer. As with phonics, that seemed to work quite well. The poster provided a good visual "final concept", but, I really believed a verbal "calling out" of equations and the use of actual money was the best way to start teaching the concept of money. Of course, since money could be a chocking hazard, when I did use it, I was always careful to make sure I was there with Zachary and that "all the coins were returned" when we were done. Using "exact amounts" at first was critical. I could then "add" more money and show Zachary how money could be "added" or subtracted... just like anything else that had to do with numbers.

In my opinion, as with the need to teach language in building blocks, the "correct progression" was important when it came to teaching money. As I had created my “poster” I first took 10 pennies and showed that 10 pennies = 1 dime, then I took 2 nickels and showed 2 nickels = 1 dime. I started with a definition of each basic unit of money first... 1 penny was shown as 1 penny (as I showed him an actual penny), 1 nickel was shown to be "this silver thing" and also said to "equal 5 pennies"... and so on! I worked with one unit at a time to show the various combinations that could "make that equivalent"... for example working with a dime and showing that 1 dime "was this little silver thing", but 1 dime also was equal to 2 nickels, or 1 nickel and 5 pennies or 10 pennies. I did this for the nickel, the quarter, and the dollar as well... working my way up, from the smallest unit up... starting with the penny, to just show 1 penny... then the nickel... to show 5 pennies = 1 nickel, then the dime... to show 10 pennies = 1 dime or 1 nickel and 5 pennies = 1 dime and so on. I started with pennies, showed how each "related to all other units" (nickel, dime, quarter, dollar - counting out up to 100 pennies to show the dollar relationship, etc.). Then, I tackled the next unit.. and its "combinations".

I spent a long time putting together this "final board"- actually using glue to put each coin into its perfect place, etc... but, again I found that Zachary lost interest the second day... so, I decided to try just one small unit each day... and work up to the whole as shown below... and to use the "final board" as a summary or reinforcement when the basic units were learned. :o)

Autistic children were very intelligent and, at least with Zachary, I found that although he wanted to "take it all in at once", doing that often worked to my disadvantage in that it was then much harder to maintain interest the next day and the tool had to be put away for a while and be retrieved later to continue the lesson. A slow buildup over time would be more helpful than providing the entire concept "as on this board" all at once... the final board was good, but only once the basics had been learned as small, individual increments. Many things, unfortunately, I had to learn the hard way, but I hope that my experiences with Zachary would help many parents from falling into the same traps I personally encountered.



This same concept of "building up slowly" should be applied to just about any lesson... for example, in teaching geography... teach the parts to the whole... starting with one country, then one continent, etc., and putting it all together... like a puzzle!

Teaching The Concept Of Time...

Given what I now understood about the autistic child's need to understand all the parts before the whole could be understood, I had very definite ideas as they related to the teaching of time in the autistic child.

Obviously, teaching time with a digital clock was the easiest way to start. Zachary could easily read digital clocks. However, he still needed to understand "those other clocks" too!

Ideally, I would like to eventually work with a programmer on many of these issues as they related to teaching very specific concepts to the autistic. For now, however, I could only share my knowledge via the Internet and paper copies... although I did hope to team up with a few programmers to develop software geared specifically to the autistic child. I had worked for a fortune 100 company for quite some time and during that time, I had the opportunity to work with close to 20 programmers, developing and testing software applications. Good programmers were expensive but well worth what they were paid in terms of working efficiently and effectively and providing quality products!

Actually, much of what I had come up with in terms of teaching language, money, time, etc. were valuable tools in teaching these concepts to any child! Software packages geared to the autistic could be invaluable tools also.

In terms of teaching money, there were really no clocks in existence that met the needs of the autistic child... so I came up with my own! I labeled everything I thought the autistic child needed to understand in terms of the concept of time... and I believed that this final product was an excellent one. I will look into making this available as a poster for parents also. I still have a few modifications to make to this idea in terms of colors but the general concept was there.

Again, this tool could be used to teach the concept of time to any child. My daughter and niece, both “normal” children, had still been struggling with some aspects of “time”, especially the “to” aspect of a clock. Upon showing each of them this clock I had made for Zachary, within a matter of seconds, they both said: “Oh, ok – I get it now”. I added a few smaller clocks in order to teach “time” in smaller increments and then, put the final concept together in the “final clock”. The subset clocks dealt specifically with hours, minutes and seconds and the concepts of “to” and “after”.

The things to note about this particular clock were as follows:

The seconds and minutes were labeled all the way to 60... each "tick" and each "minute" was there! The final clock would most likely make use of alternating colors for each tick – colors that would match the minute and second hands. By alternating colors this way, I hoped to further solidify for Zachary the fact that both minutes and seconds went “all the way to 60”.

The word "o'clock" appeared just below the "12" to help Zachary understand that whenever the "minute arrow" reached the "12", that was an "o'clock".

The second, minute and hour hands (not shown here) were provided... in colors matching other aspects of the clock. The minutes "going backwards" were provided to help with the concept of "so many minutes to" the hour. Increments of 5 were labeled and were shown "in step" with the minutes... for example, the clock had labels for the concept of "AFTER" such as "5 after" (associated with the 5 minute "tick") as well for the concept of "TO", such as "20 to" (associated with the "20 minutes to tick"). The clock was further defined by a "stop" and a "start" (something I might replace simply by using colors to represent each half of the clock... the "to" and the "after" halves). The "stop" and "start" provided a concrete example that the child needed to start or stop at a particular point or he would "cross over" into the other half (the "to" or the "after" half). As such, this drew attention to the correct or appropriate label once that "crossover" point was reached. Also, the shading around the clock was done in a manner that once on the "to" side, the numbers "read backwards" were more visible than the numbers continuing up to 60… thus emphasizing the "to" aspect to the clock.

Finally, the smaller "concept clocks" and labels below them helped "build up" to the final clock concept so that teaching time could be done in "small increments". Labels below the small "concept clocks" included:

1 minute = 60 seconds, 1 hour = 60 minutes

12 am hours (am = morning)

+ 12 pm hours (pm = afternoon + evening)

= 24 hours = 1 day

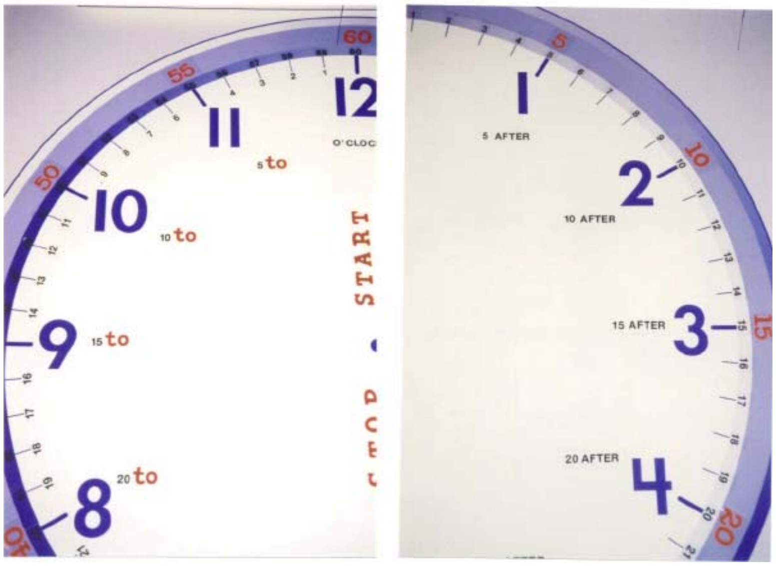
All of these "labels", when taken together made for a much more useful clock when it came to teaching the concept of "time" to any child.

In teaching the concept of time, the final thing to add would be the concept of roman numerals. Given that Zachary loved equations, this final concept would be simple enough to add once the overall concept of time was understood. These labels could also be added at the bottom of the "clock poster". Labels to provide here would include:

I = 1, II = 2, III = 3, IV = 4, V = 5, VI = 6, VII = 7, VIII = 8, IX = 9, X = 10, XI = 11, XII = 12.

Making use of math equations to greatly help solidify this concept quickly. For example: X + I = XI . Again, as with so much in the autistic child's life… it was all in providing the proper labels and explanations!


12
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
STOP • START


60
55
50
12
11
10
9
8
O'CLOC
5 to
10 to
15 to
20 to
START
5
10
15
20
1
2
3
4
5 AFTER
10 AFTER
15 AFTER
20 AFTER

Socialization - Why Interaction Is So Difficult For The Autistic Child!!!

Another very characteristic trait of the autistic child was his inability to interact socially. Again, this was easily explained by my theory that the autistic child had an impairment that prevented him from properly processing "partialities" in life. If the child was unable to process "the whole" until every parts was labeled, then it stood to reason that parts to "socialization" would also have to be properly labeled before the child could "understand" the situation and begin to interact with others. Add to this the fact that the child had a "label" misunderstood by most, and indeed, socialization became a very difficult matter for the autistic child.

Persons in society may "mean well", but for the most part, when I informed people that Zachary was autistic, almost 100% of the time, they replied with the typical: "Ohhhhhh". It was my belief that most people did not understand autism, yet, the "label of autism" and its association with terms such as “nonsense language” produced a reaction that further complicated matters when it came to socialization. These children were just "understood to be broken" by society - with no apparent explanation for so much of what we saw in them. The task of socialization thus became even more complicated in that persons all about the autistic child almost "gave up on him" before even giving him a chance. Very little was expected of the autistic child when it came to socialization, as evident from the typical “Ohhhhhh” - but if only they knew!

As with everything in the life of the autistic child the key to success in coping with one's environment and daily life was in labeling the parts to the whole. For example, until "people" were labeled as "a man, a woman, a child, a mom, a dad, a friend, a stranger, etc", the autistic child would continue to be unable to incorporate these persons into his world. They were simply "parts" that he did not understand and as such, almost chose not to see. Again, not "looking at something" was one of the autistic child's ways of "dealing with what was not understood".

Of course, the labeling of "parts" to what was involved in socialization usually began with the description of people in a home or school environment via the use of computer programs, television shows, etc. However it was critical that once these "parts" were labeled, the child be taken to an environment (such as a park) where the "labels" could be associated with actual people... where each type of person could be physically pointed out to the child to help in his comprehension. With children, it was probably alright to tell the autistic child that "strange children" were "friends". However, when it came to adults, it was important to make sure that the concept of "stranger" was explained in a way that associates with it the concept of "danger". As children learned to associated more items in the physical world with certain concepts, such as the fact that "cars were dangerous", it then should become much easier to generalize the concept of "danger" to people (i.e., strangers) also... and when the word "danger" was taught, it should always be accompanied by the words: "stay away... " and perhaps also "stay with mom", "go see mom" or "call mom". This way, you could actually teach the child the appropriate response in the face of potential "danger".

Thus as with everything else in the life of the autistic child, the key to socialization, surely, must rest in labeling everything. In view of that, what were the "parts" to socialization that needed to be labeled in order to promote this activity in the autistic child?

For the autistic child this labeling of "parts" was indeed much more complicated than most would think. The best way for me to explain this was by using the example of "going on a walk and simply acknowledging persons who go by". This seemed simple enough... but, when it came to what the autistic child must understand in order to accomplish this simple task, readers will see that this was no small task for the autistic child.

The "task" of socialization - to simply go for a walk and acknowledge persons the child saw on the street - started the very moment the child left the house or his familiar environment. The autistic child learned to adapt somewhat to his home environment and his yard. These had within them "things" he had become familiar with... regardless of whether or not he understood them - the "things" in the autistic child's home and its immediate surroundings had somehow, been accepted by the autistic child as "his world to be dealt with". It was this "world" he worked so hard at understanding... at decoding... and slowly, he began to do so as more and more labels were provided and the "code" to daily life was slowly broken.

In leaving his familiar environment, however, the autistic child introduced new "parts" to "his world", new sensory data that now had to be understood... and if these "parts" were not understood, frustration would undoubtedly set in quickly. For the autistic child, the simple act of going for a walk and trying to acknowledge even one unfamiliar person while on that walk was a huge, and overwhelming task.

Socialization in and of itself was not the only issue here for the autistic child. When a normal person thought of socialization, usually, that involved, primarily, interaction with people – with only minimal attention given to the situation or environment itself. Socialization, for the most part, involved interaction while at a gathering of some type – the emphasis of this "activity" clearly placed on human interaction. For the autistic child, however, socialization involved much, much more than this.

For the autistic child, all information being processed by the senses had to also be defined as "parts to the whole".

Thus, in going for a simple walk, the autistic child had to understand each of the following "parts" for the "whole" (the world) to make sense**, and each characteristic that could be perceived for each and every "part"** listed below:

Visual input in the form of:

a street, pavement, gravel, sand, mud, potholes, cracks, green leaves, brown leaves, grass, weeds, flowers of all kinds, trees, various plant types, posts, telephone wires, trash (pollution by the road), rocks, stones, cement, sidewalks, paint markings on streets, sewer drains, sewer covers, mailboxes, the writing on everything along the way, various buildings/structures, animals, bugs, anthills, lawn decorations, nuts, pet feces, pollution in its various forms along the street, cars, trucks, bikes, street lights/signs, persons and everything about those persons in terms of clothing, what they are doing, holding, etc., and anything else that provides "visual input" along with all variations (in terms of shape, size, color, etc.) within all these "things" in and of themselves.

Auditory input in form of sounds from:

Various car, truck or train sounds, wind, rustling of leaves, animal sounds, each different bird sound, crickets, the sound of a fly or bee buzzing by, people and their various voices, screams, laughs, the sound of planes flying overhead, etc.

Olfactory (smell) input from:

smell of plants, people, animals, pollution from vehicles, odors in the air from foods being cooked in homes, etc.

Touch input from:

the sensation of various surfaces on the feet, hands, etc. as one walked or toucheed things along the way.

… as well as issues related to motion – what I believe to be a huge area in the autistic child's understanding of the world!

In other words in order for the autistic child to even begin to attempt to socialize, absolutely all input to his senses needed to be understood in terms of how the "parts" fit into the "whole"... how all these things "fit together" to form "an environment"... an environment that was so different from that the child knew best - his home. Given this, one could easily understand why, for some children, leaving the home was so very stressful! This simple activity of leaving the house introduced a whole new set of variables that the child now had to "decode"... and until these variables were "decoded", these new variables would but only add to the child's frustration level.

Again, as overwhelming as this seemed, the key was again in labeling and providing explanations **for everything** for the autistic child - to help him decode his world - to help him understand just how all the parts "fit together" to form a whole! Only once the "physical environment" was understood could the child then focus on specific things within that environment that "were not really 'part' of that environment"... those things could be there but may not be... such as people!

It was important to note also that the environment itself also changed with time in terms of not only the objects within the environments themselves (i.e., cars there one day but gone the next) but also in terms of seasons, for example. The autistic child, like all of us, lived in a constantly changing world, and as such, the world was, for him, a constant potential source of frustration.

Once the environment was defined, people themselves had to be then defined in terms of who they were and what they were doing. When humans and the various activities they engaged in, clothes they wore, way they smelled, way they talked, way they moved were thrown in, the situation was indeed overwhelming to these children. Throw in there the inability of the child to process "sentence" parts or understand unexpected or unfamiliar noises and you indeed had a very difficult situation for the autistic child to overcome.

In my opinion, another one of the best tools parents had in terms of “teaching socialization” was to make use of “role playing”. To actually role-play a “social situation” and provide for the child the appropriate response for certain basic situations should greatly help these children as role-playing provided for the autistic child a “reference point” for future use for similar situations and for autistic children, I truly believed “reference communication” was a key coping mechanism.

In addition, the child had to have an understanding of who "he was"... to understand his name and how "he too" fit into the whole. That too, was a critical piece I believed had long been overlooked! Autistic children were often characterized by what had come to be known as the "deaf child" syndrome.

The theory of issues with "partialities" and sensory integration failure also explained the "deaf child" syndrome. The "deaf child" referred to the fact that an autistic child could be called by his name over 50 times and still failed to respond. It was “as if” he did not hear the parent at all. Yet, when tested for hearing, everything showed up fine. This happened with Zachary as well. Until "Zachary" had been labeled as "Zachary", he had no idea what that "sound" meant no matter how many times he heard it. Human voices were all about. Autistic children had come to accept human voices as "background noise" (although new voices, especially men’s voices, I found bothered Zachary) and so to hear someone calling out: "Zachary" would be no different than that person calling out "chair". To the autistic child, I believed, the human voice was something he had accepted as part of everyday life. However, when Zachary was made to understand that "his name" was Zachary, then, he responded. Again, it had been simply a matter of labeling HIM as an entity as well – a part to the whole!

To teach him his name, I simply said: "What's your name?" and answered: "your name is Zachary". I did this over and over until he grasped the concept of name. It did not take long for him to understand... especially since I showed him how "my name was mommy", how "his sister's name" was Anika, how the "dog's name" was Patches and so on. He had heard all family members use these names... and so, showing him the names of others around him helped him to grasp the concept that he, too, had a name. As he finally understood the concept of a name, he would laugh as he said his name was "Zachary Patches" instead of "Zachary Brohart". He knew this "got a response" from mom and to him that was funny. But, finally, I knew he understood the concept. Once he grasped that, I taught him how to write and say his full name. He finally knew "HIS LABEL" and could easily respond when called.... and finally, "my deaf child" was gone!

You obviously needed to "get rid of the deaf child" for socialization to occur. So, getting rid of the "deaf child" by actually making the child understand the concept of "his name" and "who he was" was the very first step necessary to socialization. After the child himself was labeled, family members could quickly be labeled. If the child had no siblings, the concept may be explained by "using children from another family"... or through videos, pictures, etc. Obviously, siblings helped a great deal in understanding "family labels" in terms of "brother and sister". "Mommy" and "daddy" were the easiest to teach. I simply put my hand on my chest and repeated: "I am mommy" and pointed to my husband and said: "that's daddy". When it came to "grandparents", I found the best way to teach that association was to label the grandparent first as "mommy's daddy" or "mommy's mommy"... or for me to actually put my arm around a grandparent and say the words... "daddy's mommy", etc. Then, the actual label of grandpa or grandma could be added down the road by simply saying "mommy's mommy is Zachary's grandma"... and that concept became easily accepted. Again, it was a matter of first "labeling the people and showing the association to the child within the family unit". The same concept could then be applied to aunts and uncles... by using terms like: "mommy's sister is Zachary's aunt" or "mommy's brother... is Zachary's uncle".

I believed it was important to make use of the child's name when labeling others to show the child the relationship between those around him and himself. This would also help provide that sense of security and greater understanding of the concept of a family at the time "a family" needed to be labeled.

The next thing that needed to be labeled was "the environment"... everything within it in terms of sensory input to sight, sound, smell, touch and taste…and motion. This involved teaching the child that "this thing we live in is a house", "this place where you play is a park", etc. and defining/labeling absolutely everything within each "environment" as much as possible, down to the most minute detail. This concept was easy enough for the child to grasp. Simply taking a child to a park and showing him swings, slides, etc., would quickly solidify the concept of a "park". However, each part to the swing, the slide, the sandbox, etc., also had to be eventually defined.

At first, I found “bigger concepts” (i.e., a swing) were ok, but that in most things, I had to go down to the lowest level for Zachary to truly understand something and no longer be “concerned with it”. As such, I had to further define the “swing” by its posts, its chains, the loops between the chains and the seat, its seat, its motion (i.e., back and forth), etc. Until the entire “code” to anything was understood, there often seemed to always be that need to continue to break it until it was fully understood.

Next, persons within each environment had to be defined as well as the "what you do" in each environment. For example, the child should be specifically told that you "play" at the park... and that "playing" involved going down slides, on swings, and talking to other children. To teach the concept of play, the parent needed to say something like: "let's go play on the swing" or "let's go play on the slide" or "let's go play with that little boy". Again, the idea was to teach the concept of “play”. Of course, the concept of work would be taught much in the same way... for, perhaps, the "school environment"... showing the child that "we work at school" or "we learn things at school"... and I suppose you could throw in "sometimes, we play at school" too. :o) For this example, however, I would continue with the concept of play... but, again, the same process of labeling everything - down to its most minute level - would be true for any environment. At first, labeling can be more general, however, in order to best help the child decode his world labeling of persons, places, and things needed to be taken down it its most "basic levels" as quickly as possible – and that involved labeling each aspect of every part to the whole.

Once the concept of "we play at the park" had been solidified, the next step would be to label the "other parts" in the park... those things that were not part of the park itself... the other children... the "parts" not seen as belonging to the "whole" by the autistic child... and as such, these "parts" to the park were often ignored.

Children in a park must not only be labeled as "friends"... their names should be provided where possible. I would suggest always using "a friend's name" as opposed to simply saying: "go play with your friend". By introducing the children and saying: "This is Zachary" for example and asking the other child his name, then the autistic child could understand the concept that other people, unfamiliar children had names or labels, too. This helped solidify the concept that "everything had a label" and hopefully, the child would soon begin to ask for that label.

Perhaps always asking the child: "what is this?" and providing the answer for the question for the child was a way of getting him to understand the concept of "asking for a label" when one was needed. For example, in showing something new to Zachary, I could say: "Zachary, **say**: "what is this"?" and ask him to literally ask the question himself. By then providing the answer, I could show Zachary the concept that he could "ask for help" by using this question to help him "decode his world" when he needed to be provided with a label. I only recently thought about this idea… and, needless to say, was very excited about the potential within it to help these children figure out how to ask for help in those areas where they needed further help in understanding something. :o)

Another way of moving toward this was for me to say to Zachary for example: "Zachary, when you do not know... always say: "what's this?".

THIS WAS A MAJOR KEY TO HELPING THESE CHILDREN - TO ACTUALLY TRAIN THE CHILD TO "ASK FOR THE LABELS" HE NEEDED BY HIMSELF BY TEACHING HIM TO ASK: "WHAT IS THIS?".

To teach the concept of "who not to play with", perhaps all that was needed was to label "the size" of children and emphasize to the autistic child that children that were either "too big or too small" were not those he wanted to play with. Those children that were "good prospects" should be labeled as "just right" or "perfect" in size and demeanor. There were definitely children you may not want your child playing with... those who were too aggressive, etc. The same concept applied in labeling children as "not nice enough ". I know it may sound terrible to "label" other children as "not nice enough", but, I did not know at this time how else to teach this concept to the child... and yes, I did realize that this was a "negative label" to put on another child... but "not nice enough" was still better than "bad kids" for example. This was one I admit I still struggled with, perhaps due to the fact that I once saw another child punch my son very hard at the park... a child of about 8 punching a 4-year old who was autistic. Needless to say, I was more than a little upset. This particular child had simply wanted to "be mean". Zachary had done nothing to incite his wrath. So, yes, some children simply were "not nice" and that was something Zachary needed to understand because there was a very real lesson of life in that too! :o)

I just find that for autistic children, labeling someone as "not a friend" may get a little too involved at this point... in terms of defining what "made someone a friend" and what "made someone not a friend"... so, I would opt for the easier label of "not nice enough" at this time in order not to have to explain "why" someone was not a friend. :o) Of course, parents could come up with whatever "label" they think would work best for their child. Labeling a child as "too big" or "too small" worked well... it was really only for the labeling of age appropriate children who were "not nice" that this became an issue. :o) I guess you could always teach the concept of "change" to show your child that people "change" later on and that way, you could then "remove the label" from the child who was "not nice enough" later on and have that be more easily accepted by your autistic child in the sense that you would not be introducing confusion by labeling a "once not nice child", now good.

The next label should be that of "asking permission" to play with another child. For example, showing the child how to say: "Can I play with that boy?" and showing him the difference produced by a "yes" and a "no". For a yes, the next step involved walking up to the other child and introducing your child and asking the other child his name. For a no, the next step involved taking your child and walking away... to the car for example, perhaps saying: "it's time to go home... let's go"... or "it's time to go eat", or "it's time to go have a drink"... just a few words to take the child's mind off his desire to stay behind at the park. When things were difficult, counting steps to the car was another good coping mechanism. There were many things parents could think of that worked... it just took a little practice! :o)

If a child was allowed to go play, then the next label, after introductions, would be to label the activity... i.e., playing in the sand, etc. Of course, here, the concepts of sharing and "your turn" would be great things to have. In my opinion, these needed to be taught prior to attempting playing at the park. You could teach "sharing" by sharing food... remember, however, that you would have to "label" the piles as "mommy's food" and "the child's food" since the whole concept of sharing, by definition, was one of **creating** "partiality" or “new parts” ... the very issue autistic children had problems with, since sharing involved taking a part from the whole and giving it to someone else - something that would surely create stress for many autistic children.

The concept of "your turn" and "my turn" was an easy enough one to teach - with throwing a ball for example. Another important concept for socialization was that of "no fighting", or "get along"... again, another fairly easy one to teach if the child had siblings or cousins to work with on this particular "label".

Of course, as children started to interact, at first, there would no doubt be stressful moments for the autistic child. As a result, "cousins" may be a good place to start since family members would more likely be willing to help and more tolerant of the autistic child. In my opinion, it was also important to explain to other children that the autistic child's brain worked differently, and that he had a very hard time sharing and playing with other children... not because he did not want to but rather because his brain worked in a way that stopped him from doing certain things. It was amazing how much that could "motivate" other children to help with the "interaction process".

Socialization was not something I had the opportunity to work with a great deal since I lived at least 6 hours from my nearest family members, but, I had seen how during visits, Zachary's cousins did really try to play with him even if he showed little interest, simply because I had explained to them that he was a "little different". I also took Zachary to play on the McDonalds indoor play equipment when I knew there would be a lot of children there (i.e., Friday, Saturday or Sunday afternoon). Zachary was now slowly starting to enjoy being around other children. There was a time when he would simply “plow through” anyone… now, he was actually learning to “take turns” a little more. Overall, I found other children to show great compassion, caring and willingness to help when it was explained to them that Zachary's brain simply worked a little differently because he had "autism".

I had yet to label a lot of things for Zachary when it came to socialization because so much of this, I myself, came to understand only a short while ago. :o) But, given the importance of labels in everything else in the autistic child, I was pretty sure this approach would help. I found it very important to constantly reinforce Zachary with a "good job playing with..." when trying to address socialization issues. It was a small thing, but, to him, it meant a lot. :o) Lately, I had found that if Zachary was getting "out of hand" in this area, a simple: "do you want to go to bed?" helped a lot, too, since he would do almost anything to "stay up". :o)

I stumbled upon his absolute hate of "going to bed" the day I gave him his first real "time out" ever in early August of 2002. I had always tried to be patient with Zachary, as hard as that was and had never really “punished him” in the past. Zachary had been particularly stressed that did and he did something he only rarely did... he started to bite. Biting was quite rare for Zachary now, and usually, when it did occur, Zachary bit himself as opposed to others. There were a few times in the past where he had bitten his sister... but he had never bitten me - until that morning! By this time, I had figured out that "biting" was a coping mechanism for Zachary - just one of his many ways to deal with stress. I thus brought him to his room and told him to say on his bed, laying down on his back. On 3 or 4 occasions he came out of his room. I had never done this before. Each time, I brought him back and told him to "stay there because you cannot bite mom". Zachary, like most children, found that hour to be very long. I finally went back into his room and before I let him out I asked if he was going to bite again. When he responded "no", I let him get up. Now, I just had to "mention" going to bed during the day and Zachary perked up and listened right away. :o)

There were, of course, many forms of interaction and communication. Children could simply play together and not speak and be perfectly fine. To get an autistic child to actually "converse" however, was a lot more involved. Since the autistic child had issues with perceiving "partialities" and sentences were made of "parts", to have actual social conversation would necessitate that the child be able to converse. For more on this, I refer all parents to the section on Teaching Language in the autistic child. I believed language had to be taught in a building blocks approach - from the ABCs to the understanding of sentence parts.

Once everything was labeled for the autistic child... in terms of socialization and language acquisition, social interaction should truly blossom. With the passage of time, more was naturally labeled for autistic children and they came to piece more together – as would any child. With issues of socialization, autistic children would perhaps do better when with younger children, at least at first, in order to acquire basic skills before being placed with age appropriate peers. I did believe, however, that, as the “code” to socialization was broken more and more each day, the child should be as quickly as possible reintegrated with age appropriate peers to learn from them also. The goal was to make the autistic child play with those of his age as opposed to say playing with children who were much younger because, age appropriate socialization was, after all, the real goal. Thus, anything that parents could do to facilitate the attainment of this goal should be done... and that, primarily, would consist of helping the child "decode" his world and in providing explanations of just “how all this fits together”!

Society had a very long way to go in terms of truly understanding the autistic. This was also true in situations that involved the apparent need for police officers. There were countless incidents that involved the autistic and the law, primarily incidents relating to aggression in the autistic adult.

I certainly respected the need for police officers to do their work and their need to do it safely. However, I hoped that the information provided within these materials would help police officers in beginning to understand the autistic mind. Too often there were news stories of parents trying to protect their autistic children, some of them adults, from persons who simply did not understand these children or adults... and at times, that involved protecting them from police officers too... police officers who had never been trained in techniques that may be most valuable in dealing with the autistic.

The treatment of the autistic by persons in law enforcement was an area in which a great deal of work was still needed in order to help police officers help themselves in the performing of their duties, and in order to help serve and protect these very misunderstood individuals with autism and their families! Only with this greater understanding could we best help to diffuse such situations before they spiraled out of control.

I hoped judges around the nation, also, would read these materials in order to better understand the autistic mind and how, in many cases, what these children and adults do was literally beyond their control as a result of how their brain failed to function properly in very key areas!

As a final word of comfort to parents who were overly worried about issues of socialization in their child's development, let me say that although I realized socialization was important, I did believe society overemphasized the degree to which it was important - somewhat. Quite frankly, personally, I was perfectly fine with having a child who was a little less social than others - and perfectly fine with having a child who was not defined or who did not define himself in terms of his peers, because today, unfortunately, peer pressure was something that often led to "more headaches" anyway. Socialization was important, yes, but it had to be kept in perspective too. Our children had too much pressure to be the "most popular" child... and that was an additional pressure parents need not put on themselves nor on their children. :o)

Finally, in closing, I wanted to also mention that since "socialization" involved a process, the concept of "bubble graphs" as discussed in my section on "Teaching Language" could also be of use in helping the autistic child understand social situations. Bubble graphs could be used to "break down the situation" into its component parts and then further analyzed through the use of yet more "bubble graphs" as explained in my section on Language. Likewise, my section on Teaching A Process could also be of value in teaching socialization skills to the autistic.

Sharing And The Autistic Child…

A topic often associated with a child's social abilities was that of sharing with others. For a very long time, issues with "sharing" in the autistic child had been seen as "problems with socialization". In reality, however, it was my opinion, that this issue was very much also tied to the autistic child's inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up the whole.

I had often noticed that Zachary was fine with "sharing" food from his plate and putting it in my mouth, or with sharing his lemonade and allowing me to sip some too. His issues with "sharing" were more with things like the sharing of pencils, play dough, or anything else that involved the actual "splitting in parts" of objects, then, Zachary broke down and was unable to "share". I noticed that his issues with "sharing" had nothing to do with whether or not something belonged to "him" verses his sister... they simply had to do with "things" that were being "pulled apart"... in other words, with "sharing" that involved the separation of "parts" from the "whole".

To Zachary, all pencils belonged together... as did all play dough... etc. His issues with "sharing" consisted of the making of "different piles" for the same thing. For more on this issue, I encouraged parents to read the section on "Odd Behaviors".

As such, I now saw that the issue was not with his lack of "sharing" but rather with his need for order...and his inability to cope with the "part" of the "whole" being separated from the whole. Sharing involved "creating a part", "taking a part from the whole" and giving it to someone else... and that was something that was just "not doable" for the autistic child... his brain simply would not want to allow that!

To the autistic child, "all these things belonged together" and should not be "separated"... they were part of a whole. Again, teaching the "in between" situation with sharing was like anything else with autism... the child had to see how the parts made up the whole and how it was ok to separate the parts and give some to others. The concept of "fractions" was one I truly believed would help many children to understand how "parts made up a whole" and how those parts could be separated. Words to help the autistic child deal with this issue of "sharing" were found under: Words That Teach Quantity. These could help all parents address a multitude of issues dealing with parts of the entity - the whole.

In working this issue of sharing, I found play dough helped. I gave some to Zachary, and then showed him that mom needed some too, to make fun things.

I had seen Zachary share crayons, etc., just fine, as long as they were all in the same "container" and we each "took some" from there, and then "put them back where they belonged - in the one container". If, however, I tried to take some of the same objects and "split them up" in separate containers or piles - one for him and one for me - well, that did not go over well at all. Zachary seemed to have no problem sharing objects that were "different" from those he wanted. For example, he was fine with having all the pencils and I could have all the play dough. It was the separation of "like things" that was an issue.

So, again, I strongly believed the issue behind "sharing" per se was simply that for autistic children, like things simply "belonged together" and that was all there was to it! :o)

It had been easy enough to work on this issue… when Zachary ate, I would tell him to put 5 pieces of some cfgf snack he had at my “spot” on the table… by making him “count them out” and put them apart from the rest of his pile, he was much better about creating that “partiality”. At first, he ended up eating my pile too, but, I simply told him: “no, that’s mommy’s pile” and then he was fine!

I found, over time, Zachary was much better able to cope with sharing as I labeled this “activity of splitting things apart” as “sharing”, always saying: “thank you for sharing” was a phrase I used a great deal.

Teaching A Process To The Autistic Child...

In my opinion, the best way to teach a process to an autistic child was via the concept of "the critical path". Those readers who had taken management classes would know right away what this meant. For the rest of you, however, I explained this concept using a simple example - the baking of a cake – below.

Before we get started, I needed to first define "the critical path". The critical path was the longest sequence of dependent tasks for which, if you changed one step/task in the sequence, in any manner, the duration of the task was no longer optimized.

The critical path provided the optimal solution for completing a task based on specific constraints (i.e., precedents, or things that had "come first", etc.) that had to be taken into consideration. This was the more "technical" definition.

Obviously, with children, we were not as concerned with "optimizing/minimizing task duration" as we were with "proper sequence". So, for example, you could not "eat cake" without first "making cake". The focus here was to determine the actual sequence of "things that need to be done" for the task to be properly completed. Again, this example involved "baking a cake", but the same concept could be applied to any task... getting dressed, brushing teeth, cleaning up, learning situations, etc. For anything where a process was involved and, as such, by definition there needed to be a fairly specific sequence of event, the concept of the critical path could be used.

This concept was actually quite simple to understand – it looked much more complicated than it actually was in the charts below. It was simply that to explain this concept in depth required a lot of work and detail on my part since I wanted to provide what parents needed for "any process", and as such, I took an example that was a little more complex (i.e., baking a cake) rather than one that was much simpler (i.e., brushing teeth) in order to better explain the entire concept as it related to "flexible parts", etc. But, truly, this was much simpler than it looked! :o)

In management, this could become very involved. I provided "many of the steps" to completing one task - to give parents an idea of how complicated a simple task could actually be when broken down into its parts - and given that this was what was necessary for the autistic child, I wanted to provide a very concrete example of "how complicated" something could actually be for the autistic child even though a "normal person" took the completion of these simple tasks for granted because in the "normal person", the parts were so much more easily integrated into the "whole". Note that I provided a "partial list" of things that needed to be done. If I had wanted to, I could have made this list considerably longer but space constraints in terms of presenting this on paper necessitated I limit the example somewhat. Providing all the steps would have just made all this too overwhelming.

My goal here was simply to provide for parents the simple concept of breaking processes down into their respective tasks for the autistic child. I wanted to provide an idea of the things one could eventually take into consideration... and to give readers an idea of how one could expand or build on this concept as the child grew. The bottom line to all this was really simply teaching "proper sequencing" to complete a task... and to teach a sequence of tasks, the whole or process must first be broken down into its components or individual parts.

Steps:

For each task, determine the following: 1. Task Name/Description, 2. Precedents (what were those things that had to be done first, before this task could be done?), 3. Concurrent/ Current (what other tasks in the process could be done WHILE this one was also being done?), 4. Dependents (what tasks could not be completed until this particular task was finished?), 5. Duration (how long would this task take?), 6. Planned Start Date/Time, 7. Planned End Date/Time, 8. Early Start Date/Time, 9. Late Start Date/Time, 10. Early Finish Date/Time, 11. Late Finish Date/Time, 12. Float (how much time did I save or lose in days or hours because I started a task early or late?).

In management, within each activity, each task was then analyzed for further constraints, such as human resources, etc. We were not going to get into all these aspects here. For those of you who really wanted to learn more about this subject the link below provided some good information in terms of basic definitions, etc. There were hundreds of sites like this one for those of you who wanted to really get into the nuts and bolts of critical path processing... and there were also, obviously, a lot of software programs for management purposes.

http://www.demon.co.uk/mindtool/critpath.html

I had not found (or really had the time to look for) a good child's program that taught this concept. Therefore, if any parent knew of a software package to do this, please let me know and I will add it to my website. What we were really looking for was software that would teach autistic children "proper sequencing" of multiple steps. :o) Software that allowed for some flexibility in sequencing would be the most valuable of all in order to show the autistic child that there could be more than one right answer.

Ideally, a combination of "exact sequence" exercises followed by sequencing exercises allowing for some flexibility in terms of non critical tasks would be optimal... allowing the child to first work through the sequencing basics in terms of examples showing how "things needed to follow a certain order" and then allowing the child to "move non critical things around" to help increase flexibility in autistic children. Jump Start's Advanced Second Grade Program (made by Knowledge Adventure, 800-545-7677, http://www.knowledgeadventure.com**)** in its section on "Discover Science" had some useful sequencing activities in it. It asked children to sequence things alphabetically, numerically and based on processes too (i.e. a frog egg growing into a full frog). It was definitely a good start in teaching this to children - although I, personally, would like to see something much more geared to the autistic, specifically, in terms of teaching sequencing of very specific every day tasks too.

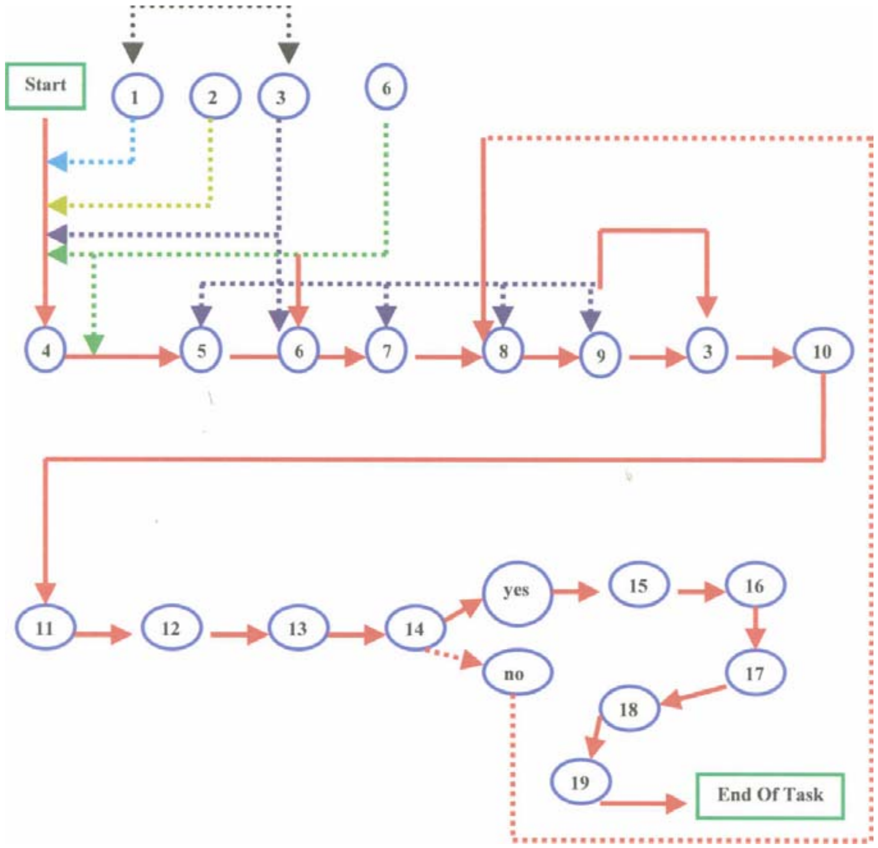
To bake a cake, there were certain steps that needed to be done. These included:

1. Taking out your cookbook 2. Taking out your ingredients 3. Turning the oven on 4. Taking out a bowl in which to make the cake 5. Mixing your ingredients 6. Taking out a pan in which to bake the cake 7. Pouring the batter into the pan 8. Putting the pan into the oven 9. Turning on the timer 10. Taking a break/doing something else while the cake bakes 11. Listening for the timer 12. Turning the timer off 13. Checking the cake to make sure it was "done" 14. If "done", removing the cake from the oven and letting it cool. If "not done", going back to step "putting pan into the oven and continuing all steps from there" 15. Once cooled, removing the cake from the pan and setting it on a cake platter 16. Decorating the cake 17. Taking a plate and utensils out, 18. Putting a piece of cake on the plate and setting it on table, 19. Sitting down to eat the cake.

I had listed the tasks for the critical path ... but, you could move "some steps" around and still complete the task... yet, others were pretty well "set in stone" in terms of their order. For example, you did not want to turn the oven timer on until the cake was in the oven... or turn it off until the cake was ready to be checked or was "done".

Now, to determine the critical path, you had to determine the ONE sequence that absolutely had to be followed for this task to be completed. To verify that you had the TRUE "critical path", simply "move one step around"... if you did that, you should no longer be able to complete the task in the most optimal time (in manufacturing, etc., time was obviously the key component to “critical path determination”… but, in this example, it was left out since this factor was really not needed for what we were doing).

I did not do a TRUE critical path here since time and other factors (i.e., human resources, etc. were left out)...but this one was "close enough" for you to explain the concept and to work sequencing issues with autistic children. To do a true critical path would have involved including a lot more steps, time factors, human resource factors, etc. ... and there were always steps that could be "moved around" to various places. I did all the various "combinations" of "where things could actually get done, and include all other factors, you would have so many arrows that it would become overwhelming. So, I provided what I felt you needed to understand the concept in the graph below. Again, this was a simple concept… it just looked a lot more complicated than it truly was! :o)



The solid arrows show the "critical path"... each task number was included in the appropriate critical path "node". Thus, critical sequencing was shown by these arrows... one step could not go forward until the previous step was done (Again, I may not be 100% accurate here – especially in terms of the very first steps - but, this was pretty close. It had been over 15 years since I took this management class - and the book was long gone :o)).

Some steps were critical (such as turning on an oven), but could be done at different places throughout the process... so they were critical to getting the task completed, but "where they happened" in the "critical path chain" could be a little flexible. When a "flexible" task became a "critical path item", that arrow turned from a dash to a solid arrow to indicate that if this step was not done at this time, we could no longer move forward in the process. For example, step 3, turning on the oven, could be done at any time, but it became critical just prior to step 10, taking a break... if step 3 was not done at the very latest, prior to step 10, then the process could no longer move forward smoothly... the task would not be "completable" without this - now critical - step.

This simple example could be used to teach autistic children almost any process. The idea was simply to break the task down into its parts... down to the lowest levels. So, for example, to teach a child to dress himself, teach him first to remove his pajamas, then to take his clothes out of the dresser (showing him not only where to get his pants, his shirts, his underwear, his socks, etc., but also how to open the dresser drawers by himself and close them once the clothes have been removed). Then teach the child what clothes "goes on first", "what goes on second", etc.

For each piece of clothing, show the child "how you put it on"... for example, to put on underwear, shorts or pants, explain that "the left foot went into the left foot/leg hole and right foot went into the right foot/leg hole", to put on a shirt, explain that the right arm went into the right arm hole, left arm went into the left arm hole and head went into the head or middle hole", etc. You probably needed to show the child the "front and back" of clothing too... perhaps using the "tag" as a reference point.

Flexibility could then be taught by showing the child it was ok to move certain tasks around... like putting the left arm in before the right arm (or vice versa) or putting the head in first when putting on a shirt, etc. Teaching the child the concept of "OR" should greatly help increase a parent's ability to teach flexibility in tasks since if the child understood "OR" then the parent could simply say: "or, how about doing it this way... will this work, too?".

There were many ways to teach the concept of "or"... giving food choices was the most obvious. :o) The idea with the concept of "OR" was to teach that "more than one answer would work" and was "correct". That would surely help increase the autistic child's flexibility in many, many facets of life. :o)

Another thing I would mention had to do with the use of colors in teaching an autistic child. Autistic adults had mentioned the fact that they often perceived objects as colors. Given this fact, I think that parents should go out of their way to make use of colors whenever possible. See my section on Colors. For example, in teaching a process, telling the child to "put on his red shirt", as you went through the process with him... or to take out "his blue socks from the brown dresser". Using colors may indeed be a powerful tool for parents in teaching the autistic and getting more cooperation in the completion of tasks.

Again, these were simple examples, but they applied to absolutely everything that required a "process"... and that included the "teaching situation"... "social interaction", etc. - all aspects/tools down to the most minute detail should be thoroughly defined or labeled, tasks identified and sequenced, etc. If a child was experiencing difficulty with something in particular, I encouraged parents not to get upset but rather look at that "stumbling block" as an opportunity to find something you may not have properly labeled or defined for the autistic child... and then, to go from there! :o)

I would later come to realize that the sense of touch was also critical in teaching the autistic child a process… further explaining why techniques such as “hand-over-hand” clearly worked so well for these children! This issue was covered much later, although I did want to mention its relevance here as well!

Safety Issues… A Matter Of Life And Death!!!

It was well known that autistic children did not perceive danger the way normal children did. The best way for me to explain this in terms of how "safety issues" and the apparent inability to perceive danger as they relate to the autistic child's inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up that whole was by very concrete examples of what I saw in Zachary in terms of this issue. The fact was that "lack of flexibility" was also very much a life threatening issue for these children.

In July of 2000, I learned first hand just how dangerous a place the world truly was for the autistic child. I, like so many parents had to learn this the hard way. I did not fully understand the issues involved at the time, but, now, in looking back, this too all made perfect sense.

We were in Canada visiting family. The date was July 27th, 2000... my daughter Anika's 8th birthday. We had gone to my in-law's camp for the day. Many family members were to be there and we, too, wanted to be part of this family get together. I was weary of having Zachary near water, but, as I had always done in the past when he was near water, I would simply leave a lifejacket on him all day - just in case. The day went by quickly. It was soon almost 10:00 pm and we had yet to sing "Happy Birthday" to Anika and have some cake. As we prepared to do so, I made myself a quick cup of coffee. Zachary had been just next to me as I did this. I then put sparklers on Anika's cake, lit them and was walking toward the table with the cake when my sister-in-law said: “Where's Zachary? I’m sure he'd love to see the sparklers!”

I had just seen Zachary and as such, I was not particularly worried. But, wanting him to see the sparklers, a few of us started to look for him... within a minute, panic started to set in... he seemed nowhere to be found. Surely, he must just be in a quiet spot playing... I kept trying to reassure myself and to stay calm as we continued to look for him. This camp was fairly large, with several bedrooms and a basement. In no time at all "Where's Zachary?" was resounding throughout the camp. Everyone quickly started to look for him. Upon perceiving panic now setting in, my husband Frederick had rushed outside - just in case. I continued to look in the camp... thinking he "just had to be here"! It was approximately 10:00 pm.

Frederick quickly went up and down the shoreline, looking for any movement in the water. With the dark of the summer evening, he just barely made out something moving at the very end of the dock. Sure enough, it was Zachary - chest high in water, at the very end of the dock, facing away from shore and holding on to the dock with the very tips of the fingers to his left hand - with a very watered down diaper!

Had he taken just one more step, or lost his footing, or had we taken just a little longer to notice he was "missing", Zachary would have surely drowned.

The fact that he had made it to the end of the dock in such a short time had to mean that he had literally ran to the water once he snuck outside and went right in. This had all happened too fast and he had gone too far, too quickly, for him to have simply "slowly walked to the water and went in". I had just seen Zachary earlier when I had made my coffee... in total, probably 4 minutes had gone by since then. This had simply been "too close". I was a complete ball of nerves and needless to say, we decided to leave first thing in the morning. The dangers all about for an autistic child were just "too numerous" for my comfort.

Had Zachary made it to the nearby road, instead of the water, I knew he would have "walked the line"... he had often done this in the past when we went for walks. I now understood why! It was "an entity" – continuous “whole”... and he would have kept following it (either the side line or the center line - depending on which one he happened to see first). The nearby road had a 50 mile per hour limit... and with the dark, if Zachary was on the road, a car could have easily hit him. Had he gone through the woods in the back of the camp, he could have easily been lost also. As I had searched for him during those couple of minutes, all these things went through my mind... there were so many dangers for Zachary in a "normal environment".

I knew Zachary had serious issues with direction changes, but I did not understand them until after this near drowning incident. I understood that "normal order or normal direction was involved" but it would be much later still that I would truly come to understand why Zachary had so many issues with direction changes.

To Zachary, "normal direction" meant going forward... anything else did not make sense. Going left, right, backwards or sideways were things he did not truly understand - until directions were labeled as "left", "right", "backwards" or "sideways" - in everything - from car rides , to walks, to rewinding of videos ("going backwards"). The directions of "backwards" for example, went totally against "normal order" and until labeled, it was not understood as "an entity in and of itself".

For Zachary, there could have been and would have been no going back to shore...his need for "normal order", literally, "forced him to keep going forward", away from shore! Going "backwards" was something he did not understand, it went against "normal order" , and thus, he would not have "been able to come back to shore" on his own! I had not yet labeled for him the concept of "going back" and so, he did not understand it. All his mind could do was go forward. I had not labeled for him the concept of "danger", not specifically worked on the concept of "be careful" because, at the time, I did not myself understand the autistic mind. That would only come much later. I had not outlined for him the "steps to assess danger"... all things so critical for the autistic child.

So many things we had taken for granted, we had assumed he understood – were gone and with their disappearance, an incredible rigidity and inflexibility had set in. So many concepts I had made use of – like his name – things I assumed he “still knew” were gone! Had he actually lost memory or had I simply assumed he knew these things but they had never actually imprinted in his brain? It just did not make any sense! I knew Zachary had known some of these things previously! I knew Zachary had once made proper use of stairs… but that had disappeared! Why? Why had so many things simply “disappeared” – things I knew he knew at one time!

When I finally did understand, at least partially, Zachary's issues with "direction changes" I worked with him on this issue specifically. When I first began to understand these issues, I thought they were simply attributable to his "fanatic need for order". It was only later that I would truly understand this issue for what it was - the inability to properly process a subset of the ordering function - that function within the brain that dealt specifically with the processing of "parts" to understand the "whole". Still, this near drowning had clearly shown me that for some reason, Zachary had issues with direction changes. I therefore worked specifically with him on this issue... walking backwards, left, right, sideways... these were all things we would practice on our many walks to the park. Once labeled, and identified as separate "entities in and of themselves", these "other directions" were now "ok". They were no longer a problem for Zachary - once labeled!

This issue was a little harder to understand in terms of "partials", but if you think about it, the concept of "direction" was an entity in and of itself. "Normal direction" was going forward and as such, any change in direction would be perceived as a new "part" to the whole concept of "direction"... a new "part" that until defined and explained, made no sense to the autistic mind! All these other directions (left, right, sideways, backwards) brought an unknown dimension or "part" to the concept of "direction", and as such, they were not tolerated. Although a little more "abstract" in nature, the issue of problems with changes in direction, could be explained based on the inability to process partiality... the parts to the whole... in this case, direction.

Had Zachary made it to the nearby highway when he snuck out of camp that summer night, normal order, or normal direction would have meant "walking the line"... and following that entity. That could have cost him his life as could have the fact that he most likely would not have perceived "cars" as parts to the whole - the street and as such, he would not have "worried about them" but rather would have chose to "ignore them" since he most likely would have not understood that cars were "parts" of the street. Speed and the physics of a moving object were also things Zachary did not understand... and as such, they too, would have been ignored and not seen as part of the whole equation of the inherent "danger" of a street!

On another occasion, almost a year after the "near drowning", Zachary once ran right in front of an oncoming car in our front yard while we were raking leaves. He was playing quietly... and before I knew it, he was off and running down a small hill, into the street and straight into the path of an oncoming car. By this time, we had moved and lived on a quiet street in the Upper Peninsula of MI. There were only four houses on our street. It was a very quiet street but every once in a while, a car went by just a little too fast for my comfort. One neighbor, in particular bothered me in his driving habits. It was this very neighbor in front of whose car Zachary ran. Luckily the driver saw him and was able to stop in time... but, again, this had been too close... within a month, we had put up a chain link fence, 6 feet high, surrounding almost an acre for Zachary. We also installed safety latches 6 feet up so that he could not possibly get out of the yard on his own. This fence had cost us over $5,000.00, but it had been worth every penny! We also cut all the brush in this "compound" in order to be easily able to scan the entire yard with just one glance. I could now have a little more peace of mind when Zachary was outside. Still, Zachary was always with someone even in "his compound". :o)

From that incident, even at this late age (Zachary was almost 4 at the time) cars on the street, like so many other "parts" in the environment, were not properly perceived as a danger. They were parts (cars) to the whole (the street) and if not properly perceived, and recognized as entities in and of themselves, and identified or labeled as objects of "danger", then the autistic child would continue to have no fear of them. Cars had to somehow be identified as part of the whole. The autistic child had to be made to understand that "streets were for cars - not people", "that streets and cars went together", that "cars were very dangerous" and that "you do not go in front of or in back of cars", that "you stay away from cars".

In October of 2001, I was fortunate enough to encounter something on the road... a squished pumpkin. :o) It had obviously fallen off a truck and either broken on impact or been hit by a passing car. Luckily, Zachary was in the car with me at the time. The "squished pumpkin" was very close to the intersection at which we had stopped for a red light... and it was in Zachary's direct line of sight so he saw it clearly. I made it a point to show Zachary the "squished pumpkin" and explained to him that if he went in the street, he too, would be "squished"... just like that pumpkin. That seemed to help a little to solidify the concept of the danger of a street. Within no time at all, I noticed Zachary showing a little more fear of cars. My brother-in-law had told me that in order to teach his autistic son the danger of cars, he had shown him a dead skunk on the road and said: “See what happens if you walk in front of a car?”. He believed that was what had truly solidified the concept that cars were dangerous for his son!

Zachary still had a hard time looking both ways before crossing the street in spite of the fact that I had practiced that numerous times with him. Parts to the whole that could or could not be there, like cars on a street, were simply not perceived as belonging there and as such were not feared! This was especially true of all things that involved motion!

The following summer, in July of 2002, we faced yet another dangerous situation for Zachary... this time, it was on my in-law's beef farm. We had taken both our children with us to do some work in a shed just next to a huge holding and feeding area for cattle. Most of the cattle were out to pasture and I had not noticed the one bull in the holding pen. Luckily, having been raised on a farm, my husband Frederick had noticed it right away... and he also noticed right away when Zachary headed straight for the bull’s pen. He started walking down the "shoot" and had that door been opened to the bull pen or had he been able to open the latch, without a question, he would have gone in... the "shoot" leading to the pen was part of the whole (the pen), the bull inside the pen, however, was not... and as such, Zachary did not perceive it as a part to the whole... a very dangerous part... and as such, the "danger" was not perceived. The bull itself would have had to be labeled as "a bull" and then the label of "bulls are dangerous - stay away" would have needed to follow.

Life with an autistic child was stressful indeed! Parents could simply never let their guard down, in any situation.

The autistic child was in constant danger in his environment... be that his home environment or any other. True, the home environment was more familiar, but it too was dangerous. I truly came to understand that the autistic child had no concept of what was "a little dangerous" or "very dangerous" and until taught the difference - he would treat both as equals. To the autistic child, getting onto a stack of bins in a closet was no more dangerous than walking out into the path of an oncoming car or bull, nor in my opinion, did the child perceive these situations as any more dangerous than say climbing onto the couch! Autistic children honestly could not perceive or differentiate levels of danger... whether that danger was climbing on a table or a chair or walking out into traffic. To the autistic child, there was no difference in these activities... they consisted simply of "moving about" of "going where he wanted to go"... and nothing more... until taught otherwise!

Zachary was now somewhat "more aware" of danger, but, I knew this was still a huge area for him since he still did not remember to look both ways before crossing the street... something we had practiced on numerous occasions while walking. I had also noticed something else in Zachary that troubled me when it came to safety...

Recently, I had found Zachary in my bedroom closet. He had climbed onto two plastic bins and was unable to get back down by himself. He was holding onto shelves high up in my closet with his little hands. We pretty well knew that if Zachary was "missing" for more than two minutes, even in the house, we had to go looking for him - just in case he was "in trouble". When I opened the closet door, he turned and looked my way, and in a very, very soft voice said: "help"...but, he did not know to yell for help when he needed - he had waited for me to get there rather than yell for help as soon as he needed it! Another thing I would have to work on!

Because the autistic child could not properly perceive danger these children had a tendency to get into "more of it". Their curiosity worked just fine... and thus, they were easily led to investigate things... even dangerous things - and too often, they were "in trouble" before even realizing something was wrong - if they could even realize that. I believed they actually needed to be taught "what constituted danger"! And, herein was a very difficult task. How do you even begin to teach an autistic child the multitude of situations that could "lead to a dangerous situation"? What generalizations could be made use of from one situation to another? These were indeed difficult issues I myself am still dealing with.

What was the answer to this very serious issue if you examined the issue of "danger" in terms of "partiality"? I was not sure there was "one answer" and as such, I believed parents needed to err on the cautious side and assume that their children were in constant need of supervision - at least until the child demonstrated a very concrete understanding of danger in many, many situations. Since Zachary had snuck out once, I feared he would do so again… and so, as with so many issues, when it came to safety, I was very conservative indeed.

I installed deadbolts on all doors very, very high up so that Zachary could not possibly reach them (6 inches from the top of the door would be where I would put them today since, after two years, Zachary was already getting to the point of reaching those I had already installed)… and, I put in a 6 foot chain link fence in our backyard, with safety latches close to 6 feet up, to further protect him when he was outside… so that he could not "escape" on his own. To leave our yard, he had to be "left out" by someone else. Zachary was really never alone outside, even within "his compound". If he had no concept of danger, that meant he also would not perceive danger in say, putting a rock in his mouth – a possible chocking hazard – and as such, he was constantly watched (even though putting things in his mouth was something he rarely did)!

The autistic child knew no danger and could express no heightened fear in a dangerous situation - until he had been taught what it was like to "fear a little" or "fear a lot". He then needed to be taught the appropriate response (i.e., yell for help) if the situation was one of "fear a lot".

Safety issues such as these, I believed, had to be repeated/taught in multiple ways, in multiple situations to make the child understand various aspects of safety. The key was in helping the child generalize the concept of "what was dangerous". Yet, at this point in time, at least for Zachary, I feared issues of safety were very situation specific.

In spite of repeated walks, going constantly over the need to "look both ways before crossing the street" for example, for some reason, Zachary was still not seeing the need to do this. I was careful to make it a point to stop at street corners and say: "look both ways", but he still "did not really get it". In my section on Teaching Language, under the "ordering language" section, I had mentioned how on one occasion, as we had gone on an errand, and crossed the street one day, I had made it a point to show Zachary the "Walk" and "Don't Walk" signs. He had repeated: "Don't Walk" at the time since that was the "flashing sign" as we stood on the street corner. At the end of the day, before he went to bed, Zachary started saying: "Walk... Don't Walk"... and repeating that over and over again. He was "ordering" what he had learned during the day... and in this instance, understanding this concept could literally save his life. **It was at that time that I truly understood the importance of ordering language… it would be much later that I would understand the importance of accurate and complete "reference communication" – especially as it related to issues of safety!**

Now, in focusing specifically on "Safety Issues", I could not help but wonder if Zachary's difficulty in "looking both ways" before crossing the street was somehow related to the lack of "Walk and Don't Walk" signs. After all, he had clearly "ordered" his world in terms of "Walk and Don't Walk" on the day he had seen those signs. Did he now assume that all streets should have a "Walk or Don't Walk" signs and that if none existed, it was ok to keep going? In putting all this together, I was now starting to think that this was indeed the case.

Much as language was "tucked away" for future reference (reference communication as I called it), I suspected issues such as "Walk and Don't Walk" were tucked away for future reference too... and that if "no reference" or "incomplete references" existed from which to "draw information", the autistic child was left without a "proper response" to the situation at hand... and in a dangerous situation, this could make for a deadly omission or inaccuracy!

Incomplete or inaccurate "reference communication" indeed made for a very dangerous situation. If the "past reference" was incomplete in terms of what was considered a "safe situation" for walking across the street, there was no doubt in my mind that Zachary would walk across the street into the path of an oncoming car. I was certain this would also be true if I simply said "walk" – that based on that past reference and association to "proceed across the street" upon seeing or even hearing "walk" that the "word alone" would be enough to make Zachary move forward… without looking both ways to ensure it was safe to do so!

I was now convinced that this was indeed a key to teaching an autistic child about safety... that in order to do so, the child had to be provided with appropriate "references to draw from" for future use. If this theory was correct, this made for a very difficult situation for the parents of autistic children. How could you provide the necessary "reference points" in terms of what to do in specific dangerous situations? I believed I could make use of equations much as I taught synonyms. For example, saying: "car moving = don't walk" or "street corner = don't walk", or "no cars = walk" could help, but at this point, this was all too new – even for me – and as such, I had to continue to be very, very conservative when it came to Zachary's understanding of safety issues! I had to continue to assume he had no concept of such things… until he could slowly prove otherwise!

I would have to do a great deal more in this area before I felt comfortable that Zachary could indeed even begin to "understand" danger! I, personally, would have to assume Zachary had NO concept of danger - IN ANYTHING - until he showed me otherwise in everyday situations! Videos, labels and "reference points" perhaps via books were all I had to work with. I could make use of labels and such, but, in this area, I truly felt the more real life the reference points, the better - and for our family, that would mean many videos on safety! I believed there existed a great need for a safety video that made use of colors, motion, sound, and visuals – geared specifically to autistic children! The realization of just "how dangerous" daily life could be for my child had now truly set in very concretely! :o(

I knew of no place to turn to for help with this very serious issue! This was one of those moments at which you felt very alone in life. At least, now, I had a much greater awareness of the issue and I could begin to work on it.

It had taken me such a long time to teach Zachary to "look both ways" - I had worked so hard on simply "looking both ways" and gotten nowhere. That, alone should have tipped me off to the fact that what I was doing was not working and that I needed to try something else. Zachary, in the past had learned a great deal from children's videos and I hope the same could be true for "safety" as well and that, eventually, safety videos would provide that all necessary "reference point" for my autistic child!

This was indeed a very serious issue for parents and society as a whole. How could one possibly teach a young child "issues of safety" when that child could not first understand the "parts" that made up the "whole"... in this case, the dangerous situation - and the child had no "reference points" or “incomplete reference points” to draw on in terms of "what to do in certain situations"?

To further solidify this issue of “incomplete reference communication”, I wanted to provide a final example of “how Zachary’s mind worked”. Zachary had “plastic shapes” I used in doing exercises with him. There were about 250 pieces in this “bucket” of shapes (see Exercises I Do At Home section). I had picked these up off the floor so often because Zachary loved to “tip the bucket over” (it was about ¾ full when all the shapes were in it) that I decided to put that bucket of shapes above my kitchen cabinets – up high, where Zachary could not get to them. Recently, when he wanted to play with those shapes, he said: “shapes, please”. His sister was next to me. I said: “Zachary, ask Anika to give you those shapes… say… Anika, give me the shapes, please.” Zachary repeated the “Anika, give me the shapes, please” and his sister gave them to him. After he was done playing with the shapes, I then put them back where they belonged… once again, out of his reach. The next day, Zachary wanted the shapes again – only this time, his sister was not in the kitchen – his **father** was! When Zachary said: “shapes, please”, I said, “Zachary, you have to ask **dad** for the shapes”. To my utter surprise, he said: “**Anika**, give me the shapes, please”. He had drawn on his prior “past reference” on how to ask for the shapes… and in doing so, used his sister’s name to ask for the shapes… even though his sister was not in the room! Absolutely incredible! I then corrected him and told him he had to ask “daddy” for the shapes because “Anika” was not in the room. The following day, again, Zachary had wanted to play with these plastic shapes. This time, when he said: “shapes, please”, and I told him he had to “ask for them”, he said: “Mom, can I have the shapes, please”. I was the only person in the room… and this time, he had learned that the person you had to get to “do something” actually had to be there to do it. :o)

This, example, truly showed me the workings of the autistic brain and how incomplete or inaccurate “references” to draw from, could literally cost my son his life in a dangerous situation – and how <u>a past memory – an ingrained reference - seemed to override actual incoming sensory input</u>! It was then that I truly came to see that <u>Zachary’s life consisted not only of “reference communication”, but indeed, of “reference living©” - or “living via reference©” - in everything! A very dangerous way to live</u>!

Indeed, I now understood that echolalia and "ordering language©" or "reference language©" were just tools by the autistic child used to "build references". There were so many topics on "safety" that had to be addressed: fire, construction sites, traffic, animals, anything related to issues of danger and motion, etc. It would indeed be a challenge to find good videos to address so many areas... videos, that needed to include motion, visuals, sounds, smells (i.e, for dangerous substances), color, etc.

I encouraged all parents to submit " recommended safety videos" via my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com - videos that, based on the above, could be used for teaching certain concepts as they related to safety. I would post these "suggested videos" under my safety link for all parents. But, truly, I believed this area was so huge, that what was needed was a video geared specifically to the autistic! As with everything for the autistic child, understanding "safety" would could eventually come "over time" as the child came to understand more about his environment and as he was provided with more coping mechanisms (i.e., labels) to more fully understand that environment and its inherent dangers, however, I feared that for these children, time was not on their side when it came to issues of safety! This indeed was truly an **immediate** issue of life and death for the autistic child!

This inability to understand the parts to the whole - when combined with a dangerous situation - and the lack of past information or incomplete information to "draw from" indeed made for a deadly combination! The inability to perceive danger - another issue explained, yet again, by the inability of the autistic child to properly process the parts to a whole and the inability to integrate those parts and assess them in terms of potential danger in order to obtain the "appropriate response" given the situation!

Motion And The Autistic Child...

Another critical piece of the puzzle I came to understand in terms of how I believed the autistic child perceived his world had to do with the role of motion. As had happened in my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, as I neared the completion of my second book, Breaking The Code To Remove The Shackles Of Autism: When The Parts Are Not Understood And The Whole Is Lost! with only final edits remaining, and once again thinking I was basically "all done", I came to see, what in my opinion, was yet another huge variable that had been there all along but that I simply had not seen until now: motion!

I had always suspected that "motion" somehow played a critical role in the life of the autistic child, but I really did not understand to what extent that was true until very recently (end of August 2002).

As I went for one of my many walks when I tried to sort things out, as I listened to cars going by, I became more aware of "my person" as an intrusion within a specific environment. For some reason, although I had walked this same route so many times, on this particular occasion, I had an overwhelming sensation that can only be explained as a sense of "not belonging there".

I had learned a long time ago to always listen to that inner voice. Why did I all of a sudden have this overwhelming feeling of "not belonging there"? As with so many things I pondered on my walks, I tried to understand this in terms of autism. So many of my "answers" had come to me this way... and once again, I came to see a critical piece I had overlooked: motion!

The best way for me to explain the role of motion in the life of the autistic child was, again, via the use of examples as I saw the role of motion in the life of my son, Zachary.

In trying to understand the role of motion as it related to partiality, I came to see that those things Zachary had the most trouble with were things that were not constant, but rather, involved motion. For example, making Zachary "see cars" in terms of perceiving them as parts to a street, had been very, very difficult for me.

Try as I may, I simply could not get him to understand that "cars were parts to a street", that the two "went together". I now saw, that for Zachary, perhaps this concept had been so difficult to grasp because cars were really not part of the street itself... they were something that may or may not be there... things in motion, that came and went. I knew that Zachary understood the concept of "walk and don’t walk" and what those particular words meant, but I now understood that even though Zachary understood these specific words, I suspect that if I said: "walk" even though a car was coming, that he would still proceed and walk directly in front of an oncoming car! He had a "reference" established in terms of what "walk" and "don’t walk" meant... that you cross or do not cross the street... from our experience with the "walk and don’t walk" signs, but, I now feared that this "reference" was still incomplete...

because, even though Zachary understood these words in and of themselves, he did not understand all that went "behind those words" in terms of assessing safety issues!

If Zachary could not perceive the "cars" visually as a part to the whole, perhaps helping him understand the danger of a coming car would better be explained by making Zachary "listen" for a car and to make him understand that when he "heard a car" his response had to be to "stay on the grass or on the sidewalk". Again, this was all so new to me that all these issues of "safety" were very troubling to me. I feared even "listening for a car" may not be the answer, because as Zachary came to understand the "label of cars", perhaps they would simply all be simply integrated into the whole, as a now "acceptable part" that had been labeled... and understood in terms of what it was...an object called a "car"... but, I feared the much more abstract concept of "what a moving car meant" in terms of safety issues, involved a great deal more work! How do you teach such abstracts concepts to an autistic child…that things that could or could not be there were really “part of the whole, too”? Needless to say, given the fact that I believed autistic children did not perceive moving objects as a "part to the whole", the entire issue of safety as it related to autistic children weighed very heavily on my heart! :o(

Although safety issues such as the above could now be explained in terms of the relation of the "parts to the whole" and the fact, that in autistic children, I believed objects in motion were not perceived as "parts to the whole", there were other things, in addition to the safety issues that I now came to understand based on "motion".

For example, issues with eye contact and blank stares also now made more sense. The eye, by design, needed light in order to "see", but, much of our sight was also dependent on motion. In fact, the eye itself was an object in constant motion, forever adjusting to light as it moved. In addition, the very act of "seeing" involved motion. Your eyes were not "blank stares" as they observed objects... rather, they were constantly in motion. In a normal person, to do what an autistic child does in terms of "blank stares" was a very difficult thing to do. To simply "stare" at something, without moving your eyes was indeed almost impossible to do. Yet, in the autistic child, "blank stares" were commonplace. Why was that? Why was an "activity" I considered so difficult to do - staring at one spot - something the autistic child engaged in so much? Was this simply another coping mechanism - the autistic child's attempt at doing away with motion? I truly wondered!

Another area I came to understand a little more had to do with "self spinning"... something I still saw in Zachary to this day. Zachary often looked up to the ceiling or down at the floor as he "spun himself". Was this his way of attempting to figure out how he himself fit into the "whole"... the environment? After all, persons were, like cars, moving "parts" to the world and perhaps Zachary simply could not understand how he, personally, fit into that whole... the environment, much in the way, I believed he did not understand how cars, these "other moving objects", did not fit into the whole! Self-spinning was simply Zachary’s way of attempting to “decode” how he, himself, fit into his world!

I now understood why the simple act of catching a ball could be so difficult for these children. If they had difficulty integrating motion in their world, all areas involving motion would be impacted – including motor function!

I also came to understand how the inability to look in the mirror could also be related to the issue of motion. Much like a street was a "stable object" without the "cars" or the "moving parts", so, too was the mirror a "stable object" in and of itself... without a "moving person" within it. Once that "moving part" was added, however Zachary could no longer understand how this new, - moving part - fit into the whole! Once again, motion appeared to play a part!

Difficulty in understanding how objects that moved fit into the whole could also explain many socialization issues in these children. Large crowds, by definition, had a great deal of motion (in addition to the many sounds, smells, etc.). As such, I certainly understood how situations involving many persons could be difficult for young children still trying to understand how "all these moving parts" fit into the whole. In Zachary, I knew this had been somewhat of an issue, although now, he liked the hustle and bustle of certain crowds. The fair, for example, with all its rides and things to explore, had been something he truly enjoyed this year. Of course, as expected, some things were more fun than others. Rides, with all the mechanics involved, were fascinating... animals were not! Rides were part of a whole entity - animals and people were not!

If you looked at the issue of motion, it appeared that motion of "parts" that were truly "part of the whole", like fair rides, the moving parts of a clock, gears of countless objects, etc. were more readily perceived and understood by Zachary. Such motion was "ok". But, the motion of "parts" that did not "truly belong to the whole", parts that "could or could not be there" (like cars, people, etc.) were more the problem! As such, animals at the fair, or a bull in a pen, or cars on the street - all moving objects that did not actually "belong" to the whole - were objects that simply did not seem to be understood in terms of how they "fit" into the "whole"... and as such, they were ignored! The implications for the autistic child were huge and indeed, overwhelming!

This also explained why spinning was so fascinating to these children. I believed Zachary spun things in an attempt to “decode” the mechanics of motion and how motion fit into his world. The large wheels on the McDonalds toy (see Spinning section) created the interesting illusion of the wheels spinning in the direction opposite of that the child was spinning. No doubt, this created even further interest in Zachary when it came to this particular toy. There were plenty of things he spun that did not create this “illusion”, but, surely, perhaps, many did. The fact that motion, such as spinning also resulted in the disappearance of “parts to the whole”, in my view, was how “spinning” could be used as a coping mechanism also. Thus, spinning, I thought, played a dual role in the autistic child. It was his way to attempt to “break the code” of motion and his way to cope with partiality when the parts to the whole simply did not make sense! Add to that the visual stimulation or vertigo effect of spinning, and this activity became powerful indeed!

Perhaps this issue with motion also explained why fluorescent lights were so interesting to Zachary, too. Fluorescent lights could create interest in several ways… via the motion or flickering within them and perhaps also in their light intensity and the possibility that this somehow impacted how colors were perceived. As with so much in autism, I always felt there were several factors at play in even the smallest of things!

With motion, it was as if that "normal instinct" as it related to danger… that connection we all instinctively made when we perceived motion – to assess a moving object in terms of potential danger – was simply not there in the autistic child!

In my view, autistic children had to somehow be taught "how moving parts" fit into the whole of life... moving people, moving animals, moving insects, moving things. Of these, I felt moving "things" (i.e., trains, trucks, cars, etc.) and moving animals that could pose a danger, were the first things to tackle... to clearly define, label and for which clear explanations of "consequences" had to be given. I felt videos would be the best way to teach such things, but I knew of none that even came close to what was needed for these children!

As with so many issues, as I wrote these materials, I came to understand even more in terms of how the autistic child saw his world. I came to understand why "motion" was such an issue for the autistic, especially when it came to the subject of "safety". Although many apparently felt that "overall ability to see" was not impacted in the autistic, truly it was, in my opinion. I came to see that, for Zachary, even when motion was involved, such as a moving car, a past memory would over-ride incoming sensory input. As such, Zachary, literally, could not "see" the car coming… based on the fact that a past similar situation had already been ingrained in his mind and that was the information he chose to draw from when asked "do you see a car coming?"… as opposed to relying on incoming sensory input. Thus, truly, Zachary could not "see" the coming car… the object in motion… the object that could so easily take his life!

“Father, I Cannot Tell A Lie”… The Apparent Inability To Lie In The Autistic Child…

The autistic child's world was one of exactness and completeness in everything. A lie was, by definition, a "fabrication" and thus, until the autistic child saw another child lying and the lie was labeled as "a lie", then, the autistic child appeared unable to lie because it was something that was simply not part of "normal life" - at least not part of life for very young children! Young children did not “inherently lie” - it was something they had to be "taught", something they had to learn! They had to "learn it" by seeing someone else do it. A "lie" was a new "part" or "aspect" of language that was, at least at first, unknown or "nonexistent" to the autistic child. Yet, once a lie was heard and the "label" of "a lie" was given and the autistic child actually perceived that "this was a falsehood", I believed autistic children could understand the concept of a lie and use it in language and "fib" as well as anyone else. :o) Again, as with everything labeling and understanding were key!

The Potential Danger of Imaginary Play In The Autistic Child...

The Slippery Slope... That Could Lead To... Adult Schizophrenia?

Like lying, imaginary play was something most autistic children did not do... until they were taught, "to pretend".

It had long been speculated that schizophrenia was the adult form of autism. Based on what I have come to understand of the role of partiality in the autistic child's life, I now believed that this could indeed be the case. The best way for me to explain this theory was by providing an example of what I believed could be a behavior that led down the slippery slope leading to adult schizophrenia.

For the autistic child, as with any child, fascination started first with objects and then moved on to people as the child grew older. This was why young children were perfectly happy to just be at home with mom and their toys... but, as they grew older, the need to interact with other children became more powerful than the need to play with toys… and in my opinion, that was true of the autistic child also, in spite of his huge issues with “socialization” because the issue was not one of “ not wanting to play with other children” it was one of not understanding one’s world – and that was a **huge** difference!

When the autistic child did that "crossover" - when the need to have friends became more important than simply playing with objects - pretend play could take on a dangerous role... that of actually replacing people – including the autistic child himself!

Again, a very poignant example would best show why I believed this to be the case. A mother I knew recently commented to me that her son had become obsessed with a fictional character in one of his software programs, so much so, that he identified himself completely with the main character in this software package. Although this autistic child, like so many, kept very much to himself and did not like to be disturbed at all when engaged in a particular task, his mother soon discovered that if she called him by the name of this particular fictional character in the software program, her son would leap to his feet and do just about anything she asked without making a fuss. If the character's name was not used, getting her son to do what she wanted was a lot more difficult.

In this particular program - but again the "identification" could come from any character in ANY video, book, software, etc. - but, in this particular program, one of the main character's tasks was to take ice cubes and make snow. To accomplish this task, the ice cubes were made, then taken and put on a conveyor belt, passed through a machine and thus made into snow. Each snowflake was then inspected for uniqueness with a magnifying glass.

Note, there were several key things here...

1. A process was involved... this process had a beginning and an end.

2. The process had a particular order.

3. The process involved an individual... a fictional character.

4. The task involved something "with order"... first in the form of placing the ice cubes on a conveyor belt and then in checking with a magnifying glass to ensure the perfect order or uniqueness of each snowflake.

This child came to be so completely identified with this character, that he came to respond primarily when called by the name of this fictional character.

This child also came to spend his time exactly as did the fictional character... the child spent a good part of his day... making ice cubes and putting them into his mother's freezer. So many of these ice cubes were made that the mother had to start bagging them... but the child made so many, that there were always loose ice cubes in the freezer, falling out each time the door to the upright freezer was opened.

If the mother took any of the child's ice, the child became very upset and the usual outburst/tantrum followed.

So, how did this fit in with schizophrenia? Please remember, this was simply a theory was putting forth... I had no proof that this was what was happening, but, I suspected that it may very well be...

First, I wanted to emphasize that I believed "pretend play" became a very real issue once an autistic child did that all critical "crossover" from objects to persons in terms of what captivated his attention.

In the example above, the child was not allowed to "complete the process". He was only going "as far as" the making of the ice cubes... but, he never completed the process entirely. This was a definite source of concern.

As the autistic child grew, I believed he learned more coping mechanisms simply from "being in the world", and as such, he adapted a little more to his environment... picking up the concept of fractions along the way, understanding that things had labels, etc.

Note: A child who was left to “break the code” to life would have very little chance of doing so and would only slip further into the clutches of autism. As such, when I referred to “coping mechanisms” in the above paragraph, I was referring to positive coping mechanisms such as labeling, explanations, etc. There were indeed many, many negative coping mechanisms in which the autistic child engaged, and these, I believed, would only make him slip further away.

As such, it was critical all parents understood the “simple passage of time” was not the key to recovering these children! In my opinion, these children needed to be provided

with the right coping mechanisms and that could only come through a great deal of work and therapy!

Thus, **positive** coping mechanisms helped with "the real world", "the physical world" as the child grew and more labels were provided to “decode” the physical world, and as such perhaps less focus was given to environmental tasks since the child was now better able to cope... having had years and years of experience to learn to adapt to his environment, having had years of labels to help understand so much of his world.

As such, it was my opinion that environmental issues or issues as they related “**to objects**" took less of a priority as the child grew older. Socialization, however, became more and more important to the child. This was indeed true of all children- and I firmly believed, of autistic children as well!

It was, however, a well-known fact that the autistic child had difficulty making friends... and herein was the **danger of pretend play** in the life of the autistic child. As the autistic child searched for "friends" and discovered he had very few... or none... he could begin to identify with fictional characters... to consider "them" "his friends"... and since these "fictional characters" were now "one's friends”, readily available for play, for company it would be natural for the autistic child to want to "play with them" much as a normal child would play with his "real friends".

In our example, the child engaged in the making of ice cubes... just as did the character with which he identified himself. Indeed, this particular child not only engaged in the activities of his "fictional friend", he was "becoming" his fictional friend - responding now, almost exclusively, only when called by the fictional character's name.

Also important to this analysis was the fact that in the above scenario, this child was allowed to make ice cubes - but, the process itself was never completed in its entirety... only a PART of the process was done. There was that key word again: "a part"... a "part" of the "whole" only had been completed!

Based on my understanding of the role of partiality in the autistic brain and the autistic child's inability to deal with the partial, as I observed this autistic child, I could not help but wonder what happened when a process was not completed, a conversation or activity with a fictional friend or character identified with was interrupted?

It was my belief that the fact that the process, conversation or activity was never completed made it so that this "partiality" became a greater focus of the child's attention...and just as the autistic child strived for completeness in the physical environment by spinning, etc., so may the autistic adult strive for completeness by "finishing" the process, conversation, task or activity that was left incomplete or "partial".

It was my belief that as the autistic child grew, by definition, he was simply "exposed" to more labels and concepts... and picked more up along his journey through life in terms of dealing with his actual physical world.

Given the fact that the life of the autistic child was one that demanded "exactness" and "order" in everything, I began to question what would happen if that "completeness in order" was missing... if, for example, a process was left only "partially done" as in the above example.

If a child was allowed to so completely identify with a fictional character, would that child not accept that character as part of his "reality" and consider that "part of his world" or "that new person or process" in his world something that needed to be made "sense of" and categorized or completed?

I could certainly see that as the environment became better coped with, the focus of the child's attention could certainly shift to processes and other "issues" of conversation/ process, etc., that had remained yet unresolved. As the autistic child could not cope with partiality and reverted to spinning, so too, did I suspect, the autistic adult sought a method to complete the partial...only now, it was to complete the partial within... and this, I believed could be what led to schizophrenia.

This may very well explain why the schizophrenic were seen "talking to people who were not there".

Therefore, to allow children who were autistic to identify with fictional characters may could actually lead to bigger problems down the road as the brain may focus on incomplete processes (as the ice cube to perfect snowflake example), incomplete conversations (as in with fictional friends), or any other incomplete or partial task, etc., that may have been interrupted and left "undone".

As such, I personally, would not encourage **any** imaginary play in Zachary, especially as he made that critical crossover from objects to people in terms of what captivated his attention, and I would be very careful when he initiated pretend play himself... careful to complete the task... to make sure tasks were completed with the verbalization of an "all done", etc. prior to moving on something else.

In terms of "imaginary friends"... something I had not yet had to deal with... I would do my best to "snuff them out somehow" as soon as possible by perhaps suggesting the "imaginary friend" - "was gone", perhaps using the words: "bye-bye" or something like that! Of course, words like “bye-bye” could reinforce the “existence” of such friends… as such, **perhaps the best thing was simply to “snuff them out altogether”! This was especially true if that “imaginary friend” involved my child actually identifying himself with or as a particular “character” (as had the child in the above example)**.

This was a problem I had yet to observe in Zachary... but, I would make absolutely sure he did not start to fall down what I saw as that possible slippery slope that perhaps led to adult schizophrenia. :o(

This issue had the potential to be so devastating to my child, if true, that I was simply, personally, not willing to take the risk of allowing my child to engage in anything that had to do with "imaginary friends".

I suspected that as with so much in the life of the autistic child, **labeling pretend play when it did occur would be critical in helping the autistic child to cope... to make him understand the difference between reality and the "pretend world"**. This may be as simple as explaining to the child for example that "dogs did not talk", "that imaginary an friend was not real... that they not someone you could call on the phone... not someone who could really come and fill up your bucket in your sandbox", etc.

Indeed, for the autistic child, I truly believed that it was critical that pretend play, when it surfaced, be carefully and painstakingly labeled for what it was – not real!

Also critical in my opinion was the fact that any actual identification with a character/person be limited, by constantly reminding the child that "his name was...." and actually using the child's real name *only*. Teaching the concept of "what's your name?"- of one's "self"- early on, I also believed was key... as was, I believed, using the child's real name and that name only when calling the child.

It was too easy for parents, siblings and others around the autistic child to fall into the trap of letting the child identify with a fictional character and allowing him to "respond to that name" when called by that name since that was "the name" that “got” the child's attention. But, in this case, **allowing that identification with a fictional character by the autistic child gave him exactly what you did not want to provide... control over a potentially dangerous situation – a new coping mechanism to deal with loneliness as it so often existed in the life of the autistic child!**

If you think about it, **pretend play allowed the autistic child to control the situation**, or his world... to make it "just the way he wanted it"... much in the way "spinning" was used by younger autistic children to "do away with partiality". Indeed, many coping mechanisms seen in autistic children provided this sense of control over the situation. I found this to be true with spinning, self injurious behaviors, screaming, biting, associations whereby children created "new objects" out of parts to make a new entity (see information on creation of a truck in section on fractions), etc. and in my opinion, that could certainly also be the case here!

The key for parents was to allow only those coping mechanism, like Labeling, Echolalia, Ordering Language, Counting, etc., that actually helped the child cope with life in a productive way and to work at eliminating all negative and potentially harmful coping mechanism that allowed the child to not only control his world in a negative or non-productive manner, but also allowed the autistic child a means of eliminating the need to understand his world.

Labels were truly the parent's most powerful ally in this fight against autism. If something had a label, it was a whole in and of itself... even a partial could be perceived as its own entity. Labels were, I believed, also key to keeping the child in "this world"... because they removed the frustration of "not understanding this world" and as such they could help ensure pretend play was labeled as pretend and this too, helped keep the child "grounded in reality" as opposed to a fictional world he could completely control on his own. I encouraged all parents to review my section on coping mechanisms and to encourage only the use of "positive ones" in working with their children. Parents would also find very valuable information under my section entitled Exercises I Do At Home. These were exercises I had done with my son in an attempt to help him deal with issues of "partiality"... in an attempt to help him better cope with his world and to find joy within “real life” as opposed to seeking it in a “make believe” world!

My theory was simply that... a theory... as was everything else I had provided in these materials. Of course, what was to those in research simply a “theory”, to me, was very much a fact of life… a “theory” that had proven itself time and time again! Based on what I had come to understand of the role of "partiality" in the life of my own son, I believed this “theory” as it related to the danger of pretend play, in view of its potentially devastating consequences, certainly warranted further investigation.

Issues with "partiality" also helped explain other disorders that involved completing a task, such as obsessive-compulsive behavior.

As I suspected that adult schizophrenia could be tied to the need to "complete the partial" and the need to deal with issues of loneliness in the autistic child, so, too, did I suspect that this obsessive-compulsive behavior could also be an attempt at “completing the partial or incomplete” in life. Many autistic children were reported to have obsessive compulsive disorders... and although many other children were labeled simply as "obsessive compulsive disorder" (and did not have the label of autism), I suspected obsessive compulsive behavior could simply be another, perhaps milder form of autism.

I had once heard a young man speak of his life with obsessive-compulsive disorder. The young man was approximately 17 and had no other "label"... he had not been labeled as autistic. As he talked he explained how he felt he could "catch germs everywhere" and that as such, he constantly had to wash his hands. Much in the way that a bandage was quickly removed by the autistic child who had not had a bandage labeled - a child who had not learned to cope with something (the bandage) which was not part of the whole (the skin) - so too, did I suspect a person suffering from obsessive compulsive behavior may be attempting to "remove" something (germs) that were not part of the whole (the skin or person). Again, this was simply a theory... but given we saw so much "obsessive compulsive" type behavior in the autistic, it was certainly an interesting one - at least in my opinion. :o)

In closing this section, I want to mention one final thing. There was apparently research showing that schizophrenics often had parasites (i.e., hookworms) in their brain tissue.

Of course, as in so many other things, the medical community was quick to refute this possible link. You could see this issue listed and refuted under a very popular link on the Internet called "Quackwatch" by simply doing a search for "Hulda", a somewhat controversial person in the medical community. Not surprisingly, "Quackwatch" also did not believe vaccinations could cause autism. Given that most "advisors" for "Quackwatch" were from the medical community, this was not surprising to me. Of course, anyone who denied the impact of mercury, the second most toxic substance in the world, on the human body was a “quack”, too! In my opinion, it was time for those on “Quackwatch” to look at the facts rather than allowing themselves to be spoonfed what to believe by the pharmaceutical and government agencies tied to vaccination programs!

The medical community, a community so closely linked to the pharmaceutical industry, had long denied the vaccine/autism link - just as had the pharmaceuticals and the many government organizations (i.e., CDC, NIH, etc.) directly linked to this issue of vaccinations. I provide this information on parasites in the schizophrenic as "information only" for those who wanted to look further into this topic since I did find it to be a rather interesting one – especially given the fact that so many autistic children engaged in behaviors that simply made them more prone to parasitic infections (behaviors such as licking, eating sand, etc. – for more on that, see my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism).

As a child, my mother, the wife of a doctor, always used to treat all her children for parasites on a regular basis. When hyperactivity seemed to be a little overwhelming, she always suspected worms. If indeed autistic children were prone to parasitic infestation due for example to the fact that they were often "licking things" and, in Zachary's case, actually eating sand (that could be laced with the eggs of parasites), that would certainly contribute to hyperactivity. As such, treating for parasites (i.e., worms) was a good idea.

As I mentioned earlier, however, the cautionary word for parents here was that the medical community did not give this issue the attention it deserved. Most tests for parasites tested for only a very few types… and often, by the time the stool samples made it to a lab, the presence of parasites was “negative” because the eggs, etc., had died by the time they reached the lab (one of my sisters-in-law used to work in a medical lab and was the one who had mentioned that to me). As such, I cautioned parents to become informed on the issue of parasites (i.e., pinworms, roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, etc.) and to be very cautious in terms of allowing their children to engage in those behaviors that made children prone to these infections.

Teaching Emotions... Why The Autistic Child Is Never Simply A Little Bit Angry...

It was my belief that much as sensory, behavioral and social aspects of the autistic child's life were impacted by the inability to properly process the parts to a whole, so too, was this the case with emotional issues. In my opinion, because the autistic child was unable to understand "partialities" his life was one of "all or nothing"... having no room for the "in between" situation or "part" in anything – including emotions!

In the autistic child everything was "magnified" in that those areas that functioned well, functioned extremely well… those areas that were dysfunctional, had the potential for being extremely dysfunctional!

Thus, the inability to allow for the "physical" existence of "parts" that were not understood, in my opinion also applied to the inability to allow for the existence of "parts" to emotions. As a result, emotions, like the physical world, become a matter of "all or nothing" in terms of what was "allowed" by the autistic brain. For example, "parts" to emotions, I believed, were not understood - perhaps simply because they had never been "labeled" for what they were - "degrees" of emotion within the expression of one specific type of emotion. Thus, as with everything else, for the autistic child, "degrees" of emotion also had to be defined - to be understood.

Take for example the "emotion" of "happy". Parents did not usually think of actually "teaching" the various "degrees of happy". In my opinion, however, this was exactly what was needed to help the autistic child understand his emotions as well as to help him perceive the emotions of others. I had noticed in Zachary that he could easily tell when "mom was very upset" but that unless I was "very upset", he really went about doing his daily activities without taking much notice of "how mom felt" during the day. Likewise, he could easily perceive "very happy" when I laughed "very hard" - and he too, usually ended up finding that "funny" and laughed "very hard" right along with me. Yet, what he found funny was always "hilariously funny" and we always found ourselves wondering "why" things that "just were not that funny" to anyone else were always "hilariously funny" to Zachary. If something was perceived as funny, at all – it was always, hilariously so! If something was sad, it was almost "devastatingly" so. Again, why the extremes even in emotions? Why the hilariously funny? … Why the violent outbursts? … Why the tremendous aggression? Why the so complete anger?

I truly came to understand this whole issue with "degrees of emotions" as I watched my autistic nephew who was approximately 11 years old. It was then that I saw this issue with "partiality" truly spanned all areas of life… including not only what was perceived by the physical senses, but all those abstract things… like emotions, social, behavioral and, most likely, sexual issues as well.

Andrew had exhibited all the characteristic behaviors of an autistic child. As a younger child, he had been fascinated with many of the same things that currently fascinated Zachary. As I observed Andrew, I often looked for "clues" of what I could expect to see in

Zachary as he grew older also, in an attempt to help "prepare myself" for what was inevitably down the road for my autistic child.

Like Zachary, Andrew was a very kind-hearted and intelligent boy. He had a fantastic memory for specific things and excelled in or had immense difficulty in stereotypical areas of strength and struggle for autistic children. In July of 2002, while we were visiting many of my in-laws, almost all my nieces and nephews were playing together... all except Andrew. He went around, talking to himself - undoubtedly a form of ordering language in the older autistic child - and every once in a while, he would notice something another child did, something he thought was funny. What hit me right away on this particular day, was the fact that what Andrew had "perceived as hilariously funny", most children would have perhaps only found "somewhat amusing". Yet, there was Andrew, laughing hilariously at something that really "was not that funny" to begin with.

By this time, I had already figured out that partiality processing was an issue for the autistic child... but, what I had not realized until that very moment, was that partiality processing affected absolutely all aspects of the autistic child's life... including emotions! Once again, it all made perfect sense!

Andrew did not understand the "in between" emotion or "partial emotion" much as he could not understand the "parts" in anything else until they were first "explained" or "labeled". As such, I came to quickly understand that for the autistic child, even "degrees of emotion" had to be labeled!

As with so many other things in the life of the autistic child, we had made the mistake of assuming a child could at least "see all levels" of emotions, but for the autistic child this was a very false assumption! The fact that various "levels of emotion" were expressed every day by those all around the autistic child did not mean that the child necessarily "understood" those emotions, those degrees of emotions within a specific emotion. I would argue, indeed, that the autistic child did not understand "in between" emotions until they were specifically taught. Only then, did I believe, could the autistic child truly come to perceive "levels or degrees of emotion"... only then could he understand the "parts" or "degrees" to the whole - the type of emotion!

This easily explained not only issues with "hilarious or inappropriate laughter" so often seen in autistic children, it also explained the other extreme of emotions too - the violent outbursts of anger and aggression. In autistic children, it was all too obvious that it seemed to take "almost nothing" to upset them tremendously. Again, there was no "in between"...the autistic child was either "not upset" or "tremendously upset", "not finding something funny" or finding something to be "hilariously funny"... and nowhere were "degrees" of either anger or happiness anywhere to be found!

I now truly came to understand that in order for the autistic child to "perceive" and understand the various "degrees" of emotion - in all types of emotion - those "degrees" literally had to be taught via labels and explanations.

The various or "in between" degrees of "happy", for example, needed to be taught to the autistic child since he knew no "in between" emotions. The autistic child was either happy or not happy, sad or not sad, angry or not angry. In my opinion, the autistic child experienced only the "full blown" emotion or none at all.

As with everything else in the child's life... the part to the whole had to be defined to be understood...and again, this was why labels were so critical for these children in coping with their world. As with everything in the autistic child's world, when the parts could not be understood, they were simply ignored, or frustration surfaced and erupted in the form of anger and aggression, self injurious behavior and withdrawal and so many other "coping mechanisms" we saw in these children.

Given this, how did you go about teaching "degrees" of emotion?

As with so much in the life of the autistic child, this too, had to begin with a label. For example, in teaching "degrees" of happy, the autistic child needed to be given labels and specific examples of the following ideas or "levels" of "happy": giggling, snickering, grinning, contentment, enjoyment, pleasure, satisfied, ecstatic, elated, overjoyed and so on. The goal was to teach the various "degrees" or "in betweens" ... between the "a little happy" and "very super super, absolutely ecstatic happy". Once the child understood the various "labels" for the "in between" levels of "happy" or "mad" or "sad", he could then himself, make use of these emotions because now, each specific level of emotion, each "degree" of emotion had been given a label ... making that "degree" or "part" to the emotion an entity in and of itself as opposed to a "part" to something else. Emotions should no longer become outbursts - in any direction - happy or mad - as labels to variations of one thing should provide a coping mechanism and greater understanding of the “range of emotions” for the child.

In teaching a child to deal with anger and/or frustration, it now became necessary to show him the various levels of anger... to show him that "it's ok to be a little angry if this happens, but not very angry"... to show him what level or degrees of anger were appropriate for various situations. So was it true for levels of aggression. Autistic children needed to be shown what was acceptable “emotion” and “behavior” and what was not - given a specific situation. The same would be true of "levels of screaming"... when was a little scream ok... and when was it ok to give out a huge scream! All these "levels of emotion" had to be taught to the autistic child! :o)

Teaching the child to cope with his emotions via productive coping mechanisms, and helping the child understand alternatives to emotions, the "in between" emotions as opposed to only the extremes, I was convinced would be of great help to these children in anger and aggression management.

I knew Zachary has some appreciation for the expression of emotions as seen in these pictures when asked to show me his "happy" and "sad" face.

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But, in teaching him, I previously had never thought about the "in between" in emotions... at least not until recently.

Again, I longed for a teaching tool I had not yet seen in this area... a video whereby Zachary could actually see and be taught the "in between" emotions, not simply the general concept of "happy" or "sad", for example. In starting to teach Zachary degrees of emotions, something I found to be of help were all those "smilie" faces you saw on the Internet. Zachary could "relate" to them easily when I told him "what they were". This technique seemed to work because each smilie came with that important "label". This at least provided me with a “place to start” in this area of emotions.

There were tons of good links for "smilies" below for those of you who wanted to try this, too.

As with everything else, the part of the whole first had to be taught or understood in terms of how the part fit into the whole in order for even "emotions" to make sense for the autistic child... in order to provide the necessary coping mechanisms for these children. The "label" truly was the key to so much for these children.

For these children, life was indeed marked by emotion - the emotion of frustration - as these children desperately attempted to "break the code" in absolutely everything - including understanding emotions themselves, and why they felt the way they did... especially when that emotion was one of "sadness"!

For Zachary, I had often noticed that when he was sad, he was very, very, very sad... and this had always troubled me a great deal - now, I finally understood why my son's sadness had been so intense that it broke my heart also! I finally understood my son and in showing him I understood, I saw the joy in his face because I knew he finally sensed that I did understand! His life, a life that had until recently so pervasively been marked by frustration, almost overnight lost much of that frustration because as I understood my son, I could now easily move in and help him deal with those things causing his frustration. My work with Zachary could now be much more focused.

The shackles of autism that had for so long enslaved my little boy were finally slowly starting to come off!

Although I did not realize it, however, my truly complete understanding of Zachary's issues would only come, literally, as I progressed in the writing of this document, as I was finally able to "put it all together"!

To help teach "degrees of emotion" - smilie faces (links below) and words of quantity! (see section on Teaching Language) were a good place to start!

Links for "smilies" to help teach emotions to the autistic child.

http://www.ezboard.com/resource_posticons.html
http://www.tnfj.com/Downloads/smilies.html
http://www.gosmiley.com/
http://www.wearenow.com/smilies/
http://theroleplayersrealm.com/images/similies/
http://www.soccercrew.com/forum/Smilies/Best_Smilies.html
http://www.abestweb.com/smilies/
http://www.spasschat.de/chat/smile.php3
http://home.c2i.net/jmoelnaa/smile/smilies.html
http://www.mysmilies.com/
http://www.fridaynight.lu/forum/smileys/smilies.php
http://mazeguy.tripod.com/smilies/all.html
http://members.tripod.com/cannon_fodder/smilies.html
http://tomato17.tripod.com/smilies.html
http://www.larainmotion.com/smiliespage.htm

Discipline And The Autistic Child... Potentially Devastating To Both Child And Parent!!!

When A Lack Of Understanding Leads To A Painful And Potentially Harmful Situation!!!

Life with an autistic child was a difficult one - especially emotionally - for both the autistic child and the parent… and I now truly understood just how difficult that life could be for those parents who had two or more autistic children. As difficult as I found life, myself, my heart truly went out to all parents of the autistic and especially to those who had several autistic children.

Recently, however, the emotional distress I, personally, felt in daily life with autism was magnified, beyond what words could even begin to express - by my realization of what I had been – unknowingly - doing emotionally to my autistic son when it came to discipline!

Discipline was a sensitive issue for all parents. So often, I had heard parents complain that their autistic child, had been labeled by onlookers as simply "undisciplined" and that "a good spanking would do him a world of good". Well... only the parent of an autistic child could truly understand just how difficult it could be to discipline a child - when there seemed to be no answer as to “why” the autistic child did what he did. Too many times, I believed we made the mistake of disciplining our children as one would discipline a "normal child"... and herein was, what I believed, was yet another huge issue for both the parent and the child.

The best way for me to explain this, again, was via an example. As I worked on my computer one day, I had a cup of coffee next to me. The cup only had about 1/3 of the coffee left in it. There were papers all about me, with my notes scratched on them. Zachary came into the office and saw the cup. He immediately proceeded to turn it over and I proceeded to pull his pants down and give him a small spanking in an attempt to "teach him" that this was "unacceptable behavior". Well, two hours later, I realized he had done this because he literally could not help himself. Again - as with so much in his life - partiality had played a role... at the time, however, I had not recognized that!

The cup was only 1/3 full... and given that I now knew for a fact that Zachary could not properly process partiality, it now (2 hours later) made perfect sense to me as to why he had flipped that cup and emptied it in such a quick motion. Had that cup been full, he would have left it alone - I had seen him do that on many occasions in the past - but, now**, in a very poignant way, I truly understood what I had done to my child! I had spanked him for doing something over which he had absolutely no control!** This had happened very, very shortly after I had come to the conclusion that "partiality" was an issue for him... but, reacting to the situation, I had not made the appropriate "connection" at the time of the incident. Needless to say, **I felt horrible!**

I had showed Zachary the concept of fractions but had not yet applied it to so many things in his life, specifically, for example, to the fact that a cup could be 1/3 full, etc. I had actually planned on working on that "example" in the next day or so but had not yet done so. I had shown him the concept of "fractions" at it related to a door being opened halfway. We had a rather squeaky front door, and I decided to use that as my example of "fractions" in applying the concept to "real life". Had I used a cup instead, I was certain Zachary would not have even touched the cup that was 1/3 filled because I would have provided the necessary label he needed to cope with the situation... it could have been that simple!

Interestingly, I had noticed that, in Zachary, if a partially filled bottle had a cap on it, such as a bottle of mouthwash, etc., somehow, that was better tolerated. It could simply have been that Zachary had tried to open partially filled bottles in the past with no success and now left them alone... but, I did want to mention this also. I was not sure if "a cap" made the bottle and its content more easily perceived as a whole - I suspected it did, but, again, it may simply have been that I had not noticed Zachary trying to open these in the past. Yet, Zachary had, at a very young age, figured out how to open many child proof caps. Again, I cautioned parents to be careful in making assumptions here - this was true for all children. There were many dangerous liquids in bottles, and parents should never assume that any child would leave dangerous liquids alone!

There was an inherent danger in assuming that the fact that something in "black and white" was inherently true! I advised all parents to always err on the side of caution, and to always question everything – even the materials I provided herein because, although I saw things a certain way, perhaps, I had missed something else altogether. I truly wanted to caution everyone to always seek the answers and to continue to search for them, until everything made sense… not only those "parts" we were personally comfortable with. :o) Given the safety issues as they related to "incomplete or inaccurate reference living©" and the generalizations these children made from one thing to the other (i.e., all pills or "candy looking things" tasted good and were fun to eat… all liquids were fun… like bubble liquid, etc.), this was especially true when it came to matters such as dangerous substances, pills, etc. Never assume your child "knew" something and that "this knowledge" could "cross over" accurately from one situation to the other… that could be a very deadly and heart-wrenching assumption to make!

There were many situations that parents and others in society, saw as issues with "disciple" in the autistic child, but that, in actuality, were nothing more than issues with partiality!

For example, Zachary had long had issues with running back and forth, down a hallway... never stopping in "the middle" of the hallway. Even if someone was "in the way", he practically "mowed them down" to get past them and to the other end. Again, it was an "all or nothing" motion... and there were no "in betweens". To someone observing this situation, Zachary would, surely, be seen as a "very rude, undisciplined and unmannered child". That, however, could not be further from the truth! Zachary was pretty good in saying, "please and thank you" in everything, yet, with issues that dealt with "partiality", he literally could not help himself... his brain simply was not allowing for that "in between" situation - at least not until that "in between" situation was taught!

There was another story I needed to share that also related to the issue of discipline in the autistic child. I had once been in a grocery store with Zachary. This particular store had a small toy aisle as so many of them do. In that aisle was a small package of toy soldiers. Zachary had wanted me to purchase that item, but, at the time, I had told him, no. Six months later, we returned to that same store. As soon as we had gone down the first aisle, Zachary said: "soldiers". At first, I did not understand what he was talking about... but, his sister did... she had a knack for always understanding exactly what he wanted. She reminded me of the packet of toy soldiers and said: "he wants the soldiers he saw last time". I could not believe it... how was it that he had such a fantastic memory for such things?

If you put the stories of the "spilled coffee" and the "toy soldiers" together, you get another very real story - the story of a misunderstood child who was disciplined for something beyond his control and the story of a child who had a fantastic memory and would remember the fact, that, for some reason he could not understand, mom punished him for doing something he could not help doing – for doing something he simply did not understand in terms of “what was wrong”! You ha the story of a child who was spanked for a reason he could not control nor understand and you had a child with a fantastic memory... the two, together, again, made for a dangerous combination in the autistic child.

I truly wondered how much emotional damage, we, as parents, teachers, and others all about these children were inflicting upon them simply because we did not understand them. Until the "offending situation", as the 1/3 cup of coffee, and the concept of what "1/3 is" was explained to Zachary and he understood that concept, he could do nothing but turn that cup over... his inability to process partiality properly would ensure that - until he had been taught otherwise! Add to this - the use of sedation and/or medications, and "therapy" methods based on punishment or negative reward systems - in an attempt to control a child who simply was not understood, and you get a very dangerous and harmful combination indeed!

When I, personally, came to this realization as to how Zachary was affected by "partiality", I truly came to understand exactly what all that now meant for my child - every single aspect of his life had been impacted - his behavioral, social, emotional, sensory aspects - everything - and that impacted absolutely everything in how I, as a parent needed to respond to him! It was now critical to make him understand everything with labels, to explain every aspect of every situation - a huge task indeed, but a very necessary one!

Now that I realized this, I, personally, felt a great deal of emotional distress - knowing I had punished my child in the past when he literally had no control over what he was doing, and knowing that he had a fantastic memory simply made matters worse!

I could not even begin to describe the pain I felt at the moment of that realization and the pain I still feel to this day for having punished Zachary when he simply did not realize what he was doing, and truly could not control himself! :o(

This was an issue that would always weigh very, very heavily upon my heart. I could only hope that since I now understood his problem, that I could help erase some of the horrible memories he surely must have had of a mom getting upset for so many years and his not understanding why! :o(

Finally, let me say, that I found autistic children, in most cases to be very, very intelligent children. They understood so much more than we could ever imagine. Not being able to communicate back to someone did not mean that something had not been understood. While on the phone, I often used to say to people who wanted me to visit: "Well, I really can't... with Zachary... it's just too hard!" I no longer said that because I now realized he truly understood this comment... and I knew he understood so, so much more!

For example, when I had to go to Canada to pick up his sister who had been at a horse camp for a week, I told Zachary as I put him down the night before I left that "mommy was going to get Anika"... and I told him I would be gone for 2 or 3 days. When I said that, he answered: "2 days". He understood completely!

Thus, to parents, teachers - indeed everyone - I would just caution you to be careful of what you say and do when it came to such issues. Those little ears did understand. Be very careful when a stressful situation occurred and you wanted to discipline your child to first look at the source of your child's behavior. I urged you to evaluate the situation, and make absolutely sure that the reason for which you thought discipline was necessary had absolutely nothing to do with the autistic child's inability to process partialities or his inability to integrate his world, because, if it did, then punishing or "disciplining" that child for his actions would do nothing to help him understand the situation and why "it was wrong" to do what he did and it would do nothing to prevent the situation from happening again in the future since the underlying issue had not been addressed with the giving of a spanking!

Undoubtedly, it will take all parents a while to come to truly understand and cope, themselves, with the huge role partiality played in the life of the autistic child, but soon, like me, other parents would be able to spot these issues in an instant. And when that happened and the "offense" was as a result of this inability to process partiality, look not at the moment as one for discipline, but rather, seek the lesson you needed to teach your child as it related to partiality and the need to integrate information in order for the “parts” to make sense!

In truth, I would say that when the urge to discipline occurred, I would look immediately at the situation, not the child. What was wrong with the situation that caused him to do what he did? These "situations", when they result from an inability to process partiality needed to be viewed as excellent opportunities to find out exactly what your child needed to understand... what issue, what concept, etc. Only then, would your child truly strive, as with each explanation and each label, he was more and more able to cope with daily life and decode his world! :o)

Routines And Other Therapies...

Why They Work... And Why They Don't Work!

When it came to behavior therapy and the autistic child, I simply could not even begin to count the many "therapies" out there – nor did I have any interest in researching all of them either! As such, this section would not be an attempt to review all therapy practices but rather a section to helped parents understand why "some things work" and "others do not"!

Perhaps one of the "most accepted" principles out there when it came to the autistic child was that "routines worked for these children". I would argue that, truly, this was simply **not** the case! In fact it was just the opposite that was needed for the autistic child!

Before going further in this section, I encouraged all parents to read my section on Socialization as it related to "routines" and "familiar environments".

Routines

In my opinion, "routines" provided a familiar environment or sequence of tasks and in doing so, the autistic child came to understand the "parts" that made up "the whole" in terms of what "made up" his physical environment (the people, things, etc.) and what "made up" the parts or sequence of daily life. When things were constant, either physically or in terms of the sequence of one's daily tasks, it was much simpler to "decode" the parts that made up the whole in everything... and once decoded, frustration levels, obviously, were reduced for the autistic child. Did that, however, mean that this was the "best practice" in terms of how these children should be handled? In my opinion, the answer to that question was a resounding: "No"!

Although routines provided consistency, and hence a sense of control and predictability, in the autistic child's world they kept the child in a "synthetic" world... one that was never, or only barely, changing and one that provided for very little in terms coping with "real life", opportunity for growth, and hence, the ability to actually leave behind the shackles of autism.

It had not taken me a long time to realize that, for Zachary, his stress level came not with a new environment per se, but with a lack of understanding of what was in that "new environment". I had noticed that he experienced no particularly heightened sense of frustration or stress whether he was in my house or someone else's house. He experienced no particularly heightened sense of frustration or stress if I went to a new grocery store or the "old" grocery store. In no time, I came to realize that "these places" - in and of themselves - did not increase Zachary stress levels. Yet, so much in "accepted practices" had stated that "routines were key" for many of these children. For a long time, this had puzzled me. How could my experience have been so different from "accepted practices" in terms of "routines"? I had on so many occasions taken Zachary to the homes of persons I knew, persons who for Zachary were complete strangers. Their homes, also, were completely strange for Zachary. Yet, on so many occasions, I had seen him perfectly "at ease" in these "strange homes". Almost the second he "hit the door" and was inside, he would do as he did at our house... take off his shoes and start looking for something fun to play with.

If routines were so critical to these children, why was it that Zachary experienced no heightened stress whatsoever in such situations? In reality, I found Zachary actually thrived the more "I broke his routine"! I made it a point to drive home taking "different roads", to go to new stores, to go to new places, to try new things, etc. - and through it all, Zachary strived more than ever! Why was it that my experiences with my son simply went so against "accepted teachings" in terms of "what worked" for these children?

As I came to understand Zachary more and more each day and to understand autism more and more each day, the answer soon came to me. All houses were pretty well the same in that they were all places where people lived and they all pretty well had the same "objects" in them... doors, floors, ceilings, dishwashers, refrigerators, stoves, bathrooms, bedrooms, kitchens, etc. The same was true for all grocery stores... they all "looked" pretty much alike and all had pretty much the "same stuff" in them. The same was true of all parks, all beaches, all schools, etc. Once the "parts" to something were understood, the whole, in terms of "where it was" or "when it was done" really did not matter at all!

I soon came to understand that the key to everything, for Zachary, was not having consistency in "where he went" or "what he did" but rather in having consistency in the understanding of the "parts" that made up the "whole" in every place, every situation, etc. Once the parts to places and things had been labeled and those things were understood, it mattered not "where" they were encountered or "when" they were encountered. Labeling the "parts" was the key to it and once those parts had been labeled, Zachary could easily cope with them regardless of when or where he encountered them.

As such, it was my firm belief that autistic children needed to be brought out of their "routines" and into the "real world" as much as possible and that the key to doing so with minimal stress for the autistic child was in labeling absolutely everything for that child from the moment he left his "familiar" environment – starting with the “big picture” and quickly moving down to the most minute detail in everything. For example, starting by saying: “opening the door”, then labeling any stairs, cars, etc. Only by doing so would the autistic child truly learn to cope with "the real world" and how things worked in “real life”. To leave an autistic child in a "synthetic" environment where things and sequences did not change or changed only slightly, was to give that child basically no coping skills for life - to let him live in a bubble that could not be burst! But, all bubbles did eventually burst, however. People moved, family dynamics changed, etc. And, as such, to keep an autistic child in a "bubble" was the worse thing you could do for that child – other than putting him in an institution (see section on When Rest Is Work, Too!), because the day would come when that bubble would burst! And, then, what would happen to that child if he had been provided no coping skills to adapt to a changing world?

I realized there would be many parents who would be absolutely heartbroken by what I was saying here… many parents who had had no choice but to institutionalize a child they simply could not care for due to the fact that so little was known… and the fact that these children were so misunderstood, by everyone. As a parent of an autistic child, I understood just how overwhelming life could be with such children. Those parents, who had institutionalized their children, perhaps now, could work with institutionalizations to help make life finally better for these children. My heart truly went out to these families… families that had been so devastated by autism that the entire family unit was, literally, ripped apart. It was for all autistic children, including those in institutions that I felt, more than ever, that parents, grandparents and, indeed, society, simply had to stand united, in a single voice, in demanding very specific things from the government when it came to the care and therapy necessary for these children. For more on this issue, see my section on “First Steps For Parents!”

By taking the child out of his bubble, be that a routine, or an institution, and in providing labels and explanations for everything in his world, helping him to "decode" life you provided much more in terms of necessary coping skills for that child... and much more in terms of "growth" and quality of life for that child!

In working with Zachary, I always remembered the words of my mother, now deceased... the mother of ten children... who so wisely always said: "Children need to be made part of life to thrive and grow". Although she had no degrees, she truly understood child psychology... and she knew that children simply could not live in a bubble and do well! Although my mother died prior to Zachary's birth, her words rang loudly in my heart and so greatly helped me in the recovery of a grandson she never knew – a mother, and a grandmother who very much understood the real keys to life, a mother and grandmother – so, truly, truly missed!

As with so many things in life, the beauty and simplicity of common sense and the undying love and devotion of a mother, or father, indeed lived far beyond even death and went so much further than any degree in those things that truly mattered in life!

The "fragile bubble" of a routine, so long advocated by experts was but one of the many false keys that had for so long been provided to parents of autistic children in terms of what was "needed" for these children. This, however, truly was a false key in that it could never truly unlock the shackles of autism because it did nothing to address the root cause of the autistic child's enslavement!

In examining the autistic child's inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up the whole, as I thought about various "therapies" I could easily understand why some would work better than others, when understood in term of how they helped the autistic child to "break the code".

For example, picture and word associations (such as seen with PEC - Picture Exchange Communication) were simply a method of providing "labels" for children and hence, once that "connection" that pictures or words "represent" something was made, the child moved forward. The issue with word and picture associations, however was that they truly were not the cornerstone building block... the cornerstone on which all other communication was built. That cornerstone was the alphabet – although, perhaps, pictures could be used as a tool to help the child learn the alphabet. But many factors needed to be involved in the laying of this first cornerstone – this first building block to decoding one's world (see Language section).

The alphabet, I believed, had to be the first building block for all these children, for if that symbol/meaning association was not made, then communication would never proceed as efficiently and effectively as it perhaps would were the first cornerstone properly laid! Did autistic children need picture/word associations? Absolutely! The key to almost everything in the autistic child's life was in labels - in labeling all the parts to the whole to "break the code" and in providing those labels in a variety of ways. But, as everything else, the label itself had to first be defined! The autistic child needed to understand "where it came from" and that could only come from an understanding of the alphabet - first and foremost! Once the alphabet was understood as symbols representing "something", and that these symbols could then be put together to represent something else, then the autistic child could easily generalize that "concept" of labels and use it for all associations – to more completely decode his world!

Hand Over Hand

Hand-over-hand - Why this can be an excellent tool for the parent of the autistic child who knows how to "move on", or a crutch that needed to be let go!

"Hand-over-hand" was a basic behavior therapy practice that parents of autistic children needed to be aware of. Basically, with Zachary, I had always instinctively done this, but, I wanted to make sure all parents were aware of exactly what this was since many of you may be doing this without actually realizing that you are.

Again, based on the fact that I found order, and specifically, partiality processing to be key in everything that was a problem for Zachary, that also became a "key" I could use in teaching basic life skills. If things had a "specific order", that meant, by definition, they had a beginning and an end.

In working with Zachary, I found that if I helped him "do the first motion" for a task or process, he could go on and complete the task himself. So, to a child who knew only an "all or nothing" world, simply doing the first motion made it so that he saw "this task" now had to be completed. The partial motion, the partial process triggered the desire to complete the whole! That was why this technique worked so well with these children!

This, I found to be true for teaching many life skills, such as getting dressed or undressed as well as things like writing, cleaning up, etc.

For example, in teaching Zachary to put on his socks, I literally took his hands and showed him how to put his thumbs inside the socks and then told him to pull them up. The "action" of putting his hands on his socks helped him to "do the task" because that was the first "part" of "putting on socks" (I still took the socks out for him...so, I could work on that...and teach "getting the socks out" as the first "part" of the task...the first "motion" in the "critical path" to the process). The idea was basically to simply "get him started" with the task.

If I kept talking to him and encouraging him as he completed the process, then, I found he was more open to doing it the next time...more independently. I think with many, many tasks, the key was simply a matter of "initiating" what you wanted the child to do and eventually, the child figured it out and could do it with minimal prompting (such as a simple, "put your socks on"... and later, a simple, "get dressed").

The technique of "hand-over-hand" was definitely something I think many parents "did" without realizing it was actually a "technique" that worked well for autistic children.

I had recently played a game with Zachary and I used this technique and that was what had reminded me to include the discussion on this topic of "hand-over-hand". I had taken a deck of cards and was on my back on the floor. As Zachary tried to zoom past me, I would take the deck of cards and make all the cards go flying "at him". He thought that was absolutely hilarious. When the game was over, I picked up half the cards and placed them on the table. As I was busy picking up the other half, Zachary was busy throwing the first half back onto the floor (to him, all cards "went together). I took his hand and forced him to pick up the cards with me. Verbal prompting alone did not work. I had to literally take his hand and force him to pick the first one up. Once he touched the first one, and placed it on the table, he picked up all the others just fine too. So, as he helped me clean up, I simply kept saying, "good job helping mom pick up the cards", or "what a big boy...helping mom clean up...thank you!". Before I knew it, he had completed the task. So, although it was difficult to "initiate" the first move, to force him to pick up the first one by me actually taking his hand and making him do it, once the first card had been picked up Zachary understood what was expected, and he gladly completed the process/task.

Sometimes, when you do something and get the results you wanted, you may not know why it was that "it worked"... and as such, I wanted to make sure parents understood this "technique", because I was sure many parents were doing this without realizing it and perhaps not identifying this for what it was...and the next time, because you did not make that association and perhaps did not understand exactly "what worked", you may not tackle the task the same way and hence wonder why you could not get the desired result. Therefore, I wanted to make sure parents were specifically aware of this valuable technique, known as "hand-over-hand".

Hand-over-hand was a valuable technique indeed in that it could truly help teach the autistic child many, many processes. However, as I had so often done, there was an almost inherent desire for the parent to continue to "do too much" for the child rather than move on to the next level of simply using verbal prompts. For example, when trying to go somewhere in a hurry, I would often still help Zachary to put on his socks - still help him with that first motion or the entire process. It took a great deal of patience to simply "let him do it all by himself" when I was in a hurry. :o) But, in reality, that was what needed to be done. The time had to be taken for the child to do the task on his own, in order to move toward the simple use of "verbal prompts" such as "put your socks on" or "get dressed when you get up in the morning" and to eventually move to no prompting at all. :o)

It would only be much later as I progressed in the writing of these materials that I would truly come to see why Hand Over Hand worked so well with these children – the answer had to do with the sense of touch, as would soon be clearly evident for all parents!

Auditory Therapy

As with so much in the life of the autistic child, the benefits of auditory therapy could be traced back to how they work in terms of "parts to the whole". Music therapy, for example, by the very fact that "music started and ended" provided for the autistic child "a whole" ... its parts all "fit together" beautifully to form this thing called "a song"... and the song kept going until it was all done. Hence, music provided for an excellent coping mechanism for these children - a non-stressful way to relax (non-stressful in that all the parts "come together" to form the whole).

Although there were many sounds within music itself (in the form of various instruments, voices, etc.), it appears to me to be the case that, as with so many other "sounds of life", the overall music was simply viewed as that "background noise" that the child had learned to accept as everyday life. Loud, unexpected noises, within a musical selection, would, however increase the autistic child's stress level, most likely causing him to put his hands over his ears because such "unexpected" noises brought a new "part" into the equation... a new “part” that had to be integrated into the whole.

Auditory therapy, in terms of providing various “unexpected sounds” and/or frequencies of sounds would result in stress, initially in the autistic child, undoubtedly making him cover his ears. But, it was my opinion that as the child adapted to sounds, as they became familiar due simply to repetitious exposure, that these sounds would no longer pose a problem – especially if they were always presented in the same “order” during therapy because the child could, based on “order alone” anticipate the “last sound”.

If therapy involved the actual labeling of sounds, then, I believed the autistic child would make much greater progress in terms of “adjusting” to the sound than if those sounds were not labeled. In my experiences with Zachary, when “unknown” or “unexpected” sounds were labeled, they could then be dealt with. Sounds that were not labeled always took much longer to get used to, because unlabeled or unexpected sounds introduced a “new part”, a new “element” that had to be “decoded” – an element that would continue to be a source of frustration as indicated by the child’s placing of his hands over his ears until the “new part” was decoded or defined/labeled.

When the reason Zachary covered his ears had to do with the “content” of what he heard (i.e., “get to bed”), I found that simply saying: “take your hands off your ears and listen to mommy” really helped in that I could then, slowly and gently provide a “further explanation” of what was expected.

Obviously, a video of “sounds” providing visual representations or associations of “what made those sounds” would be of great help to these children! Sounds of animals, sounds of people, sounds of things, etc. – in my opinion, all sounds had to be labeled to be understood!

I did believe, as with all senses, that there was more to auditory issues than simply the issue of how "things come together" to form a whole. I did strongly believe that there may be issues with actual sound frequencies and the actual physical inner workings of how the ear perceived sound, in all likelihood, perhaps even involving a degree of pain for the child as sound waves "hit the ear". I had noticed that in spite of labeling, Zachary still did have sensitivities to certain sounds. Enzymes had helped him tremendously with this issue.

In terms of auditory issues, I was even more convinced that there could be actual physical damage due to things like heavy metals in vaccinations. The reason I say this was because when Zachary experienced what I believed to be a very severe reaction to cod liver oil (and the possible heavy metals such as mercury it contained), I noticed his hearing was much more sensitive the following week or two. This experience had been enough to convince me that there was more at play here than simply “labeling things” for autistic children in terms of auditory issues. Indeed, I believed this to be true for all senses.

In my opinion, from what I had seen in my own son, it was as though all senses themselves had been somehow actually physically damaged – that the physical parts within the body involved in processing sensory information had somehow sustained actual, physical damage. I was absolutely convinced of that! Pictures of what I believed to be a reaction to cod liver oil were found in the Appendix to these materials – and there were many more on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com, along with an overview of the day’s events when this reaction happened.

Again, as with so many other factors, as I progressed in the writing of this book, I more clearly understood the role of auditory processing. The key to issues with auditory processing truly had to do with the difference between “incoming sound” and sound generated by the child himself, as parents would come to clearly understand as they, too, progressed through these materials!

Pressure Therapy… The Physical "Compartmentalization" Of The Autistic Child!

There were various "pressure" therapies available for autistic children... some of them, rather expensive. These included pressure vests and pressure equipment of all types.

Given the importance of the autistic child's need to "compartmentalize" everything, to understand how all the "parts" fit into the whole, to "organize his world", I could understand, why for some children, these therapies appeared to work.

The very act of putting pressure on the child, in a sense, allowed him to "compartmentalize himself" - physically. Undoubtedly, for a child who was frustrated and who was unable to understand his world, this may indeed provide a great sense of security. In my opinion, however, the key was still in helping the child to "break the code", in helping him to understand his world and in helping him to understand the sensory information he needed to process (i.e., the information he received from his sense of touch, as it related to his sense of "self" and his sense of "others" in terms of "where they begin and where he ends" - in terms of being able to understand "his parts", as opposed to the "parts" of others. For more on this issue, please read my section on: I Don't Like To Be Touched!/Issues With Touch In The Autistic Child). Once the "code was broken", stress and frustration were greatly reduced and as such, a simple hug may be the only "pressure" the child needed.

I have absolutely no doubt that the autistic child, like all children, was in constant need of reassurance and as such, constantly sought those things that provided for him security. Zachary used to often watch the video: "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" based on the best selling book written by Eric Carle. One day, as Zachary experienced a heightened level of stress, I noticed he was wrapping himself in a blanket. When I asked him what he was doing, he responded: "cocoon". He was physically placing himself in a "cocoon", in a place of comfort and security - a blanket wrapped tightly around him. Pressure therapy was no different than Zachary's "cocoon" - it was a physical way to obtain comfort and security in a world of frustration. :o)

If this were indeed true, then the danger of pressure therapies was again in the fact that they could provide a "coping mechanism" that could simply allow the child to "not deal" with the source of frustration - thus again, not getting at the root of the problem. I did believe that the sense of "physical security" was truly important for the autistic child, but I also did believe that this physical security needed to move from "pressure therapies" to an understanding of that which caused the frustration in the first place - to understanding what made it necessary to seek "physical security" in the first place. Once that happened the autistic child should no longer need more than a hug when it came to "pressure therapy". :o) As with all senses, I did believe there could be actual physical damage to the body parts involved in how sensory information was processed. See my section called "I Don't Like To Be Touched!" for more on this issue. Again, the sense of "touch" played a role, as would again, become clearly evident… it was all coming together!

Concluding Comments on Therapies…

Obviously, there was no way to possibly include the multitude of therapies in this book… nor did I plan on investigating them in great detail in the future since there were just “too many therapies out there”. In closing, I simply wanted to ask parents to look at "why" certain things worked and why others "did not work" and to always look for the pros and cons in all therapies... including their costs, and especially, their reward and/or punishment systems – especially given the information in my section on Discipline.

Many "therapies" were outrageous in terms of "what they cost"... and that was in everything from behavior therapy to pressure therapy. As with everything in life, parents needed to look at what worked, what did not work, weigh that in terms of physical, emotional, etc. benefit/harm to the child as well as in terms of cost/benefit analysis... keep the good and throw out the rest! There were many things parents could do to help their children deal with issues of partiality without spending a fortune, as parents would see in my sections on First Steps For Parents!, and, Exercises I Do At Home.

I was not saying that current therapies simply did not work...some did, some did not. What I was saying, however, was that parents needed to be much more critical of what worked and what did not work and to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of all intervention methods/practices! In my opinion, those therapies that were perhaps most beneficial were those that provided positive coping mechanisms for the child in order to help him “break the code” and understand the world about him – a world he very much needed to be a part of and those that helped address the real physical damage I believed could be present in the physical workings of the senses – damage I very much suspected existed in all autistic children!

Coping Mechanisms...

How The Autistic Child Deals With His World…

And His Inability To Properly Process "Partiality"...

And How Parents Can Use Some Of These Coping Mechanisms... To Their Advantage! :o)

Throughout these materials, I have identified what I saw as "coping mechanisms" in my son Zachary as I came to truly understand what was at the root of most of his problems: the inability to properly process or integrate the parts to the whole. Zachary and I suspect many other autistic children, had a rather extensive repertoire of coping mechanisms they made use of to deal with the frustrations of everyday life. These included:

- Spinning and other visual stims
- Self-spinning
- Hand flapping
- Licking
- Screaming
- Rocking
- Toe walking
- Odd behaviors
- Biting
- Self-injurious behaviors (head banging, injury to skin, hitting/covering one's ears, hurting one's eyes)
- Breaking eye contact with people and/or objects (looking through you, making eye contact)
- Physically removing oneself from an upsetting situation and/or
- Creating "synthetic order", "hyperactivity verses the Child In Motion"
- Ritualistic familiarization processes (alignment and stacking of objects)
- Creating new entities
- Creating one's "own code to life" (The Danger Of Inaccurate Or Incomplete Reference Living©)
- Creating randomness
- Ordering language, echolalia, and reference communication
- Counting and the use of math equations
- Words to cope©
- Music
- Labeling

... and perhaps countless other coping mechanisms yet to be identified!

Although many of these coping mechanisms had in the past been viewed as "negative" or "non-productive", in actuality, when understood in terms of how the autistic child made use of them, there were indeed some of these coping mechanisms that can be used in a positive way as parents attempt to help their children "break the code" and understand the world about them. Thus, the goal for all parents was to use the “good” and eventually “eliminate” the bad by providing coping skills in the form of labels, explanations, therapy techniques for stress management, etc.

Note: Since I discussed most of these issues within my previous text, there would be some repetition here. However, I felt it necessary to provide a “summary” of these all too critical coping mechanisms as I saw them in the autistic child to help parents and professionals “see the whole picture” as I now so clearly saw it! This also provided a section I could continue to add to on my website as I came to understand additional coping mechanisms in the autistic child. Parents and professionals could always find the most up to date information on this topic on my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com.

This also provided a very quick “reference” for parents who were new to the world of autism and had to quickly “get up to speed” on so, so many issues to help their children. So, there truly was a method to my madness in repeating certain things. Given that so much of this was so new to everyone, such a “summary” provided a good review of so many issues previously discussed and there was no denying that given all the information here provided, there would undoubtedly be the need to review certain materials more than once – and coping mechanisms certainly fell into that category in terms of helping to determine how to best help these children from a behavior therapy and, also research standpoint! :o)

Spinning And Other "Visual Stims"...

The Autistic Child's Way Of Doing Away With The Partial

And Attempting To Understand Motion!!!

Spinning was, perhaps, by far the most common coping mechanism we saw in the autistic child. This was because spinning did what nothing else can do... it made the partial whole again. This explained the autistic child's fascination with this activity and with ceiling fans. When an object spun, its parts "disappeared" and were integrated into the "whole". You could no longer distinguish the parts from the whole. Something as small as a "spec" or a "scratch" on an object was enough to provide a "partial" that had to be made to become part of the whole through spinning. This was why this activity was so entrancing for the child. It provided not only a way to cope with the partial but, certainly that "vertigo" effect also that put him further into his own world. This was why interruption of spinning could be so stressful to a child... especially if it had been a difficult day and there was that need for the child to "de-stress" - and one of his most important coping mechanisms for doing that... was spinning!

In my opinion, spinning also provided a coping mechanism in that it was perhaps the child’s way at attempting to decode the mystery of how “motion” fit into the world and given that there existed so much motion in life, striving to obtain the “key to motion”, surely, had to be a strong motivation to also constantly engage in this activity.

I have gone back and forth on the issue of spinning... whether or not to allow it. Currently, I allowed some, but tried not to allow extended sessions. I found that if some was allowed, some coping was provided, some stress was relieved... but, too much could simply allow the child to slip further into the clutches of autism. For more on this subject see: Spinning - Making The Partial Whole!

As annoying as spinning could sometimes be, it was also a tool a parent could use to his advantage in order to help "de-stress" a child when life was just too much to cope with. When Zachary found life just too stressful and was going through a major "meltdown", all I often had to do to calm him down quickly was turn on my ceiling fan in the bedroom and let him lay on my bed looking at it for a few minutes or let him spin an object of his choice. If traveling, I simply positioned myself so that he could “view wheels” spinning on another car. Obviously, this was only a practice I engaged in where there were two lanes going one way. I would never encourage parents to do so on two-way roads… since a slight distraction on the part of the parent in terms of actually focusing on driving could lead to devastating head-on accidents – just a second or two in terms of distractions was often all it took to result in an accident… and as such, **I encouraged parents to be first and foremost responsible drivers! The additional burdens that could be placed on a family as a result of a car accident were simply not worth the risk**. An injured or killed parent, sibling or autistic child were the last thing families already so devastated emotionally, financially and physically needed – and these were all very, very real possibilities if anyone attempted doing this in two-way traffic

If driving became too unbearable as a result of an autistic child's distress, my best advice was to pull over as soon as possible and help that child deal with the issues at hand (a lowered car window used to be enough to send Zachary screaming… as was a simple change in direction and thus, working on these issues as quickly as possible, during short trips, even around the block, were indeed, in my view, a priority in terms of helping with travel issues). For more on that, see issues with direction changes under "Odd Behaviors" and "Safety" sections!

This "driving next to another vehicle" should **ONLY** be done in two-way traffic… when both lanes were going in the same direction and only as a last resort to calming a very out of control child! The simple fact was that in some cases, parents just had to learn to "tune their children out"… and this was definitely one of those cases! Having a favorite "spinning toy" in the car was also another great idea… as was having earplugs for temporary use by everyone else! **While in a car, the safety and concern had to be for all individuals, in your car as well as in other cars – the autistic child could NEVER be allowed to change that priority!**

By creating a "new whole" via spinning, Zachary, and I suspected other autistic children, were literally able to give, themselves, control of a stressful situation and literally could "do away" with the "partial". By removing the partial through spinning, Zachary could now focus on his "new whole" as opposed to having to deal with partiality (i.e., the blades of a fan). Hence spinning was simply a coping mechanism that could be used both positively and negatively by the autistic child.

It was used negatively in the sense that it did not help the child move forward in terms of actual learning but it was used positively in that it helped the child cope with life's frustrations and as such, spinning did play a critical role in the life of the autistic child. Thus, the key to reducing spinning was to help reduce the child's stress levels by helping him "decode" stressful situations having to do with partiality. When times of stress were particularly intense, parents could use spinning to their advantage by using it as a tool to help the child cope and calm down until the child was ready to once again tackle the issues of partiality found in his environment and daily life. :o)

The moving of a pencil back and forth quickly in front of one's eyes, hand flapping, and other such "visual stims" were used much in the way spinning was used by the autistic child in that these activities created the illusion that a "part" could be made into a "whole". There was an element of "visual stimulation" also, such as the vertigo effect created by spinning, that also fascinated the autistic child, but, in my view, spinning was more a coping mechanism than a visual stimulation since spinning was all to often the autistic child's way of dealing with daily stress. For Zachary, when spinning was not an "available coping mechanism", he resorted to behaviors such as "hand flapping" – although "hand-flapping" was now quite rare in Zachary. Yet, other coping mechanisms were still very much there!

Self-Spinning

Another area I came to understand a little more had to do with "self spinning"... something I still saw in Zachary to this day. Zachary often looked up to the ceiling or down at the floor as he "spun himself". Was this his way of attempting to figure out how he himself fit into the "whole"... the environment? After all, persons were, like cars, moving "parts" to the world and perhaps Zachary simply could not understand how he, personally, fit into that whole... the environment, much in the way, I believed he did not understand how cars, these "other moving objects", did not fit into the whole! Self-spinning was simply Zachary's way of attempting to "decode" how he, himself, fit into his world, and perhaps another way Zachary attempted to understand motion as well! The fun vertigo sensation involved in self-spinning, something I had personally also loved as a child, no doubt was an "added benefit" in this particular activity.

Hand Flapping

Hand flapping was another one of those behaviors I saw as potentially having more than one "reason". The one thing I did see, however, was how, for Zachary, this was very much simply another coping mechanism. If Zachary wanted something and it was denied him, I had seen the hand flapping set in - almost immediately after being told: "no". This had been recently been true when I took away a favorite car he liked to spin and I said: "no more spinning". I had recently placed a favorite car on top of the refrigerator and Zachary started to scream and flap his hands - almost immediately. Since hand flapping was something Zachary rarely did, I noticed this behavior right away. I believe hand-flapping, because the child's hands were "always there", ranked in the "preferred" coping mechanisms for these children... that if spinning was not allowed, this was another coping mechanism the autistic child could easily revert to since it simply involved part of the child's body... and that, even mommy could not take away! :o)

But, if you think about it, as with spinning, the flapping of hands created an "illusion" of "parts being made whole". When you quickly flapped your hands, it was harder to distinguish the fingers... the "parts" from the "whole". This particular coping mechanism does not work as well as spinning for Zachary and as such, I believe this was why he preferred to simply "spin"... he never seemed to be able to "flap" quickly enough to really calm himself down. Zachary used to do a lot more hand flapping. However, over time, it became less and less obvious... and less and less intense.

I had also noticed hand-flapping start when Zachary touched something he did not like... it was as if he was trying to "shake it off" physically... physically trying to remove "a part" (something on his finger) from the whole (his finger). For these reasons, I had come to the conclusion that hand flapping was nothing more than another coping mechanism for the autistic child. It was important to note again, that since I had put Zachary on enzymes, the whole hand-flapping issue had greatly subsided too...although he seemed to be doing more spinning than he used to... so, again, I thought multiple issues were involved here! Of course, the increase in spinning could be very much attributable to the fact that I had recently spent less time with him than I needed to because I had been writing and sharing all this information with other parents. I now did a lot of writing at night when he was asleep, or very, very early in the morning before he was awake. Providing "words to cope" was a good way to help minimize hand flapping. I always made extensive use of "words to cope" and I suspected that indeed, they did help Zachary cope and as such, helped with the elimination of this particular behavior. :o)

Licking

Although I only experienced this somewhat in Zachary, this was such a limited behavior for him that I had forgotten about it until recently. Licking was now basically non-existent in Zachary (except for something we called "lick kisses" on the cheek), but, I suspected the act of licking in the autistic child had something to do with an attempt by the child to "remove" something from the object being licked... that the autistic child could be attempting to remove a "part" that just did not seem to belong to the whole, such as a fingerprint on a window, etc. Again, as with spinning, any spec, any marking on a surface, etc. could be seen as "a part" that did not belong and that had to be removed. Since this was no longer an area I could work on as this behavior was no longer present in Zachary, I encouraged all parents who have children who "licked constantly" to truly observe what the child was licking as it related to the "parts to a whole". Once the issue was identified, the "parts to the whole" could be explained in order to help minimize this behavior in the future.

Given the fact that "licking" could make a child more prone to parasitic infections, this was a behavior, I felt, parents should try to minimize as quickly as possible via the use of labels, explanations, and, if necessary, substitutes (i.e., food) until the child could better understand why there was no need to "lick" anything. The other cautionary advice I would give parents on this issue had to do with metal objects in the winter. As a child, as embarrassing as this was to admit, in fourth grade, I had tried to lick an icicle off a metal window ledge – at school when I lived in Canada. Well, needless to say, my tongue got stuck on the metal. Other than the fact that this was very embarrassing… it was also very, very painful since that ledge had been slightly higher up… and I had literally been on the tips of my toes as I did this. It was a memory that had been so painful, and yet, as an adult, so funny, that it never left me. Given the inherent need for the autistic child to "lick things", I wanted to caution parents about such "licking behavior" in the winter as it related to things like icicles and frost on metal objects! Since I now had a 6 foot chain linked fenced in my backyard, this was something I was particularly sensitive to in the winter when it came to Zachary's safety… yet, another reason to never leave him alone… even within his "compound". With any licking, there was also the possible issue of a gluten "high", too.

Screaming

Every child screams... but screaming in the autistic child could become overwhelming. When he was about 2 1/2, Zachary used to scream up to 100 or more very high pitched screams a day. This was totally draining on all members of our family, including Zachary himself. I had now come to understand these screams simply as yet another coping mechanism... much as it was in "normal children" who were frustrated. The difference, however, was that the world of an autistic child was one of constant frustration as a result of his inability to cope with the "partial" and to integrate sensory information and as such, the screams were much more numerous than in a "normal child".

This coping mechanism was magnified by the fact that for many autistic children, communication was not something that came easily! As such, for many non-verbal autistic children, screaming was one of the few means of communication they did have... and as such, it was used as a coping mechanism to help them deal with frustrating situations - to let others around them know something was wrong and it was an effective coping mechanism because a scream always seemed to illicit some kind of response in others! Screaming, in my view, obviously, for the most part, was a negative coping mechanism. As for all children, however, it did, serve an important function in that it was a means of communicating that should be used when there was a dangerous situation. As such all children, including autistic children had to be taught that screaming was appropriate in order to "get help" in dangerous situations, but that otherwise, it should really not be used… at least not indoors. Obviously, screaming outside when one played was fine and perfectly normal. :o) But, I knew I spoke for all of my family when I said that we, personally, had heard enough screaming to last us a lifetime!

Rocking

As far as "rocking" was concerned, this was a behavior I **never** saw in Zachary although I knew it was one found in many autistic children. Having never been able to actually "observe" a rocking situation... to see what happened just before the behavior started, during he behavior and after it, etc., I could only guess that perhaps this was simply another coping mechanism for the child... another way to deal with the stress of his daily life... to ignore that which caused him frustration and slip further into his own world. This was simply a guess on my part, but, I suspected, perhaps a good one. Even normal children found comfort and security in "rocking" as well evidenced by the fact that parents often rocked their children to sleep within a matter of just a few minutes once the “rocking” motion began. :o) There could also be something there at play in terms of “motion” itself, but I really could not address that since this was not something I had observed in Zachary.

Toe Walking... Was This, Too, Simply Another Coping Mechanism?

Toe walking had been observed at some time in the great majority of autistic children. Parents and professionals alike had long sought to explain this behavior.

In terms of toe walking, parent discussion boards were really what led me to believe that this too, was simply just another coping mechanism in the autistic child. Many parents somehow felt toe walking and constipation were related... and felt that constipation resulted in toe walking. Zachary had been on a casein/gluten free magnesium supplement for over two years. I knew magnesium helped with issues of regularity... and quite frankly, Zachary never seemed to have that many issues with constipation. I noticed constipation after long car trips... and that was when I usually noticed the toe walking too! I just did not think that constipation, in and of itself, "caused" toe walking... Zachary, overall just did not seem "that constipated" and toe walking was noticeably present in him even though I felt he was, overall, rather “regular” in his bowel movements.

I then had another thought since I had noticed "some" toe walking. Perhaps the issue was not constipation... perhaps it was something else. I kept coming back to that. I had read on a parent discussion board that the colon could stretch to four times its normal size...if this were true, that was absolutely amazing indeed... and dangerous because as more and more bacteria and feces accumulated in the colon, the more likely an infection. The fact that so many parents believed toe walking and constipation were somehow related led me to actually come to the same conclusion... as I too, suspect that they were related - but perhaps not in the manner most parents believed they were related!

Parents seemed to think that constipation caused toe walking... but, I was beginning to be of the opinion that the very opposite may actually be true - that toe walking causes constipation and that this was simply another coping mechanism in the autistic child.

It certainly would make sense if examined in terms of issues with partiality and the fact that so many autistic children took so long to be potty trained. I came to wonder if "toe walking" was simply tied to issues with "potty training" and the child's inability to cope with the "parts" that made up "the whole" and the failure to integrate the “sensation part” (feeling the need to go) with the appropriate motor response (walking to the bathroom and performing the necessary “things”)... in this case, those things that physically needed to occur for a child to go to the bathroom... the physical removal walking to the bathroom and the physical removal of "a part" of the child... his urine and stools... from the whole - his body.

If sensory information (from sight, sound, hearing, taste and smell) was not properly integrated, surely, that could be true when it came to such “physical” sensations as well as they related to “potty training” and the “urge to go”.

Walking on toes created a "firming sensation" in the buttock area and may simply be a coping mechanism used by the child to delay the inevitable separation of the "parts" from "the whole" as described above. Could we all "picture" researchers trying this, and trying to see how long, "they too" could "hold it"? :o).

This was simply based on my observations in my own son! With Zachary, I had indeed noticed that toe walking started just prior to his having a bowel movement.

Relatives were visiting when I once pointed out that Zachary had just started "toe walking a few moments ago on a particular day". I mentioned my theory on the possible relationship between toe walking and going to the bathroom. Sure enough, within minutes of starting to "toe walk", Zachary was crouching down to poop in his diaper. Once done, the "toe walking" mysteriously disappeared! Very interesting indeed! :o)

"Odd Behaviors"

In addition to the obvious "odd behavior of spinning", parents of autistic children could identity countless "other odd behaviors" in their autistic children. With Zachary, I was able to identify easily over 60 "odd behaviors" that could be explained by his inability to properly perceive the whole without first understanding the parts that made up that whole. I encouraged all parents to review my section on "Odd Behaviors" to see how these were used as "coping mechanisms" by the autistic child who was simply attempting to do away with "parts" to the "whole" he simply could not explain or understand. In some cases, some of these "odd behaviors" had serious issues in terms of Zachary's actual physical safety and as such, understanding these behaviors, in many cases, could actually be a life and death issue for the autistic child! "Odd Behaviors" could take on many, many forms in autistic children but, "variations of them", however, existed in pretty well all, autistic children. They were just a little "harder" to identify for what they were because there were "so many of them" that they, in the past, simply did not seem to have a "common thread" - until now. In my opinion, these "odd behaviors" were simply attempts at dealing with issues of "partiality processing" and integration of the parts into the whole – more coping mechanisms!

Biting

Biting was something I had not paid particular attention to since Zachary had not really done it in a while. But, recently, as I played with him one day, I noticed something rather interesting happened when I took away the toy he had been spinning. I had been wearing shorts that day... something I rarely did. When I interrupted Zachary so that he could no longer spin, he proceeded to biting me, such that a mark appeared on my skin. It was not a "full force" bite, but it did leave an impression. When biting had been more of an issue for Zachary, I would have paid no attention to this in the past, thinking he was just "biting again". But, lately, Zachary only rarely bit, and I had now trained myself to observe his every move, the motion of his eyes to see the object of his fascination, and to pay particular attention to his every utterance, etc.

Well, since this had been the first bite mark in a long time, something really jumped out at me on this particular occasion. I noticed that after Zachary made the bite mark, he looked at it for a few seconds, fascinated by it. When I asked him what "that was" on mommy, he responded: "train tracks". How interesting! Could this, too, be explained by my theory on partiality? A circular bite pattern on the skin, after all, formed a "whole" and his referring to it as a train track really made me wonder. Later, Zachary would call bite marks "teeth tracks".

I then thought a little more on the whole issue of biting and why, exactly, any children bite. Normal children bit... and when they did so, it was usually because they were upset with someone or frustrated. The same was completely true for the autistic child. The life of the autistic child was defined by frustration and thus it made perfect sense that biting was so prevalent in many of these children. I now came to the conclusion that biting, in the autistic child, was but another coping mechanism, one used especially in dealing with frustrations that could not be eliminated via spinning or other "coping strategies" and biting was a coping mechanism engaged in “on the spot” when no other coping mechanisms seemed readily available. In the past, this coping mechanism of biting was clearly evident in Zachary. But, again, I had simply missed seeing it for what it was.

For example, when frustrated by my partially open living room or bedroom windows - things he could not "spin" - Zachary simply resorted to biting to deal with the frustration of the situation. This was also evident from the biting around the windows in Zachary's Room Of Colors.

This picture captured only about 1% of Zachary's actual bite marks as they could be found in his Room of Colors and in my bedroom around each window and around certain doorframes.

The picture below, although taken recently, showed Zachary's bite marks from approximately a year ago (Spring of 2001). I now understood that Zachary had bitten the wooden window frame in an attempt to cope with the fact that the window was half open and "half" represented a "partiality", an "in between", a "part to the whole" he simply did not understand and simply could not cope with.

Having worked with fractions in helping Zachary had greatly helped him cope with these issues of "parts to the whole"... because now, I could label the window as "half open" and that "half open" became an entity in and of itself, and was no longer viewed as a "part" by Zachary. An open window, not only could be result in Zachary “seeing” a “partiality” but, it provided for “auditory” partialities too in the sense that open windows allowed sounds to come in from the outside… sounds that were not inherently present in the home! Biting open window frames, I was happy to say was thus no longer an issue. :o)

I did suspect that biting may also have some actual physical implications in addition to it being a coping mechanism. In the past, I had always found that foods high in phenols seemed to increase overall biting. I did not know if that had simply been a coincidence... that I had noticed the biting on days he took phenolic foods. Since Zachary had been on enzymes (see section on First Steps For Parents!), however, biting had all but disappeared. It came back once in a while, but infrequently and less intensely – and I believed that now, when it did surface, it was simply as a coping mechanism.

Obviously, I could not say for sure whether the overall disappearance of biting was due to the fact that digestive enzymes somehow helped by better breaking down the phenolic foods, or whether this disappearance was due to the fact that Zachary could now cope much better with his world given that I now understood him so well and could much more easily help him deal with his frustrations via the use of labels and explanations as to how things fit together.

Zachary now understood it was not acceptable to bite.

As rare as biting was in Zachary, this was one behavior I now tried to extinguish quickly when it did surface, because I knew that Zachary now did have that understanding that biting was wrong. I understand biting provided a coping mechanism for Zachary and hence, the trick in extinguishing biting as a coping mechanism was in helping Zachary deal with frustration in another way.

As such, when biting occurred, I encouraged parents not to punish their autistic child but rather to look for the source of frustration and to provide for the child an understanding of how the source of the frustration "worked" - to provide an understanding of "the parts to the whole" to better help the child cope with issues of partiality... and again, this may be as simple as "labeling" a window as "half open". :o)

Zachary rarely bit himself. Self-injurious behaviors in Zachary were quite limited, but I had come to see that these behaviors - so present in so many autistic children - were also primarily coping mechanisms used by autistic children as they attempted to deal with the frustration that was so much a part of their daily life!

Self-Injurious Behaviors

If there was one topic in autism that truly caused stress for parents it was surely that of self-injurious behavior... when the autistic child physically harmed himself. This behavior could take on many forms: biting, head banging, injury to the skin (i.e., obsessive "picking" or "scratching" of the skin), hitting of one's ears, attempts to injure one's eyes, etc.

Undoubtedly, there were certain physical issues at play here. For example, I did believe that autistic children were overly sensitive to certain to almost all sensory input, and, as such, I believed in part, this was likely due to actual physical damage to those parts of their body physically involved in the processing of sensory information and, although I had not, personally, done chelation in Zachary, I knew many parents reported wonderful results from this process whereby heavy metals were extracted from the body (see section on First Steps For Parents! for more on enzymes and chelation). In my own son, I found many of these issues were helped with digestive enzymes. Although I did believe that these issues were related to the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten and issues with phenols as well as to issues of mercury and other toxic substances in vaccinations, the mechanics of "how" such sensitivities occurred or how to resolve them was not the focus of this discussion. These were all serious and valid issues, however, explaining these in particular, was an area I could not even begin to address in this forum. Each of these issues would, surely, constitute another book in and of itself. I had a basic understanding of these issues and certainly saw how they fit into the "big picture", but there were others who had a much better understanding than I did when it came to issues of diet, vaccinations, the immune system and "true" sensory issues (i.e., physical issues with vision, hearing, touch, etc.).

What I, personally, could help readers understand, however, was how these issues with self-injurious behaviors, were in my opinion, multi-faceted in that, again, I believed there was more here than met the eye because many of these behaviors also acted as coping mechanisms the autistic child used in trying to deal with frustration in his life (in addition to possibly having very real physical implications in terms of how vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch actually worked in these children). Unfortunately, for the autistic child and his family, these "coping mechanisms" – self-injurious behaviors - could cause further serious physical injury to the autistic child, further complicating his already complex and frustrating existence. :o(

The "coping mechanism" provided by these behaviors was that they at least gave the child the sense that his parents were trying to help him. The act of parents providing attention when such behaviors occurred was indeed a double-edged sword.

Parents needed to try to prevent the child from truly injuring himself, yet, in doing so, they were also helping to comfort the child in distress...and herein was the reason the child most likely continued and often increased the intensity and frequency of these behaviors. Through their self-injurious behaviors, these children were screaming and begging for help... and any attention from a parent did provide for the child "some security"... "some comfort"... "some sense" that mom and/or dad were trying to help. The inability to understand the underlying issues that resulted in these behaviors in the first place, I suspected were associated with issues of partiality, and led to frustration and extreme stress not only for the child, but for the parent as well - often having emotionally devastating consequences as children were often institutionalized and separated from their parents. A mother of a 13 year old boy with autism had recently taken her child, clung to him and jumped from a bridge because of the fear that her child was about to be taken away from her. The physical separation of parent and child, indeed, was often more than even the parent could bare – still further testimony to the fact that autism was devastating not only for the child, but, I would argue, emotionally devastating for parents as well! Autism, had for a very long time been viewed as an illness whereby you slowly “lost your child” for no reason – truly, the ongoing, living death of a loved, one’s child, for the entire length of that child’s life and, as such, a seemingly never-ending living hell for the parent whose child was so completely devastated by this disorder!

Before we look at specific behaviors, I wanted to make clear to parents that my own son had some injurious behaviors but certainly far, far fewer than may be seen in other children. When Zachary used to throw himself back in any way, as painful as it was, I ignored it from very early on, as explained in my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. I also believe I may have "stumbled" upon how to help my son in so many ways from the very beginning... only much later coming to truly understand why the things I did worked. As I came to fully understand my son, his frustration levels continued to decrease. Self-injurious behavior was virtually nonexistent in Zachary. I hoped that my providing these insights would also result in this being true for many, many other autistic children!

Head Banging

Of all self-injurious behavior, this was perhaps the most troubling for parents - for obvious reasons. In my opinion, there were several things that could be going on in "head banging".

First, I did believe that the natural opiate (drug) effect caused by casein and gluten and possibly, issues with phenols could make it so that these children were actually hallucinating... and, unfortunately, not all "drug trips" were good. This was one factor that could certainly explain head banging.

Another issue with "head banging" could indeed be related to physical pain being experienced by the autistic child. There were many studies that show that migraine headaches, for example, were indicative of neurological stress. When Zachary had what I believed to be an allergic reaction to cod liver oil (and the possible mercury it contained), he rubbed the top of his head constantly and as such, I believed he had somehow experienced some time of neurological distress when this occurred!

An autistic adult once told me that when she was young, the headaches she felt were very intense as well as very frequent. Such headaches could surely be related to the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten... or they could have something to do with injuries to the brain due to mercury or other toxic metals from vaccinations or from other sources of mercury poisoning, such as dental fillings (those silver ones that pretty well everyone has today), or from virus related issues.

Dr. Andrew Wakefield, the man who ignited the "MMR controversy" in England had indeed shown that certain viruses, he believed could only come from vaccinations, were found in spinal fluid, indicating that the virus could have had access to the brain. There was also talk of the fact that with the MMR, **the Measles and Mumps viruses, together, could interact in a very negative manner. Throw in there the fact that the "rubella" vaccine was made with the cells of a human fetus and as such, we were, literally, injecting our children with the dna of another person, and indeed, you had, to say the least, a rather "nasty" situation! Why were these vaccinations not readily available as single doses? I suspected, the answer was completely a financial one!** Interestingly, it was only in the last 20 years or so that the "rubella" part had been changed from animal cells to the cells of a human fetus, and coincidently, it was in the last 20 years that autism rates had skyrocketed, and had particularly skyrocketed exactly at the time that children were being given bigger doses of mercury via their vaccinations!

Thus neurological stress, manifesting itself in the form of headaches, may indeed be another plausible explanation for head banging. For more on this, readers can go to: http://www.jabs.org.uk/pages/main.html or do any search on the Internet on key words: "Wakefield virus presence in brain". I also encouraged parents to read the soon to be released book of the US Autism Ambassador, Autism and Vaccinations: The Story A Closer Look.

For autistic children, head banging for some could be a behavior they engaged in as they attempted to somehow deal with the pain to "make it go away".

In looking back, I suspect Zachary's pushing of his forehead along the floor was related to neurological stress. This was something he did rather frequently at the time he was first diagnosed! :o(

Finally, I did also believe that head banging was related to issues with partiality. As stated in my theory on autism, I believed autistic children lived in a world of constant frustration, until they learned to very slowly and painfully "break the code" to the world – to see how all the "parts" fit together to form the whole!

As such their world made no sense to them... it was one of constant confusion and stress.

Head banging, in my view, could often simply be a coping mechanism... a way for these children to try to distance themselves from the "offending situation" ... those " parts " that were not understood and thus cannot be tolerated by the autistic child. There were indeed several times that, when Zachary was younger and frustrated, he would simply throw himself back hitting himself on the floor, the wall, the sidewalk or the back of the couch. This behavior was not "head banging" in the sense that it was a repetitious behavior, but it certainly could be seen as "head banging" in the sense that he was actually hitting his head against something as a result of his immediate frustration with life.

In terms of the three above theories as to why we saw "head banging" in autistic children, there were certain things that parents could do to really get to the issues behind this behavior for their specific child. First and foremost, I encouraged parents to speak with their children's doctors about possibly placing the child on a casein and gluten free diet, and possibly one low in phenols as well. Again, for more on that, please refer to my book: Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. There were plenty of other books and websites on the values of this diet alone.

Second, I would caution parents that if your doctor tried to tell you that there was no "proof that these diets worked", well, my son, and many other children were living proof that they did! As such, if your doctor was unwilling to support you in your decision to try this particular intervention for this child, I encouraged you to seriously consider getting rid of that doctor and finding one who would help you. There certainly were plenty of excellent doctors out there who were more than willing to help in this area (for more on this issue, see First Steps For Parents!).

Although I had heard many parents give up on the casein and gluten free diet, believing they saw no changes or insignificant changes in their child after 3 or 4 months on the diet, I wanted to share with all readers that, in our situation, the very real changes for Zachary came after at least 10 - 12 months on a very strict casein free and gluten free diet that was also low on phenols. It had been shown that gluten could indeed take close to a year to leave the body and as such parents should not to give up on a casein and gluten free diet - as difficult as it could be - until the autistic child had been on it for at least a year. This was strictly just an opinion. I had no medical training whatsoever and as such did not want this to be taken as medical advice, but rather, just as a suggestion of something to look into – something to discuss with a doctor who was familiar with the removal of casein and gluten and the potential benefits to the autistic child! If no progress was seen after a year, then, obviously, other options had to be considered with your child's doctor. But, given gluten took close to a year to leave the body a year, at least, had to be provided to determine the effectiveness of such a diet on the autistic child.

In addition, there were now digestive enzymes that helped reduce and/or eliminate the opiate effect of casein and gluten. I encouraged all parents to look into these enzymes by looking at the information under my section First Steps For Parents! or, on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com, under New Options For The Autistic. These enzymes were **non-prescription** (over-the-counter) and helped autistic children to more properly break down casein, gluten and phenols.

Finally, I did believe that head banging, in addition to possibly resulting from dietary and vaccination issues may also be another coping mechanism in the autistic child to deal with the frustration created by the inability to properly process "partiality" and thus, the inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts. In such cases the key to reducing and/or eliminating this behavior, again, was in helping the autistic child to "break the code". Once the child understood how the parts of each situation/object - the parts of everything - fit together to form a whole, then frustration would, surely, be reduced and thus result in less self-injurious behavior such as head banging.

Injury To Skin, Hitting/Covering Of One's Ears, Hurting One's Eyes...

Like issues related to head banging, the autistic child, in my opinion may have actual sensory reasons for self injurious behaviors such as "picking" constantly at the skin (issues with touch), or for engaging in self injurious behaviors as they related to auditory and visual processing. The natural opiate effect of casein and gluten and the possible issues with foods high in phenols (apples, bananas, raisins/grapes, tomatoes) may be the culprits behind such behaviors.

There was also the belief by many, including myself, that mercury and other toxins from vaccinations, and possibly dental fillings, somehow impacted the senses in a very negative way, perhaps affixing itself to key nerves and as such, causing physical neural damage in the areas of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

Did I suspect that mercury and other toxins found in vaccinations played a role, based on what I did know? Absolutely!

Again, in my own son, many "sensory type" issues improved once on digestive enzymes. For example, my son, Zachary, used to have serious issues with anything being on his skin that did not appear to belong there in the first place. This included bandages, as well as scabs... and once a scab was formed, Zachary did not seem to understand that it was "part of the whole" and hence, he continuously tried to remove it... only making it worse. Labeling this "part" of the skin as a "scab" or "broken skin" and saying it would fix itself gave it an entity in and of itself and as such, Zachary was better able to tolerate "this thing" on his skin.

Hitting of the ears, in addition to having possibly "truly sensory" issues due to casein and gluten, and/or vaccination injury, could also be simply another coping mechanism. The autistic child was used to "certain sounds" and when "unexpected sounds" were introduced the autistic child simply could not make sense of them... I believed they were perceived as a "new part" to the "whole"... a new part the child was unable to make sense of. Thus, hitting of the ears or covering of the ears, in my view, was very much a coping mechanism as the child attempted to "block out" the offending "unexpected and/or new" sound.

The act of covering one's ears, in Zachary, was also due to his "not wanting to hear something"... yet, another way for him to "ignore what he did not want to cope with". The most specific example I could provide of this had to do with the phrase "get to bed". As I worked on the computer one night, before I knew it, it was approximately 9:30 at night. The children had quietly put in another video and knowing fully that they were well past their bed time, they were being rather quiet - truly "little angels" in order not to bring attention to the fact that they were still up. As I looked at the clock above my desk, I realized how late it was and said: "ok, get to bed". I got up and went the few feet to where the children were sitting. As Zachary saw me standing next to the couch and heard me repeat "ok, get to bed", he immediately put his hands over his ears and said: "no... no get to bed". :o) Of course, my heart melted as I laughed a little at his desperate attempts to stay up. I simply said: "You want to stay up? Then you have to ask and say: 'mom, can I stay up, please'? ". Zachary repeated the question/request and I, of course, stated he could stay up a little longer. So there you had it... yet, more proof that putting one's hands over one's ears was not simply an issue with sound frequencies... it was an issue with sound "content". When "content" was the issue and Zachary covered his ears, I walked up to him, softly told him to take his hands off his ears, and told him to "listen" as I explained what was expected.

Breaking Eye Contact With People And/Or Objects

In my view, as with auditory issues, I believed there were several things at play when it comes to issues with sight. In the most severe cases, autistic children actually attempted to gauge out their eyes. :o(

In my opinion, there were definitely specific sensory issues due to the natural opiate effects of casein and gluten and/or vaccine injury on the brain... issues as they related to certain light intensities, for example. However, it was also my opinion that those situations that involved the autistic child's inability to cope with partiality - where what the child actually saw - the "parts to the whole" that were not understood, created for the child such intense frustration that the child simply tried to hurt his eyes in order not to have to deal with partialities – to not have to deal with all these "pieces" in his life that made no sense!

Given what we did know about casein, gluten, phenols and the improper functioning of enzymes naturally occurring in the body to deal with these substances very likely due to vaccination injury, it was obvious there were huge immune system issues in the autistic as well, as huge issues in how their bodies functioned overall, in terms of the digestive process (i.e., impairment of proper enzyme, pancreas and liver functioning), as well as impairment in how the brain perceived and processed information from the five senses. The proper integration of sensory input as it related to "the whole" was simply not there! The fact that this impacted all senses the same way made me believe this "integration issue" may be more readily identifiable in that it seemed to occur in those areas of the brain primarily for sensory input – overall, and, specifically, in relation to “partiality processing”.

The brain failed to see the whole without first understanding all the parts that made up the whole. In a normal person, this "integration of parts and the whole" was pretty well automatic or subconscious. **In the autistic child, it was my opinion, that for reasons mentioned above, this ability had been severely, if not completely impaired and as such, in everything, the child had to painstakingly *consciously* put "everything back together", and his failure to do so resulted in a life of complete frustration and stress!**

In my opinion, in addition to addressing issues of diet and vaccinations, the key to helping the autistic child minimize self-injurious behavior as it related to the inability to cope with issues of partiality was in the use of key coping mechanisms to help the child "break the code" to his world - accomplishing this via the use of labels, explanations, fractions, words of quantity, etc. These were the keys to reducing and/or completely eliminating many of these behaviors in autistic children. For more on this issue, see my sections on Auditory Issues, Breaking Eye Contact: More Than Meets The Eye, and I Don’t Like To Be Touched!

Another very characteristic aspect of the autistic child was that of **not** maintaining eye contact. In my opinion, breaking eye contact was also, frequently but another coping mechanism used by autistic children. This was definitely one where there was "more to it than met the eye"! It took me a very long time to finally figure this one out! Breaking eye contact was clearly not simply a sensory issue... an issue of the eyes "not working properly". I was absolutely convinced of that!

What followed was the text from my section on "Breaking Eye Contact" as discussed earlier. This area was so critical – to so much – that, I chose to reproduce it from my previous section. Those readers with a good memory or who did not want to review this section, could skip down to “Making Eye Contact” as a coping mechanism.

Breaking Eye Contact ...

More There... Than Meets The Eye!!!

When it came to eye contact in the autistic child, many a parent would attest to the fact that maintaining eye contact with an autistic child was a difficult task indeed.

Autistic children had issues with vision and many seemed to be helped by enzymes and cod liver oil (use only a brand that has been tested for heavy metal content... check with manufacturers). Most parents on message discussion boards seemed comfortable with a brand called Nordic Naturals, but, again, I advised all parents to do their homework… and check each time you buy a product as they can change over time. The website for this particular company was: http://www.nordicnaturals.com/consumer/products_codliver.html.

Zachary recently experienced such a negative reaction to cod liver oil that I will **never** again give him any cod liver oil. I encouraged all parents to read the account of what I believed to be a reaction to cod liver oil, and the possible mercury it contained, on my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. The pictures I provided of this reaction would truly be an eye opener, and “jaw-dropper” for all parents. The brand I had was purchased from a local health food store and was made by a company whose website stated the oil was indeed tested for heavy metals. Zachary's reaction was so severe, however, that I have decided to have the bottle's contents tested (results will be posted on my website once I get them). I encouraged all parents to read my section on our personal experience with Cod Liver Oil and to be aware of what I believed was a very real and serious issue for children with autism.

Note: The particular bottle I had, I had used in the past and was about half way through it. Previously, Zachary had been fine with me rubbing the contents of this bottle on him. I had seen no reaction to it in the past. I wondered, however, if the fact that I was on the “last half” of the bottle was the reason he reacted so badly… I suspect that if his reaction was as a result of mercury or heavy metal content in that bottle, that the “last half” would most likely contain the bulk of these metals as they settled to the bottom. Although the manufacturer’s website indicated their products were tested for heavy metal content, I later discovered that often, this testing was done by “third parties”. That could be an issue in and of itself too! All this was just a theory, but certainly one that would explain why this happened. I just could not in my heart attribute this reaction to anything other than the cod liver oil! Time – and testing - would tell! If I was wrong in this conclusion, I had no problem with admitting that, but for now, this was my “best guess” as to what had happened to my son – and I was now a very observant mother!

In the past, I had used cold liver oil because the vitamin A in cod liver oil helped remove issues with "sideways glances" while enzymes seemed to help many, many children, including Zachary, give better eye contact.

As with so many other issues with "the senses", however, I truly believed that in terms of breaking eye contact, there was more here than met the eye!

What continued to puzzle me for a long time was the fact that even with things to physically help restore the functioning of the eyes (i.e., the cod liver oil I had used in the past and possibly the enzymes), I still felt Zachary had great difficulty maintaining eye contact. He had made some progress, but then, he always seemed to slip back somewhat. I knew it was not that he could not physically look at me. There were plenty of glances into each other's eyes that I had so cherished. So, if it was not completely a physical issue, that the "capability" to make eye contact was indeed there, then what was it? Why did Zachary so regularly and so completely want to avoid eye contact so often?

It did not take me very long to understand this behavior when I considered it in terms of issues with "partiality". Breaking eye contact was simply another coping mechanism for the autistic child. If you think about this in terms of the autistic child's inability to deal with the partial and to properly process information from sensory input... again, it all made perfect sense.

For example, the act itself of looking someone in the eyes involved "looking at 2 eyes"... that in itself was difficult for the autistic child since he could not deal with "partials" ... and the 2 eyes were simply 2 parts of the face... that in itself was a problem for the autistic child and was enough to make him want to break eye contact. But, the "part" that I had missed for so long when it came to eye contact was the fact that breaking it... with anything...a person or object… was also a coping mechanism for the autistic child. The child broke eye contact with anything that was "partial" or offended him...in the sense that it had not yet been "decoded"… be that his mother's eyes or a book. Not able to deal with the "pages"... the "parts of the whole book", the child simply chose not to focus on a particular page, but rather, often simply turned all the pages quickly, shut the book and tried to run away!

I had started to pay more attention to this issue of eye contact recently. I believed it was important to label each eye for the child... the left eye and the right eye. I believed it may also help to say that: "the left eye is to see things on the left" and "the right eye is to see things on the right"... and "both eyes are used to see everything - together". Again the use of labels was critical and for the autistic child, these labels had to be very, very specific when first explaining exactly how "parts" fit together to form "a whole". Just labeling these 2 things as "eyes" would not do it... you had to label **each** eye and explain its **purpose**. This was also true of all other body parts having a left and a right – although the eyes, given their proximity to one another and their "motion", obviously posed a greater problem for the autistic child. See section on Motion also.

Look At Me!!!

Why "Looking Through You" And Blank Stares Are Simply Coping Mechanisms...

This issue with the inability to properly process partiality also explained why the autistic child always seemed to be "looking through you" rather than "at you". As with the “deaf child” who did not understand “his label”, if you think about it, when a deaf child “looks through you”, it was most likely due to the fact that he did not understand “another person’s label” either. A “person” in the child's environment was but a "part" to the "whole" ... if the child was unable to integrate "that part", "the person", then, that person was "not seen" in the sense that the child simply refused to “ignore” that sensory input of which he could make no sense. Each person, after all, came with his own physical appearance, his own voice, etc. This, combined with the desire to break eye contact because "2 eyes" - "two parts to a whole" created a stressful situation for the autistic child indeed made for a difficult task when it came to making a child "look at you".

Just as the "child" needed to have "his label", so too, did I believe, he needed to understand the labels of those around him… "the part" like "mommy" or "daddy" or "a friend" … labeling these, would greatly help the child in this area of "looking through you". With Zachary, I found his greatest areas of difficulty involved both partiality and motion. **Parts to the whole - input that involved motion - were always the most troublesome in terms of being properly perceived**. See sections on Motion and Safety.

Blank stares also now made more sense. The eye, by design, needed light in order to "see", but, much of our sight was also dependent on motion. In fact, the eye itself was an object in constant motion, forever adjusting to light as it moved. In addition, the very act of "seeing" involved motion. Your eyes were not "blank stares" as they observed objects... rather, they were constantly in motion. In a normal person, to do what an autistic child did in terms of "blank stares" was a very difficult thing to do. To simply "stare" at something, without moving your eyes was indeed almost impossible to do. Yet, in the autistic child, "blank stares" were commonplace. Why was that? Why was an "activity" I considered so difficult to do - staring at one spot - something the autistic child engaged in so much? Was this simply another coping mechanism - the autistic child's attempt at doing away with motion or any other stressful situation? I truly wondered! After all, when Zachary had recently had what I believed to be a very bad reaction to cod liver oil, blank stares once again appeared... when they seemed to have previously been almost non-existent! Perhaps "focusing" in this manner was simply a way of putting all one's energy into "coping" with a particular situation, such as the stress involved in an allergic reaction! I truly wondered! Blank stares were perhaps simply the result of intense focus in trying to “break the code”… to understand how various parts fit into a whole.

So, herein was what I believed was the critical issue with eye contact... the fact that the autistic child used "breaking eye contact" and “blank stares” as actual coping mechanisms to not have to deal with what was perceived as "stressful" - if you did not physically see the "parts" you could not make sense of, then as the saying goes: "out of sight, out of mind"...

and stress levels were thus greatly reduced for the child. In my opinion, there was something else to “blank stares” though…the intense focus in autistic children when giving blank stares made me believe they were somehow attempting to “retrieve information” to cope with the situation at hand. Eye contact - something so critical in teaching, yet so difficult for the autistic child! So, what was the answer?

Not surprisingly, again, I believed labeling was key in helping with overall issues of breaking eye contact as this related to the autistic child's coping strategy. I, personally, had recently spent more time with Zachary on this specific issue. I decided to label everything for him when it came to "his eyes". What I decided to do was to not only label each eye as "this is your left eye" and "this is your right eye", but to also physically show him the purpose of each eye. Therefore, I covered his left eye, for example, and said, "your left eye is to see on the left... if I hide it, you can’t see on the left". As I did this, I tried to position

myself out of his line of sight for the left eye so that he could no longer see me. I then did the same thing with his right eye. Then, I finished by uncovering his eyes one at a time and saying: "left eye plus right eye means I can see everything". After doing this a couple of times, I could tell Zachary understood the purpose of having a "left" and a "right" eye. In a very short time, I could already see that this helped him to better tolerate the "parts" (the eyes) to the whole (the face) and I was hoping that this would also help with his issues with eye contact in general... that he would come to understand that he needed both eyes for a reason... to see everything. :o)

The autistic child needed to be a visual learner when the visuals "did not offend", but perhaps needed to be an auditory learner as well, in instances where the visuals were just too much to cope with.

So, how do you maintain eye contact on those objects such as the pages of a book that a child needed to focus on to learn? The key may be in drawing attention to the "ordered" parts... perhaps the numbers on the page - the child may then be able to proceed more easily. Counting was a coping mechanism the autistic child generally loved... thus, it may be that simply drawing attention to page numbers, showing the pages "as parts to the whole book" would suffice.

Perhaps we needed books that were labeled showing the parts and the whole for the child... so that instead of just one page number at the bottom of the page, you had something like this:

1 2 3 **4** 5 6 7 8 9 10

with more of a "whole" provided by counting, and yet the current page number, 4, showed more brightly to show "this" was the current page and that we had more to go. I tended to think such visuals would help the autistic child want to “keep going” through the entire task of reading a book due to his desire to “complete the task” and get to “10”.

I encouraged any parent who has "found a trick" to maintaining eye contact with both people and things to share their insights by sending me an email via my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. I truly believed parents held within them observations and techniques, perhaps even unknowingly, that were surely key to further removing the shackles of autism. Perhaps as more parents came to understand autism in terms of the inability to properly process the whole without first understanding the partial, many more "tricks to the trade" could be uncovered by parents in order that, together, we may help as many children as possible with so many issues. :o)

Given eye contact was so critical to learning, this was certainly one of many areas where I did believe that behavior therapy could be necessary provided the therapist understood these issues with partiality and the inability to properly integrate information from the senses! Simply teaching eye contact with a therapist saying: “look at me” would not be enough... you had to teach the “parts” to why eye contact was done, and to teach eye contact with "things" too... books, papers, blackboards, objects of any kind necessary in teaching.

Behavior therapy now became much more necessary for these children because the key was to teach each child how to go about integrating all aspects of his life for himself… to teach that child the necessary means by which they could themselves decode their world – a huge task indeed!

To see "other things" I did to help Zachary increase his eye contact, please refer to my section called "Exercises I Do At Home".

Making Eye Contact With Certain Objects

Just as breaking eye contact was a coping mechanism for the autistic child, in some cases, so was making eye contact with specific objects. For example, I found that when Zachary was very stressed out, all I often had to do was position my car next to a large truck and allow Zachary to "look at the spinning wheels". In stores, all I had to do if he was too stressed out was simply "point out a ceiling fan". These simple things provided a great way to de-stress Zachary while on trips or errands and as such, making eye contact with specific things was also a coping mechanism in the autistic child.

Physically Removing Oneself From An Upsetting Situation And/Or Object...

Creating "Synthetic Order"... And Issues Of Hyperactivity...

The physical removing of oneself from an “offending situation” or stressful situation where the “parts to the whole” were not understood was but another coping mechanism used by Zachary.

This explained why pretty well all children with autism seemed to be constantly "running off" as parents chased after them in the hopes of teaching them or having them complete a task. I found Zachary not only "ran away", but when he removed himself physically from a stressful situation, he usually moved right to an activity that helped him in terms of providing an "order fix", a way in which he tried to bring order back to his world when it simply made no sense at all. "Order fixes" could take on many forms.

For example, Zachary climbed on the couch from one end, walked across to the other end and then got off... or continued onto the next piece of furniture... moving from one end of it to the other. He would do the same thing as he climbed onto the kitchen table... he would go from one end to the other before he got off. Never did he "get off in the middle" of the piece of furniture – until taught about “middle” or “sides”. He had to "complete the task", much like he would "walk the line" on a street... he had to "follow" the furniture from one end to the other. If I was on the floor, Zachary would "walk the line" by starting at my feet, trying to physically walk over me, from my feet to past my head. When he first began to do this particular activity, I did not understand it... and of course, I always tried to "push him off" by the time he got to my neck, but, soon, I came to realize what he was doing... he was using me, too, as a way to physically get an "order fix"... he was again, "walking the line"... only in this case, the line was my body... from feet to head... and he kept starting over, going back to my feet if I pushed him off before he completed the task and actually made it past my neck and head! He was creating a "synthetic order" where none had existed. The furniture and my body came to be "perceived" as "lines to walk".

Zachary's constant need to synthetically "walk the line" made it so that he was constantly "walking across furniture" and as such, I often saw him simply as "hyperactive"... but, again, I believed I had simply "missed" what was truly going on.

This issue was not one of “hyperactivity” per se... it was simply another one of Zachary's coping mechanisms, another way to deal with the stress of daily life and to bring order where none existed! This, I came to call the "**child in motion**" syndrome as opposed to "hyperactivity" because the constant "child in motion", in this case was truly **not an issue of hyperactivity!** The label of "hyperactivity" had too many "implications" associated with it for me to use this term to describe this particular coping mechanism I believed was so often mistaken for hyperactivity! I encouraged parents to keep this distinction clear!

For more on the issue of physical removal from offending situations, see the "Exercises I Do At Home"... exercises that showed me this issue with "the child in motion" and physical removal so well... specifically, the exercises that related to "The Plastic Eggs!"

Note: I first wrote this section just after writing my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. At the time I wrote my first book, I knew order was a key factor for these children... it was only later that I came to see that "within order" the key to it all was the autistic child's inability to deal with “partialities” or “parts to the whole”... the "not complete", the "not whole". Although this section made sense when viewed in terms of “order”… it now made “complete sense” when viewed in terms of a subset of the ordering function, the inability to properly process the parts to the whole. When you read through this exercise, you could now clearly see that order played a role, but more specifically, that the issue was in the inability to deal with "partiality

Hyperactivity could be an issue for some autistic children (i.e., children who ate too much sugar, or did not have enough magnesium, etc.), but, in all honesty, I did not believe it was as pervasive an issue as many currently believed and that the issue was more one of the autistic **child in motion** and his **use of motion as a coping mechanism**. This certainly explained the constant running away we saw in these children, the constant jumping, and the apparent inability to be able to sit down long enough to learn anything - as it also explained why so many children were still "hyper" in spite of being given medications, magnesium, epsom salt baths/creams, and other supplements known to help with "hyperactivity".

All persons had a tendency to "walk away" from stressful situations or situations they simply do not want to deal with. I, personally, had done this on many occasions at work whenever I had a project I simply did not want to delve into. It was so much easier to delay the task, to get a cup of coffee, go talk to co-worker, etc., than to have to deal with actually starting an unpleasant activity.

I knew I had been an excellent employee, yet, I too, to an extent, suffered from this type of "hyperactivity" when it came to doing a task I considered most unpleasant. In reality, I think all persons naturally reacted this way. In an adult, there were always the "consequences" of "not doing something". In a child, however, especially an autistic child, I suspected this particular coping mechanism of "running away from the unpleasant" had too long been mislabeled as "hyperactivity".

Thus, again the key to truly decreasing "hyperactivity" - which in reality, I believed probably to be more an issue with the "**child in motion** issue" rested in removing areas of frustration in the child's life/ environment by helping him to understand those things that, to him, just did not make sense. If the child did not understand the parts to the whole for teaching materials being placed before him, there was no doubt in my mind that he would continue to "run away" in order to cope with the frustration resulting from what was being put before him.

The final thing I wanted to mention, as it related to "hyperactivity" was that, often, it could truly be a physical issue for many reasons. These included lack of magnesium, too much sugar, as well as issues with parasites (i.e., worms). Parasites were a serious issue for all family members and I encouraged all parents to become informed in this area as well, for this too could make a significant difference in one's behavior. I recently treated Zachary for parasites and indeed found that it helped to calm him down somewhat! :o)

I did believe that behaviors engaged in by the autistic (i.e., licking, eating sand, etc.) made them prone to parasitic infections!

The fact that the autistic child used "physical removal" of himself as a coping mechanism was also clearly evident in many other behaviors we so often saw in these children. Zachary's "security cocoon" - the physical wrapping of himself tightly in a blanket was but one example of this. Physical "removal" of oneself took many forms in the autistic child. It was seen in their "blank stares" as they mentally removed their glance and thoughts from something they could not deal with and simply chose to "ignore" by “looking through it”. It was seen in the "deaf child" syndrome as the child chose to "remove himself" by physically "not hearing" certain sounds. For obvious reasons, this selective hearing and selective sight we so often saw in the autistic had serious implications when it came to the whole issue of safety for these children and as such, these particular “coping mechanisms” could literally be a matter of life and death. The challenge was to ensure that everything was "seen and heard" as it should be!

As with everything, in Zachary, I found the key to this issue as well was to make use of labels in everything and to help Zachary "break the code" that would lead to a greater understanding of his world.

Ritualistic Familiarization Processes...

What's The Fascination With Stacking And Aligning Objects?...

In my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, I mentioned how Zachary, whenever he received new "tools" such as pencils, crayons, blocks, flashcards - anything - always engaged in an almost ritualistic familiarization process. What followed was an excerpt from my first book:

"For each new thing I introduced as a tool, I had to give Zachary the time to get "acquainted with it" by allowing him to touch or play with the new item until the “newness” had disappeared. It could take several days for this ritualistic process to be completed. Anything new first had to be made “familiar” to Zachary before he even considered using it “appropriately”. He went through an almost “ritualistic” familiarization process...stacking, spinning or aligning new things best he could. That had, in a way, also been true with his toys. New puzzles could not be used as puzzles until the pieces had first been “stacked” one on top of the other, then scattered. Flash cards could not be read until they had been stacked one on top of the other, then scattered. New cars could not be used as toy cars until they had been flipped over, and the wheels spun endlessly. Everything went through some kind of ritualistic familiarization process. Once the “newness” was gone, the new tool introduced could be used for its intended purpose... Zachary had to somehow "get to know" each object before it could be used for its intended purpose."

At the time I wrote the above quote, I suspected "order" was the issue for these children - indeed, I was "close" - a few months later, I came to see that the issue truly was in a subset of the "ordering function", specifically, in how the autistic child processed or "orders" the parts to the whole. The above quote clearly illustrates how Zachary indeed "ordered everything" in the constant quest to understand new objects. It also clearly indicated that with these new tools, "all similar objects" were treated as one... all cards were stacked together, all pencils were aligned, etc. There were never separate piles of "one type of thing" because in order to understand the whole, Zachary had to somehow figure out how all these "similar parts" fit together to form the whole. When the object had multiple separate, unique "parts", Zachary attempted to "put the parts together" by aligning or stacking them in order to understand how "together" they somehow formed a whole. Thus, each card was "a part" in and of itself, each pencil was "a part" to the whole in and of itself... and Zachary constantly engaged in activities to "join the parts"- to see how they fit together! He was constantly "trying to break the code"! Although such activities used to drive me almost insane, when seen for what they were, a coping mechanism used by the autistic child as he tried to figure out his world, I now believed that I would no longer try to stop such activities but, again, try to explain to the child just "how these things" fit together by labeling the objects as much as possible.

I must admit that when this was a bigger issue for Zachary, simple labels did not seem to be enough to eliminate these behaviors, however, because long after Zachary "knew" the labels, "that these were pencils", "these were puzzle pieces", for example, he still tried to stack and align objects for a long time. This behavior still showed up somewhat when he was very tired or frustrated, but it was much better than it used to be and I fully expected that as Zachary learned more about his world, that this behavior may completely disappear. I suspected that his issues with still needing to stack and align objects resulted from the fact that I had not been "specific enough" in my labeling... perhaps each color had to be labeled (especially given the important role I suspected colors played in the life of the autistic child - see section on Colors), perhaps each puzzle piece had to be labeled somehow, with a "specifically assigned number"... I suspected that would have helped more than simply saying: "these are puzzle pieces" in terms of helping Zachary see how the parts fit together to form a whole. I suspected that if I had somehow brought "more order" to his understanding of these pieces that he would have been able to move past these issues much sooner. The key was not only to label these objects but also in providing an explanation as to their purpose or function in life. To define how their role fit into the whole as well!

Creating New Entities To Avoid Or "Ignore" The Old...

Much as Zachary "created new entities" by making "pencil trains", etc., as he aligned all these objects, Zachary also created completely "new entities" from those things that caused him stress. The best example I could provide of this was that of his "Fraction Stax truck" in my section on "Fractions" (see First Steps For Parents!).

The following excerpt from my section on Fractions illustrated how the autistic child "created new objects" to avoid dealing with the "current" object at hand (in this case, fraction pieces - truly parts to the whole).

In the pictures below, Zachary decided to make a "Fraction Stax Truck". He decided to create "a **new whole**" with the "parts" before him... yet, another coping mechanism... only this one has a double-edged sword!

1

2

The creation of the "Fraction Stax Truck" allowed Zachary to cope with "the in between", the "partial", because, now the object before him was no longer a "Fraction Stax" with missing pieces that caused so much frustration, the object BECAME a Fraction Stax TRUCK... It was no longer its previous "self" and had been replaced by a "NEW ENTITY".

This object was then identified by Zachary - himself - as his "Fraction Stax Truck and Trailer". Since trucks and trailers varied in real life, he seemed perfectly fine with having "partial" pieces on the truck... it did not have to be perfect... for the "new object" to look like a truck was sufficient. A trailer could have "pieces" on it, because trailers hauled stuff often with only partially filled trailers... and so, even fraction pieces were ok.

Zachary now saw the "Fraction Stax" not as the tool it was intended to be but as a **whole** and **new** entity... a truck. He was happy and content with that new entity. Frustration has left him - he was clearly able to "walk away" and "leave his truck" all by itself... **while still looking at it**... something he had not been able to do with the "original tool". In the past, physical removal meant a complete break in eye contact, too. Gone was the need to scatter all pieces, the tool had been replaced by something Zachary could better cope with... a **new** and **whole** entity... in this case, a truck and trailer... and this now became his focus... and joy!

Zachary no longer wanted to use the object as a learning tool to teach fractions. He simply wanted to "make his truck" no matter how hard I tried to simply use the tool to teach fractions again. So, the "creation of a new, whole entity from partial entities" became a coping mechanism with a double-edged sword. The trick, perhaps was to make absolutely sure Zachary had learned the concept of fractions before he was allowed to use the tool as "something else". A tool I had been so anxious to use with Zachary now became almost completely useless. I decided to put it away for a while and then take it back out much later in the hopes that I could once again use it, at least a little, in the manner it was intended to be used... and I was able to do that, but in no time at all again, the "Fraction Stax Truck" was back! This, indeed, was a HUGE problem!

Over and over again, I had seen Zachary "take" to a specific task and then not want to do it any longer. He "just did not seem interested in learning the concept any more" - he had turned it into something with which he could better cope and so, it became very difficult to teach him because repetition was needed with so many things in learning... yet, his coping mechanism of creating a new, whole entity with my tool prevented that repetition from occurring.

This had been a very difficult issue to overcome with Zachary - and I suspect it was with all autistic children. This certainly explained why behavior therapy could be so difficult, and so slow in terms of "seeing progress" with these children – especially given these children, as they created these new entities, appeared to be engaging in "pretend play" (i.e., Zachary pretending this was a "truck") – something that did not "come naturally" and as such was "rewarded" in therapy.

What too many therapists failed to see, however, was that such "pretend play" was actually a *detrimental* coping mechanism to learning. I also had huge issues with encouraging pretend play in the autistic (see section on The Potential Danger Of Pretend Play In The Autistic Child).

In addition, the "new truck" had now taken over and it, too, had to go through the ritualistic familiarization process. The pretend truck was now "perceived" as was any other "real truck". As such, if the "pretend truck" – now seen as a "real truck" – if that "**new**", "**real truck**" (the one that was actually a pretend truck but was perceived as real) was not perfectly aligned or "just right", then frustration erupted once again.

Now, there could be no truck without a trailer... the wheels had to be able to sustain the whole, with no pieces falling off as that would now become a source of frustration – as it had been with so many real trucks! This was indeed a vicious cycle.

I had spent $25.00 spent on a tool had been turned into something I now had to find new ways of using to explain the same concept... or my tool became completely useless! This coping mechanism in Zachary, of creating a "**new**", and "**whole**" entity out of my teaching tools was detrimental indeed!

In my opinion, this issue with the "creation of new entities" was generalized to all aspects of life for the autistic child and this was, I believed, the reason it was so, so difficult to teach these children.

Creating "new tools" or "new things" also explained why pretend play was so dangerous… because in pretend play, the "new entity" created, could be either an "imaginary friend" or more devastating yet, a "new entity" to replace the child himself!

As a result of this coping mechanism of "creating something new", I constantly had to be looking for new ways to teach the same concept using tools that now no longer had the original, intended meaning for Zachary. Yet, to teach so much in life necessitated some repetition... this became an overwhelmingly difficult and exhausting task!

As such, I firmly believed that “tools” that could be used in various ways to teach the same concept were desperately needed for these children. Much in the way that “transformers” (a child’s toy) could be made into various objects, so too, did our tools for the autistic need to “transform” themselves into new entities **while still maintaining their original teaching purpose!**

Creating One's Own "Code To Life”...

The Possible Danger of Inaccurate or Incomplete "Reference Communication"...

I suspected autistic children also generated their own "code to life" in order to better cope with those things they did not understand. This issue was addressed under my section on The Importance Of Colors In The Life Of The Autistic Child as well as in my discussions on "Reference Communication" in the Language Section. I believed that when the autistic child was unable to "break the code" to deal with the world about him, he simply "invented" or "made up" his own code for dealing with life and categorizing everything. Color and Language were such huge sections that I would not duplicate them here but rather asked that readers go to these sections to understand this concept.

There were several issues with this. First, there can be issues of conflict between life's "real code" and that code "created" by the child "in his own world". Perhaps, more importantly, however, may be the fact that **once a child created "his own code to life", there was, I believed, the possibility that the child did not perceive the need to understand or "decode" the "real code" to truly understanding the world about him, thereby allowing that child to slip further into the grasps and shackles of autism**.

In terms of "reference communication" and indeed, “reference living©”, there were also matters related to safety in that if a "new code" was created and that "code" was expected to be used for future reference, if that code was "not completely accurate and all inclusive" in terms of the "appropriate response" to a specific situation, then the consequences could be devastating - in some cases, undoubtedly even leading to the death of a child who had "memorized" perhaps only one "reference" , such as "walk or don’t walk” signs being necessary to determine whether or not it was safe to cross a street"... and as such, if no "walk" or "don’t walk" sign existed, the "reference" to draw from was incomplete, and hence, allowed the child to proceed, unknowingly, into a very dangerous situation! The verbalization of “walk” also had to be understood, for example, in terms of what it implied… so that to simply hear “walk” would not be enough to go forward – that the child also had to do the appropriate safety check to ensure that it was safe to do so in spite of the fact that someone had uttered the word “walk”. As such, multiple "appropriate responses" need to be taught to these children when it came to safety issues and they had to be taught using various methods/senses.

Creating Randomness...

A very interesting coping mechanism I observed in Zachary was that if he was not allowed to put pieces back with the whole, for example, to complete a puzzle just the right way, to put all similar objects together, etc., he reverted to something rather unexpected... creating randomness.

If the objects that belonged together were not allowed to be seen as "the whole", he simply scattered the objects so much physically that they could no longer be perceived as "a whole", as things that "belonged together". Thus, much as he had physically used "removal of himself" from a situation, Zachary also physically removed or scattered pieces so that they simply were no longer be perceived as somehow "belonging together". For more on this, see the section on: Exercises I Do At Home as they related to “plastic eggs”.

Ordering Language, Echolalia, and Reference Communication...

What some used to refer to as "nonsense language", I chose to refer to as "ordering language" and I encouraged all parents to refer to this behavior as "ordering language" from now on... because that was truly what it was! It made perfect sense once you saw it from the child's perspective... it was anything but "nonsense"!

Ordering language, as described in the section on Language, in my view, was a coping mechanism used by the autistic child to deal with stressful situations and to "decode" his world. In the case of both echolalia and ordering language (echolalia being perhaps simply a more "immediate" form of "ordering language), the repetition of words provided by others, whether immediately (echolalia) or later on (ordering language) served basically the equivalent function as would, say that of a child "talking to himself" to understand and cope with life. I saw both of these as absolutely critical coping mechanisms that should not be broken or stopped in any way, especially given that these related to the "real world" as it was **given/taught to the child** (as opposed to say the creation of his "own code" to understand the world, as described above - something that may further slip the child into the grasps of autism).

In my view, echolalia was the coping mechanism whereby the autistic child tried to decode what he was hearing "right now". Ordering language, on the other hand, was a coping mechanism used to help "sort" those things recently learned, recently “taken in” via the senses, but in all likelihood, still in the process of being "decoded" - but not pertaining to the current situation. In addition, when the child becomes frustrated, "ordering language" itself could be used as a coping mechanism in a much different way. For example, when Zachary used to be very frustrated, he often made use of one small phrase throughout the day... for what seemed to be no reason at all, out of nowhere, he would say: "green truck".

So, what was he doing when he said: "green truck"... out of nowhere? I had now come to see that there were several things going on. Zachary was always fascinated by wheels... no doubt because of the spinning effect they provided. While on the highway, if he ever got upset, all I had to do was position myself next to a large truck and let Zachary look at the wheels for a while... they provided an "ordering fix" for him as soon as he made eye contact. Obviously, I could only do this where there were two lanes going in the same direction. Luckily, in the suburbs of Chicago, there were plenty of those "multiple lanes" - of course, those drivers behind me did not always appreciate my doing this. :o) At first, when Zachary was just beginning to build his vast repertoire of coping mechanism, a truck soon became a favorite... as were colors. I was recently told by an adult autistic that as a child, he perceived objects as colors. This was all very fascinating to me. For more on that, see my section on The Role of Colors In The Life Of The Autistic Child: The Pot of Gold At The End Of The Rainbow©.

If the autistic child indeed perceived objects as colors, the use of the phrase "green truck" as a coping mechanism now all made perfect sense. These two words provided for Zachary two very strong coping mechanisms all rolled into one phrase. The color, in my view so important to the autistic child and his understanding of the world, and the spinning... the making of the partial whole... provided by the image of a truck - these two things, when combined, indeed provided a powerful coping mechanism... an actual image he could put into his mind to help him cope with the frustrations of life - on demand!

When spinning or other coping mechanisms were not available, Zachary simply resorted to **verbally** saying "green truck"... providing for himself yet another perfect "order fix" - a simple way to "de-stress" when life just became to unbearable or stressful!

For more on "reference communication", and its possible dangers, see the section above on "Creating One's Own Code" as well as the sections on Teaching Language and Safety.

For more on this, see: Ordering Language. Given the importance of this coping mechanism in the autistic child, I, personally, would NOT try to stop or prevent it! In my opinion, as the child learned to cope and to understand his environment more and more, this ordering language should greatly be reduced, and eventually, would most likely disappear altogether. :o) But again, the key to reducing and/or eliminating ordering language was simply in helping the autistic child see how all the parts fit together to form a whole... in everything. **As with everything else, when these coping mechanisms "came out"... I encouraged parents to look for the source of the child's frustration and to help the child deal with that frustration through the use of labels, fractions, etc**... those things that provided productive coping mechanisms in that they helped the child to break the code!

Counting And The Use Of Math Equations...

Autistic children, even if only a little verbal, seemed to love to count! Autistic children quickly grasped the concept of counting... because it was one with order... each number followed by another, specific number, and that never changed. As such, counting was something parents could use to their advantage in helping to provide coping mechanisms for their children. Counting was an excellent way to bring order to what appeared as a random process to the autistic child (i.e., cutting hair, brushing teeth, any process, any time of stress as in a grocery store, etc.). Counting allowed the child to anticipate "what came next"... to focus on the next "number"... the next "thing". It worked with countless situations. In my opinion, this function was key in teaching processes, social interactions, safety issues, and much, much more in the autistic child. I encouraged all parents to think of "counting" when things were difficult and a child was stressed out. The old saying of "count to 10" when you were upset was actually one of the best things you could teach an autistic child for coping with a stressful situation.

Instead of having the child focus on the situation, have him focus on "counting" in order to get through the process or task at hand. For more on this, see my sections on Brushing Teeth and Cutting Hair - Simple examples that illustrated how to use counting to your advantage! Counting was a coping mechanism both the parent and the child could use in a productive way!

In addition, other math "equations", such as the use of "equal to" or "not equal to" could be used to teach many aspects of language, like synonyms, antonyms, etc. For more on this, see my section on Language.

Words To Cope©

With Zachary, I found that there were certain words he clung to when his world became just too much to cope with. These were words that helped him "make sense" of things. I had labeled these Words To Cope©. These simple words/phrases provided a great coping mechanism in many, many a situation. Zachary came to say these, himself, when he was frustrated - in an attempt to come to terms with many issues in his world. "Words To Cope" that were particularly effective included phrases like: "it's broken" or "it's stuck". **If you looked at these "words", they gave the autistic child a particularly effective way of dealing with something he did not understand**... the "part" of the whole is simply referred to as something "broken" or "stuck" on the whole until it could further be explained at a later time. These simple phrases were huge coping mechanisms for Zachary and helped him cope with situations until they could be better explained and/or understood.

"It's ok...it's ok..." or "try again...", or "you can do it..." or "all done", etc. When things did not work exactly the way he wanted... for example, when a stack fell over, I would say: "it's broken" or "it's too tippy". To help him separate a part from the whole (for example - a bandage on the skin), I would say things like: "it's stuck". Again, that helped him cope with the fact that something that did not belong "was there" and that helped him cope with the "partial" (i.e. the bandage) and help him accept it as part of the whole... as something it was ok to have there since it was "only stuck there" and that explained "why" it was there.

Using "all fixed" also helped in many, many situation. These were just simple examples of words I used that I found very helpful to Zachary... parents could use these words in many, many situations to help autistic children cope with the partial they have so much difficulty with. "Bye-bye" was another one... a word to help "complete a visit" for example... much like "all done". "All done", I found helped tremendously in going from one situation to another... helping with transitions. This simple phrase helped to see completion of one task and helped Zachary anticipate the fact that it was time for the next.

Given his inability to cope with partiality in anything until parts were labeled and made entities in and of themselves, I certainly understood, why these “words to cope©”, in particular, were among Zachary's favorite in helping him cope with stressful situations.

Also - again - helping him to "understand the problem" was a great help. For example, if Zachary wanted to stack a lot of big Legos and they tipped over, I would be sure to say: "make it sturdy" and "show him how to do that" as I reinforced the base of his stack and said, "see, now it's study". Soon, as I kept saying "make it sturdy", the frustration pretty well went away and he could cope much more easily with the situation when the blocks tipped over. Of course, as with so much in the life of the autistic child, I found there was a need to constantly go over some of these same issues to help solidify them. Zachary could be perfectly fine with his stack tipping over one day, but 2 weeks later, as he tried the same task again, frustration often set in again... less intensely, but, it definitely was still there. Thus, there was a need to constantly go over some of the same issues, until one day, they were no longer issues at all... but, some issues certainly did take a great deal of time to work through - there was no denying that!

I almost always provided "Words To Cope©" when frustration presented itself. These simple phrases became part of my regular vocabulary. Other words I used were: "it's ok to be different", or "it's ok to be silly", or "let's make it different", or "let's make a funny pile", etc., ...and show him how to make things "different", or funny, or silly, etc., as I attempted to help him increase his flexibility in so many areas.

Another key phrase I used was "try again". Zachary really caught on to that concept! Whenever I gave him something he did not want to eat, now, he would tell me: "try again" (in other words, "mom, you are crazy if you think I am going to eat this!)... it was so funny! He did the same thing when I tried to engage him in activities he did not want to do, etc. I guess you could say this one became one of his "favorite sayings".

I made all these simple words/phrases part of my daily vocabulary...they helped increase flexibility... and that was key! These concepts were concepts parents used everyday with their children, to various degrees, and I suspected, this also helped explain why some children coped better than others - again, it was all in the labeling, in the use of the "right words" and in providing explanations. :o)

Music

Like the use of "coping words", music also helped Zachary tremendously. There was a time when Zachary used to scream from the top of his lungs if a song was interrupted or the radio was turned off "in the middle" of something. Songs on the radio had to be "completed"... they could not be left "partially done". What helped here was simply to tell Zachary "music off" or "radio off" to help him anticipate the fact that what he was hearing was about to end abruptly by saying: "all done". The inability to process partiality also explained why autistic children seemed to absolutely love songs.

In my opinion, there was more at play here than the simple "beauty" of a song. A song, by definition, had a beginning and an end that could be perceived by the autistic child as the words and/or music started and ended. As such, I believed this was the reason songs and/or music seemed to work so well in teaching some autistic children and why for the autistic, music was even "more relaxing" than it was for a normal child. Music, in and of itself provided a coping mechanism, too... something that provided completeness as it flowed from beginning to end and completed “a whole” – a song!

The Critical Role Of Labeling!

Allowing The Autistic Child To Categorize His World And Make Sense Of It!!!

If there was one productive coping mechanism in all this... it was labeling – labeling of everything, including purpose! By tagging names and explanations to everything, the autistic child came to see that everything in and of itself was "an entity" and had a purpose. Even a fraction could be an entity in and of itself even though a fraction was also a part to a whole. For example, if you label a fraction, such as 1/2, even that assumed an identity of its own... it became a "whole" concept in and of itself. As such, it was my opinion that teaching fractions as early as possible was a CRITICAL key for these children... not the adding and subtracting of fractions... just the concept of the parts making up the whole.

If you thought about it, if partiality was the issue for these children, what better way to make them understand "partiality" than teaching fractions!

Most persons would never think of teaching fractions to a 2, 3 or 4 year old. In fact, the materials I purchased to teach Zachary fractions were for grades 2 through 6. This, however, was not a concern since the only thing I needed to teach Zachary and have him understand was the fact that the whole could be "broken into parts" and that "parts" fit together to form a whole... and that "those parts" had a name, too! Once he understood that everything had a "label", he could more readily ask: "what's that?" to get the labels he needed to further understand his world.

I found that for Zachary, if I "labeled" everything for him, it helped him cope tremendously. His need for order necessitated he be able to associate a thing, an activity, everything - to a "label".

When you labeled something, even if that something was a "partial", for example, 1/2 - this was a fraction... a part of a whole, but by showing the child that 1/2 meant something in and of itself, that "partial" took on an entity of its own and was recognized as a whole in and of itself.

When rewinding the VCR while the tape "went backwards" on the TV screen (something that used to totally upset Zachary), I provided the label of: "Rewinding...It's ok...we're just rewinding...we're rewinding the tape so it's going backwards". As I said this, I showed Zachary how "rewinding" was similar to "walking backwards"... and I would tell him, "it's just going backwards" as I walked backwards to help solidify the concept of "rewinding". Knowing that this "activity" was called "rewinding" made it something he could better cope with.

It was the same thing with everything that upset him. For example, I labeled the blades of fans as “blades” to help him better understand ceiling fans and how they worked. For Zachary, walking backwards in and of itself had in the past been very stressful until I figured out that if I "labeled it" as "walking backwards" as we did it, then, he could cope with this "lack of order". Once again, "walking backwards" had taken on an identity of its own. So, as I made a game of "walking backwards", I would say..."walking backwards..." to him...and then, it became fun. It was the same thing for "walking sideways...", "backing up" (in the car), "turning around", "windows up"/ "windows down"/ "windows halfway" (in the car), "going the other way", "brushing teeth", etc. The label made all the difference!

With a process, such as "brushing teeth" or "cutting hair", I found that Zachary tolerated the activity if I brought a "sense of order" to it. So, for example, as I brushed his teeth, I would count them out loud for him. As I cut his hair, I would make him hold a bowl and I would count the "clumps" of hair as I cut them and put them in the bowl. That brought "order" to a process. Eventually, I could easily do these activities without the "counting". At first, Zachary found it a little stressful without the "counting", but he adjusted since we had "done this" before, and that, in itself, provided a "frame of reference", an understanding of the activity, its approximate duration and end result.

If I labeled every object, every activity, everything...it helped him cope tremendously because he now "understood what that was"... and even a "partial" had a "whole" entity in and of itself when you labeled it (i.e., 1/3.... this partial was 1/3... 1/3 represented something in and of itself).

Labeling something as "in the middle" and showing him exercises with things "in the middle" (i.e., a big stack of blocks, a small one and an "in the middle one") helped him grasp the concept of "in between" situations. Or simply labeling the stacks as "big", "bigger", and "biggest". Such concepts as big, bigger, biggest, small, smaller, smallest, tall, taller, tallest, short, shorter, shortest, some, more, most, etc. - all these became instant sources of fascination and amazement for Zachary because they helped him understand the "in between" situation!

Labels also helped Zachary with sensory issues as well. When he heard loud vehicles go by, Zachary would always cover his ears quickly. I found if I said: "that's a broken muffler", or in a food store, when the humming of the freezers or the ceiling lights was quite audible, even for me, I would tell Zachary something like: "those are loud freezers...listen... can you hear the freezers?", and that would help him cope. The P.A. systems were still challenging... some stores had them quite loud and that still startled him. I found that if he was distracted, however, he could better tolerate those as well. Now, when Zachary heard a loud car, he himself said: "it's a broken muffler"... and he was ok with the loud sound. I did believe there were times, however, when his ears actually "hurt" from the noise. Auditory issues were among those I hope to further address this year.

A simple way to help with auditory issues was to buy Zachary a pair of "shopping ear muffs". We kept these in the car, and wherever we went, we asked: "do you want your shopping ear muffs", and he would answer "yes" or "no" depending on the place we were going to. He knew the types of sounds in these places and as such, he could decide whether or not he needed to wear his ear muffs. At first, I made him wear them in all stores... and he loved them. Of course, the earmuffs themselves had to be defined for the left and right ear. Each part to that entity had been described and their purpose of "helping his ears" had been explained also. In no time, he chose to take them off himself in specific locations but to keep them on in others. Most people simply assumed he was listening to music when he wore these. :o)

Labeling everything - was an absolutely HUGE help for Zachary!

Zachary soon learned to actually "create" his own labels too – his own verbal attempts at coding objects. As he verbalized these, I would search out "what he was trying to say", "how he was seeing things" and I would then further explain the object of his intrigue in order to help him better understand it.

For example, Zachary came up with the word "truck train" to define "freight trains" because the engine looked like a "big truck" and the cargo was often actual "truck trailers", whereas more streamlined passenger trains, he called "car trains" because they had people on board. Freight trains, like trucks, moved cargo and emitted quite a bit of pollution in the form of "smoke". Passenger trains, like cars, moved people. Understanding Zachary's "view", his "reference communication" of trains made it simple to explain the difference to him and provide the proper labels of "freight trains" or "cargo trains" and "passenger trains".

Another label Zachary came up with was that of "flower head". This one he came up with as he watched Dr. Seuss' "Daisy Head Maisy"... the story of a little girl with a flower growing on her head. To a therapist, "flower head" would indeed be "odd language", but when understood from Zachary's perspective, it all made perfect sense! I found Zachary's sister to be a huge help in understanding Zachary because she had watched the same videos he had, learned from the same software packages, etc. A sibling was an invaluable resource when it came to understanding Zachary's "talk". The key to "Zachary's labels" was simply to make sure I clarified his "funny labels" so that he truly understood "real life". In the "flower head" example, I made it a point to show him that flowers did not really grow on heads... that they just grew in dirt or sand. **Given my concerns with "pretend play" and the autistic child I was always certain to make absolutely sure that Zachary understood what was "real" and "what was not real"... and again, labels helped me to do that**!

Labels and fractions, when combined, made for a very powerful tool for the autistic child in terms of helping him overcome issues of partiality! For more on this very critical issue, see my sections on: Using Fractions (under Exercises I Do At Home), Words That Teach Quantity (under Teaching Language), and Words To Cope© to see how each of these could be used in "labeling" everything for the autistic child.

In thinking back, it occurred to me that although, in general, Zachary, for a long time, hated to even open a book, the one type of book he had actually liked in the past had been the "I Spy" books by Jean Marzollo. I now understood why - these books provided a fantastic opportunity to label countless items and for Zachary that provided a greater understanding of his world.

The key to labeling was to eventually have the child ask for the labels he needed by always saying for example: "Zachary, say: what's that?"… and then providing the answer when the child asked the question himself!

Labeling - via the use of fractions, words to teach quantity and words to cope - was in my opinion, the most powerful tool parents had in helping them recover their autistic children! :o)

Obviously, of those coping mechanisms listed above, several could be used by the parent to help the child cope with his environment. Using positive coping mechanisms such as labeling, counting and words to cope, etc., were productive ways of helping the autistic child cope... and as he came to better cope with everyday life, I suspected those coping mechanisms that were much more negative (such as self injurious behavior, biting, "the child in motion", spinning, etc.) would slowly be eliminated from the child's repertoire of coping skills.

The above were a listing of coping mechanism I myself had come to recognize in my own son, Zachary. There were perhaps countless others that have yet to be identified!

First Steps For Parents!

What Can Be Done To Actually Help These Children Today?

This next section was over 50 pages long. It included many valuable exercises I did at home with my own son and many suggestions as to how parents could actually help their children. I encouraged all parents and researchers to read this section carefully… but, even **after this section**, **the best was yet to come in terms of truly understanding the autistic mind** – so, indeed, my most valuable insights were still ahead, but I wanted readers to get through these exercises first because, they too, really told the story of the autistic mind and how it worked! As such, I felt this section belonged here, before the "other good stuff", because in order to understand the final insights as they related to the autistic mind, I wanted readers to see, in pictures, just how Zachary dealt with so many things as a result of his inability to properly integrate the parts into the whole! Although this section was over 50 pages long, it should go fairly fast since there were a lot of pictures used to "make the point"! After reading this section, I believed, readers would have a much, much better appreciation for what was yet to come, and I believed everyone – from parents to neurologists – would find the information in these exercises quite fascinating (I know I did)!

Throughout these materials, I had provided ways I felt my own son had been helped in many specific areas. The puzzle of autism was indeed a huge one. I had come to understand much of it, but, the more I learned, the more I saw how there was still, yet, so much more to learn... especially in terms of how the senses, the digestive and immune system were impacted - in addition to overall brain functioning.

We knew a great deal more than we did only a few short years ago, especially in the area of diet and supplements. As I continued my quest into understanding the missing pieces, however, certain things came to mind that I wanted to share with all readers.

The information below, provided for parents great resources in terms of places to turn to when you simply had no idea as to where to even start as well as great exercises any parent could do at home!

Many parents, including myself, saw good results with the use of **digestive enzymes** in many areas of their children's lives. There were definitely side effects that parents need to be aware of – and these could be easily dealt with - it was just best to be aware of them from the start. As such, I encouraged all parents to read the documentation provided by the parent discussion group moderator for the Yahoo group: enzymes and autism. Parents can join this group by going to: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/enzymesandautism/. There, you could find a wealth of information on this issue, and also, discuss the use of enzymes with parents who actually had been using them with their children, in some cases, up to 2 years already!

The moderator for this discussion group, Karen DeFelice, had just completed a book on the issue of digestive enzymes and autistic children. This book was entitled Enzymes For

Autism And Other Neurological Conditions (ISBN: 0972591877). A brief description of the books contents was provided below:

This book is a very solid foundation for enzyme therapy in neurological conditions that is very practical and applicable. Enzyme therapy is the use of digestive proteins to break down food, and is an emerging treatment for people with autism spectrum conditions. Users report significant improvements in eye contact, language, humour, food tolerance, and socialization. Drawing on research and trials by a range of families, this work deals with all the information on enzymes that parents need – how enzymes work, who can benefit from enzyme therapy, and what results to expect. It also gives tried and tested practical advice on buying and introducing the right kind of enzymes and shows how they can be combined with other approaches and therapies.

The files available online on at the above-mentioned enzymes and autism discussion board were also an invaluable resource for parents of the autistic. Parents who had specific questions on enzymes or any other topic related to autism could also discuss specific issues with other parents who were using digestive enzymes for their children. This was by far one of the most informative parent discussion groups and one of the parent's best resources when it came to many, many issues.

The simple fact was that although doctors had the medical training, it was the parents who had the 24 hour, 7 day a week living lab and as such, parents were an invaluable source of information in terms of the various options for these children. Parents included doctors, therapists, teachers, chemists, biochemists, psychologists, lawyers, and, last but certainly not least, mothers too, who so often held within them key observations I knew would be critical to unlocking this puzzle we all knew as "autism".

You did **not need** a prescription for digestive enzymes...they had been around for decades and were classified as a "food" by the FDA. Many children were improving greatly according to parents (a few even returning to diets that included some casein and gluten). In addition to products specifically for the breakdown of casein and gluten, these enzymes also helped in the breakdown of phenols, carbohydrates, triglycerides, soy and vegetables. They also seemed to help somewhat with yeast issues.

I used enzymes made by Houston Nutraceuticals, Inc. (http://www.houstonni.com, (866-757-8627). Some parents used Kirkman Labs products (http://www.Kirkmanlabs.com, 800-245-8282), too – some alternated between companies. It was really a matter of preference in terms of which company parents went with.

Enzyme products available through Houston Nutraceuticals, Inc. included the following:

1) Peptizyde for breakdown of proteins found in dairy, wheat, soy, meats and vegetables, 2) AFP Peptizyde (same as Peptizyde only better if the child could not tolerate phenols), 3) HN Zyme Prime for breakdown of proteins, carbohydrates, and triglycerides, and 4)No Fenol for breakdown of foods high in phenols.

These products could be further investigated by going to: http://www.houstonni.com/ .
I personally started with Peptizyde, HN Zyme Prime and No Fenol but decided to later "switch out" Peptizyde for AFP Peptizyde… and keep the other two as well. Zachary had done very well while on these enzymes.

There were some side effects (diarrhea due to yeast die off), etc. as a result of using these products. That could last about 2 weeks… but, after that, things got much, much better. Parents who were considering enzymes should read the files on the website below for the enzymes and autism discussion board. These files had a wealth of valuable information all parents should be aware of prior to starting enzyme use (in terms of how to get started and what to expect). Karen DeFelice's book, as mentioned above, was also an excellent reference for those who did not have Internet access. Karen DeFelice's book basically summarized the information in these files available online.

Yahoo Groups had a group called http://groups.yahoo.com/group/enzymesandautism/. I recommend to all parents of autistic children that they join this discussion group and see what other parents were saying about these life changing products...you would also learn a ton of stuff about other autism related issues as well on this discussion board! Very, very informative!

Most parents knew their children's digestive systems were not working properly, these enzymes helped the digestive system break down things it could not break down on its own.

Foods high in phenols include tomatoes, apples, bananas, red grapes/raisins, chocolate.

Another excellent discussion group was: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Autism-Mercury/. This group discussed issues related to autism, mercury (a preservative found in many childhood vaccinations that was slowly being "phased out" – although many children had already been exposed to this very toxic substance), and other heavy metals and/or toxins found in all vaccinations (**for either children and/or adults**) and what parents could do in terms of testing and options (i.e., chelation) to help their child.

A book by Andrew Cutler, PhD, on the effects of mercury and the total havoc that could be done to the human body by this substance found in childhood and many adult vaccinations and in mercury fillings was: Amalgam Illness: Diagnosis and Treatment (ISBN: 0-9676168-0-8). This book could be purchased via Andrew Cutler's website: http://www.noamalgam.com/#howtoorder.

Chelation was a process whereby heavy metals (such as mercury, aluminum and other substances found in vaccinations) were extracted from the body. I cautioned parents in that **chelation was a serious procedure and should only be undertaken under the care of a *knowledgeable* physician. Many parents reported great results through chelation, however, if not done properly and under the care of an informed physician, a physician who understood the issues behind chelation and who had assisted many parents in this**

process, then there could be serious consequences, including liver and kidney damage. Andrew Cutler's book, was a great place to start in terms of understanding the issues surrounding this very serious issue!

Many doctors were "aware" of chelation, but very few seemed to truly have any real experience with it – and that seemed especially true as it related to chelating the autistic! Thus, for parents interested in further investigation this option, your best bet was really to start by reading the files on the autism and mercury message board and by reading what "other parents" had to say in terms of what this procedure had done for their children. Parents could learn more about chelation by joining this parent discussion group – truly, another very informative resource for any parent of an autistic child: http://groups.yahoo.com/search?query=autism+mercury.

Many parents were currently in the process of undergoing this option with their children. These parents, many of them on the autism and mercury discussion board, were more than willing to help other parents interested in this procedure to find doctors who were knowledgeable in this **very serious but potentially very beneficial procedure**.

I personally, had not done any chelation, yet. This was something still "on radar" for me in terms of "another option" to consider if I found Zachary's progress had "stalled out". For now, however, that was not the case, and as such, chelation was not something I anticipated doing - at least not in the very near future (in the next year). I may consider it after that.

Chelation, a process whereby heavy metals were removed from the body, should never be done on someone who has silver/mercury fillings... that could make things worse than they already were by actually pulling mercury out of the fillings and into the system!

Chelation should always be done under the care of a doctor knowledgeable in chelation issues since chelation could result in serious liver and kidney damage if not done properly. Parents going through chelation could provide valuable insight, but, again, do your homework.

There were risks associated with chelation – but, there were also risks associated with leaving these metals in your child's body/brain! Only you, as the parent, could be responsible for your child's care and do what was in his best interest.

For more information on these topics: enzymes, mercury, etc., also see my the following on **my** website: New Options For The Autistic and Parent Nuggets©. (Parent Nuggets© was a collation of valuable information for parents in "nuggets" – available on my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com).

I cautioned all parents that Internet information was not always accurate, therefore, please do your homework and research these issues for yourself before doing anything... and consult your family physician as well - this was particularly important for anyone considering chelation!

As with everything, I provided this for information purposes only. **I was not a doctor and could not even begin to advise you in what was best for your child.** I knew my child, his medical history, etc., and as such, my son, Zachary was the only child for whom I could make any decisions and/or recommendations!

A couple of excellent books for parents who wanted to look further into issues of mercury, enzymes, etc. were the following:

1. Amalgam Illness: Diagnosis and Treatment, by Andrew Cutler
2. Enzymes For Autism And Other Neurological Conditions, by Karen DeFelice.

These books, together, would give all parents a very, very good understanding many critical issues behind autism.

There indeed was much more information available to parents of the autistic today. However, some information, although quite valuable, I found was not at all available in the United States.

For example, we did know that for phenols seemed to have an impact on autistic children. As I researched the issue of phenols, I came across a book written by a woman in Australia. The book was not available in the US, so, I ordered it from Australia.

The information for ordering this book was provided below.

Duncan, Mary. 1995. *Boron, Phenols and Health: Clues to the Mysteries of ADD, Alzheimer's, Asthma*. Alkimos, Australia. Park Printing Company. (ISBN 0-646-26612-8)

*This book (*Boron, Phenols and Health: Clues to the Mysteries of ADD, Alzheimer's, Asthma.*) was not available in the US. To obtain it, you need to send $18.00 US to: Alkimos Australia, 26 Trian Road, Carabooda, Western Australia, Australia 6033. I wanted to warn all readers that you had to have a pretty good understanding of chemistry to understand this information... and that was not something I had. Although I was only able to get some "bits and pieces" from this book, the vast amount of research studies behind it seemed to indicate a link to boron somehow. This book had close to 40 pages of references. **Much of what I did find on boron stated that it was something we knew very little about...except that it was necessary for proper brain function and alertness. Yet no "daily value" or "amount" needed had been determined and that just made me wonder all the more!**

Given that most foods high in boron were the same foods considered high in phenols, and that "phenols" had been identified as a problem area for autistic children, I truly wondered if the "problem" was with phenols or **with boron**! No other parent of an autistic child I had personally talked to could even begin to give me answers to how boron may play a role in autism. In my opinion, this was certainly an area that necessitated much greater investigation, especially given the fact that this book from Australia seemed to tie boron to "Attention Deficit Disorder" (considered to be on the autism spectrum)! Therefore, I raised this concern here, because **I truly did believe this was something that warranted further investigation in the near future, especially given the fact that many parents had stated on discussion boards that their children had abnormal boron levels!**

There was, obviously, still a great need for research in the area of actual physical damage to the senses - the eyes, the ears, the nerve endings involved in the sense of touch and all those things involved in the sense of taste and also smell.

I knew that labels helped tremendously in the processing of sensory information. Labeling of smells, sounds, things one touched, saw and tasted... all this, I knew would help. But, in my heart, I felt that in these issues, there may be much more involved... in terms of actual physical damage. After all, Zachary had seemed to make more progress in some of these areas once on digestive enzymes to help him actually break down foods that he simply could not properly break down on his own, food that somehow created within him a natural opiate or drug effect.

So many "new" things I had only recently learned about... like digestive enzymes, chelation and things like grapefruit seed extract – a great and inexpensive way to help control yeast issues in these children. Parents could obtain more information on that topic on the enzymes and autism parent discussion board listed above.

Note: This was grape**fruit** seed extract (not grapeseed extract). I gave this to Zachary two or three times a day (just a few drops) and it truly did help control yeast issues. This product could be obtained at any local health food store. I also gave Zachary No Fenol enzymes when he was given the **grapefruit seed extract** since it was rather high in phenols. I hid it in his rice based cfgf ice cream.

I knew supplements in the form of vitamins and minerals were terribly important too... and I knew that the pharmaceuticals were now pushing to make these everyday products, in the future, possibly only available via prescription. This was something I felt could simply not be allowed to happen. Too many parents of the autistic and too many others in the general population needed access to these items... and too many of us had no health insurance because no one wanted to "cover" our children. The burden on the families of the autistic was already heavy enough without making it worse! Vitamins and minerals had never been prescription items in the past, and in my opinion, there was absolutely no reason to do so now! In my opinion, this was simply the strong arm of the pharmaceuticals, once again waving strongly in Washington!

Indeed, there seemed to be no end in sight when it came to "how difficult" things were for the families of the autistic... and in terms of how much they had so been failed by "the system" and our government in terms of their providing no financial relief, and worse - no answers!

Like most parents who had turned to "the system" for help, I found there was very little available for my child. When our suspicions that Zachary had autism were indeed confirmed by a pediatrician, I left the doctor's office with a couple of brochures, the name of a couple of behavior therapy offices, and a couple of phone numbers to local groups that “may be able to provide some assistance”. Within a day or two, I was also given the name and number of a local neurologist.

It took me very little time to come to the conclusion that our family would basically be on its own in this battle. Behavior therapists cost anywhere from $35,000 to $50,000 per year and even for those parents who could afford this, the waiting lists to get into private programs were anywhere from 12 to 18 months. We simply refused to wait that long to get started! Local agencies could only provide about 2 or 3 hours of speech therapy per week. Because Zachary was less than 3 years old at the time, he was not allowed to have the more lucrative 5 - 10 hours per week he would have been allowed in IL - if I really pushed to get it! Needless to say, in my view, this was basically "a joke"! I had a child who desperately needed help, and this was the best I could get? The neurologist's office basically offered to put my son on drugs... that was about the extent of their help... so, for us, they were out too! Even if I went ahead with an MRI or CAT scan... then what? So, perhaps they could tell me my son's brain was "different" – I already knew that - ... but, they could provide no answers in terms of what needed to be done to help him... so, I thought, why go through that? As I came to understand more about the value of MRI in the study of the autistic brain, I came to truly understand that for our family, this would basically have been a waste of time anyway! For more on that, I encouraged all parents to read my section called: All Those Brain Studies – And The Need To Question Everything!

My husband and I grieved the loss of the son we had once known... but, we quickly realized that we were on our own, and if anyone was going to help Zachary, it had to be us! And so started our long journey down the halls of the prison so many parents had come to know as "autism"!

As our journey progressed, and Zachary did better, I had an overwhelming need to share our story with other families. That was when I wrote my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. After writing that book, however, I came to truly understand my son in terms of what his issues really were... I was "close" in my first book, but now, I had a much better understanding of so many of his issues. I could now explain well over 100 things in my son - emotional, behavioral, social and many sensory issues now all came together based on one common link - the inability of the autistic child to integrate his world... the inability to understand the whole in anything without first understanding the parts that made up that whole! This, I was certain, was the key to so much!

In the past, when I had researched autism, I had found a few common "characteristics" of the autistic listed in many books and articles on autism. But, in looking back, and truly examining Zachary and "what I saw" in my son, I could see that so many signs had been there...so many signs of autism manifesting itself... I, and everyone else, had simply failed to recognize these for what they were.

Signs So Easily Missed or Dismissed... - that had been the title of Chapter 6 of my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism.

One of the dangers with autism was exactly that... the signs were all too easily missed or all too easily dismissed and with that dismissal, precious time was lost. I now recognized over 50 things that I could now say were signs of autism manifesting itself in my son. These were provided in the Appendix section called "Signs So Easily Missed or Dismissed". In my opinion, if your own child had more than ten of these, you had reason to be concerned.

Autism meant big bucks - in profits and costs. There were big bucks to be made by those who would offer all the latest scams - and these were not limited to "fly by night operations". From a cost perspective, many clinics with PPOs/HMOs did not have an interest in diagnosing autism. These children became "too costly" for clinics that were paid a **fixed** amount per year whether or not they see the child once or 100 times in a year. It was to the advantage of these clinics **not** to see your child more than for regular/routine visits. The fewer times they saw your child, the more profitable their clinic. It was not in their "financial" interest to diagnose autism in a child. But, it was very much in their financial interest to make sure all children were vaccinated. In many cases, doctor’s bonuses were actually tied to how many children they had vaccinated. And, in addition, the pharmaceutical industry now spent close to 12 BILLION a year marketing to doctors… and that included many lucrative perks as well!

These issues were all a fact of life and make no mistake about it! Children with autism were but a major "expense" line item for many, many clinics on such HMO/PPO plans. Again, only **you**, as a parent could do what was right for your child... to expect anyone else to do so, would indeed, be a very bad assumption to make. We had learned these “realities of life” the hard way and I hoped to help prevent other parents from learning the very difficult lessons we had learned.

I was convinced the office where we took Zachary for his periodic checks knew he was showing signs of autism… they were there – so plainly – throughout his file. My husband had even asked once: “Is he autistic?” – but nowhere was that comment by the parent listed in my son’s medical records. Surely, any competent doctor would have at least noted that concern – or would he? Was the medical community so truly uninformed when it came to issues of autism or did they simply prefer to “remain ignorant” and hope parents did not figure certain things out? For more on so many of these issues, I encouraged all parents to read my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, available on my website: http://www.autismhelpforyou.com.

Yet, getting upset over “what was known”, “pretended to be known or not known” was not going to help my son. We knew we were on our own… and so, we set out to “save Zachary”, completely on our own!

In looking at so much of what I saw in Zachary, so much that had been missed for so long, I finally came to understand his issues.

I decided to test my "theory" of the underlying problem in these children - that they could not properly integrate the various aspects of their world into a "whole" without first understanding the parts that made up that whole - in everything.

As I continued to observe and work with Zachary, I tested my theory, and sure enough, over and over, it proved to be accurate. I, now, understood my son much more in terms of "what I saw in him"... and having that understanding of his issues meant I could now focus my energies on helping him leave the shackles of autism behind.

By this time, Zachary had been on a casein and gluten free diet for approximately 28 months. I encourage all parents to truly give this diet a try. It was a difficult regiment to follow, however, the benefits I saw in my son were all worth it. I knew some advocated that if you did not see improvements within 3 or 4 months that "the diet" probably would not work for your child, however, for us, as a family, the really big changes came after approximately 12 months on the casein and gluten free diet.

Although casein could leave the body in approximately three days, gluten could indeed take up to 10 - 12 months to leave the body. In addition, we had recently (February 2002) put Zachary on digestive enzymes that helped to break down casein and gluten. Even though he was on a casein and gluten free diet, and I had been rather fanatic about not having any infractions, he undoubtedly was still getting gluten from hidden sources I had not been aware of, such as toothpaste, soap, shampoo, etc. There were now companies that made casein and gluten free products for those who wanted them. Kirkman Labs (http://www.kirkmanlabs.com) provided a casein and gluten free toothpaste, along with several other supplements for autistic children, and a company by the name of Miss Robens (http://www.missrobens.com) provided a casein and gluten free shampoo and laundry detergent. Digestive enzymes, available through Houston Nutraceuticals, Inc. (http://www.houstonni.com) in my opinion, did help Zachary on many fronts, especially in terms of overall sensory issues (i.e., sensitivity to light, sounds, touch, etc.). These enzymes now gave me that comfort that “hidden” sources of gluten were not being cared for, too!

Throughout these materials, I had attempted to provide for parents examples of "what I did" with Zachary to help him in many, many areas. I chose to provide these examples of "things I did" within the area being addressed specifically. But, there was still much more to share in this area of "what can be done to help these children, today?”

Exercises I Do At Home

This section provided an overview of specific exercises I did at home to help my son deal specifically with issues of partiality processing.

Given what I knew of Zachary's inability to integrate the parts of his world into the whole, his inability to understand the whole without first understanding all the parts within it, there were several exercises I came up with for Zachary. At the time I had originally come up with these, I thought Zachary's problem had to do primarily with an almost fanatic need for order. A few months later, I came to the realization that Zachary's problems were, more specifically, with a subset of the ordering function - the processing of partialities or parts to the whole!

The fact that more boys had autism than did girls also made me wonder in terms of the fact that boys, generally, were more “spatial” or “ordered” in their thinking than were girls. Girls tended to be better at communication and social issues. Boys were, generally believed to be better in math and physics, etc. Perhaps this was simply an old stereotype, but – if it was true, it sure made me wonder! I had no way of knowing with certainty, but, again, this was all rather interesting!

The fact that more boys had autism, yet those girls who did have it seemed “more severely” impacted in many cases, also made me wonder if this was somehow related to the fact that certain vaccinations were made from the cells of an aborted fetus (i.e., the rubella and smallpox vaccines). I wondered what the sex of that aborted fetus had been – and what the impacts could be of, for example, injecting female dna into a male, or another female’s dna into a female – interesting issues indeed!

In my opinion, autistic children were all too often in a drug-induced state as a result of the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten on their bodies. Obviously, I did not believe that optimal learning could occur if a child was still suffering from this natural opiate state. Thus a diet free of casein and gluten had to be seriously considered by parents before undertaking these exercises. Learning required a clear mind and you simply did not have that when in a "drug induced" state. For Zachary, alleviating the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten meant he necessitated a complete diet overhaul. He was also on a diet low in phenols.

My point here, was simply that I strongly believed a child needed to be alert and aware of his surroundings to be able to learn in an effective and efficient manner. In my opinion, modern behavior therapy often fell short in that it did not first necessitate removing casein and gluten from the diet of autistic children.

As such therapy became like forcing a child to lift a 50 pound barbell... it would be nearly impossible for him to do unless physically fit... and even if the child could do it... then what?...just put it back down? What was the purpose of that to a child? Why force a child to do a task he does not understand because he was in a drug-induced state? What was the purpose of doing a task that had no "meaning" to it from the child's perspective - a "meaningless task" - and then reward him for doing that "meaningless task"? In such cases, there was no purpose to it - no result of any kind other than a forced, learned response to a forced "task/reward" system. In such "meaningless" tasks there could be, ultimately, no true reduction in stress, no real "carry over" of what had been learned to other situations...so, again, why do it? A child needed to understand the meaning behind the task, and for that, he needed to be thinking clearly.

Once the natural opiate effects of casein and gluten had been removed, Zachary thrived! The point of my exercises was not simply to generate some kind of learned response to a "meaningless" task... it was to actually help Zachary learn to cope with his world. A "meaningless" task, one a child did not understand because he was in a drug-induced state does nothing for him, and like the lifting of a 50 pound barbell - yes, in some cases, you would encounter children who could do "the task", but once "done" if that task was meaningless to the child - then what? And what about all those children who failed the task completely?

I, therefore, encourage all parents to find a doctor who would help them address their child's dietary issues, as I did believe this was critical for these children to achieve their true potential. DAN! (Defeat Autism Now!) trained doctors were a good place to start.

The list was maintained by the Autism Research Institute, in California. Undoubtedly, children who were not on a casein and gluten free diet could also benefit from these exercises, however, I did believe that having a clear mind made the lessons go much, much further! Why give a child a 50-pound barbell to lift - an almost impossible task to do and understand - when simply by removing casein and gluten, and allowing for a much clearer mind, a 2-pound barbell would work just as well in completing the task, and would, most likely, allow many more children to complete it successfully! Parents had to take the responsibility for removing the obstacles they could and needed to do so when it came to creating an optimal learning situation.

For more on the casein and gluten free diet, I encouraged all parents to read the first book I wrote: Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism and Kirkman Labs' Guide To Intestinal Health In Autism Spectrum Disorder. This valuable book was available for FREE either online by going to: http://www.kirkmanlabs.com or by calling the company directly at: 800-245-8282 and requesting a copy. This guide was certainly something that could be shared with doctors to help them understand the dietary issues of autism as well. This was a difficult diet to follow, but in my opinion, one that was well worth it! As such, I encouraged all parents to seriously consider a casein and gluten free diet for their autistic children.

There were many doctors who simply did not understand these issues with casein and gluten in the autistic but there were many who did. Parent discussion boards were great places to get referrals. I had placed a link on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com to over 330 autism parent discussion boards and a couple of key ones were also listed in the beginning of this section on First Steps For Parents! By far, the best are the enzyme, mercury, and diet related boards! There were certainly good behavior therapy boards, too, but I had not really frequented those.

"Other Parents" were a tremendous source of information when it came to what could be done to help your child because **this broad category of "parents" includes doctors, lawyers, chemists, biochemists, teachers, law officers, researchers, therapists, and last, but certainly not least, those valuable stay-at-home moms who all too often were the ones who "noticed" those critical observations that could often be so key to the puzzle of autism!** I encouraged all parents of the autistic to consider joining a couple of message boards - parents would be amazed at the amount of information available from other parents and at their willingness in helping others to figure out where to start and what to do to start helping your child. If nothing else, these parents, who together had a wealth of knowledge and experience could help steer others towards a potential area to investigate when you just had no idea as to where to go or what to do! :o) Parent discussion groups were also great places to get referrals for doctors who were experienced in dealing with the autistic, from a diet/supplement, chelation or behavior therapy perspective.

Thus, the first thing to consider was the removal of the drug-induced state. Then, the behavior intervention could begin. I found that I could do valuable intervention in my home...and it certainly did not cost me tens of thousands to do so. I just exposed Zachary to the "in between" situation, something he had in everyday life anyway, only now, his "exposure" to these "everyday in between" situations would be used as "therapy" and be very focused on one particular thing - helping him cope with partiality! I exposed Zachary to these simple tasks - over, and over, and over again. I could do the same exercise 30, 40 even 50 times a day. This was not difficult to do at all... it simply required a little persistence on my part. This sounded like it involved a great deal of work and time, but truly, it was much simpler than it sounded, and involved much less time than one would think, as parents would see from the various exercises I did with my son. For Zachary, it was just a matter of "increasing frequency of exposure" to the "not ordinary" or "in between" situation... and, explaining the situation best I could - and this was actually something that was rather easy to do. :o)

In doing all exercises, I found it was critical to "put things away" for a few days and then take them out again...that helped me gauge Zachary's progress because I could see if his frustration levels were the same or had decreased when the exercises were "used again" after a while "away from them" – and it also helped prevent allowing him to create “new entities” out of my tools.

The idea behind all these exercises was simply to help Zachary cope with partiality and the realization that things were not perfect and that somehow, he had to be able to adapt to that. I wanted Zachary to be able to allow for the "in between" situations, or the "non-ordinary", for him to see that although there was a need for "order" in life, not all things had to be "perfectly ordered" and, to make him see, that in many cases, “parts” were ok, too!

The fact that I could literally turn Zachary's frustrations "on and off like a switch" told me I was on the right track.

Also, in doing these exercises with Zachary, I saw that they involved "real work and effort" on his part as he was very tired after we did these things... and that was normal. Having studied psychology through graduate school, I knew that "therapy" was often hard and exhausting work for the person going through it and, often, for the therapist, too! As such, I was careful to gauge "when he had had enough" and allowed for "breaks". I found that when I stopped "working with him", Zachary immediately wanted an "order fix" as I came to call it – his coping mechanisms to deal with partiality always came “out”.

The difficult part for me was to control "order fixes" as much as possible so that he could get the stress relief he needed yet, I had to make sure that, as much as possible, his "order fixes" were either very short or involved more "productive" activities. Ideally, I wanted the need for an "order fix" to be "satiated" by everyday things that did require order, like putting away toys, working on the computer on educational software, watching an educational video, etc., as opposed to allowing the "order fix" to be one such as "spinning". Zachary had to learn that it was ok to have some order, but that satiating his need for order had to come from "appropriate" tasks that required order, not from engaging in meaningless activities. I say "meaningless" here only in the sense that activities such as "spinning" do nothing to teach Zachary anything... although I was well aware of their "stress relieving potential" for the autistic child (and as such, at times, these activities, although meaningless in what they teach, could be used as valuable coping tools when life simply was too much to handle!).

I found that after time away from these exercises, when they were "picked up again", Zachary did experience renewed frustration, but the level of that frustration had often been significantly reduced in terms of intensity or actual time it lasted. As such, I knew these exercises were helping him learn to cope with issues of partiality. In general, it did not take much time to "regain" lost ground due to the simple lapse of time. The fact was, I knew Zachary needed a break too... and a "break from things" was the best way for me to see whether or not what I was doing worked.

Basic tools I used in working with Zachary included the following:

Plastic eggs - about 2-dozen, wooden blocks, puzzles/various puzzle pieces (puzzles with missing pieces were good too!) large Lego blocks, an empty egg carton, Rainbow Stix (multi-colored mechanical pencils available at Staples office supply stores), a small basket (anywhere from 4 inches to 8 inches across is good) or large drinking cup, my own body parts (fingers, legs, arms, etc.), bandages, tape (duct tape, masking tape, etc.), rubber bands, hair barrettes/clips, etc., everyday household items or things I could find outside (laundry, small rocks, acorns, etc.) and certain activities, like going for walks also provided great opportunities to further work these issues.

I found I could pretty well do my exercises simply with things I already had around the house, and as such, I did not need to spend a fortune to really make a difference for my son.

Using everyday items he was familiar with also had the added benefit of using "tools of everyday life" and that, I was sure would help him cope with that everyday life! :o)

The goal of all these exercises was to provide or stimulate flexibility by "breaking order" in daily life and forcing Zachary to accept the "in between" situation... the "partial situation" in many things. Ultimately, I wanted Zachary to be able to do all these things, physically, himself...to have him, literally, participate in doing the "unusual" or “in between”. Only then would I know that he had truly "become flexible" and that he could better cope with issues of partiality. The key was to increase his flexibility...using everyday objects...and doing it in a fun way.

I did not believe in punishing Zachary as he worked through his issues with partiality and often reacted by using one of his many coping mechanisms (i.e., screaming, running away, etc.) even if those coping mechanisms were difficult for me to deal with at times. I knew his brain forced him to be the way he was – and that was something that was critical be remembered in working with Zachary.

In doing these exercises, it was also important to always make use of Words To Cope to help Zachary when things simply got a little too stressful. I encouraged all parents to become very familiar with these words (see Language section for more on Words To Cope©) and to use them frequently throughout the day in helping their child deal with the world about him. It was also critical to "Label Everything". Labeling was the most CRITICAL and VALUABLE tool parents had in helping to recover their children from autism, because labeling helped define the "parts" to the "whole" for a child who was constantly trying to "break the code" to life... to understand the world about him!

Patience, understanding, labels, fractions, words of quantity, words to cope and creativity... absolutely key tools in working with the autistic child!

There was no doubt in my mind that labeling everything was by far the most useful physical tool parents had to help them in the recovery of their autistic child. In order to label those things that seem to be the most difficult for the autistic child - parts - it occurred to me that the best way to teach how "parts" form a whole was actually through the use of fractions, because, as stated earlier, when you define even a part, or a fraction of something, that "part" takes on an identity of its own. In explaining the concept of fractions to Zachary, I used objects made specifically to teach "fractions" as well as "words that teach quantities". For example, words like "a little", or "some" were words that helped define "parts" to the whole and as such, these labels, in addition to making use of actual physical objects to teach fractions, I found to be invaluable!

Fractions and Words That Teach Quantity

2 Key Tools In Teaching The Concept of "Parts To A Whole" The Autistic Child And Allowing Him To Better Cope With Everyday Situations!!!

Although I knew Zachary had made great strides, I also knew he still struggled with the need for "all or nothing" in almost everything! I had thought long and hard about the best way to "break" this need of his... and I finally came up with the BEST way to approach it... the PERFECT way to teach the "in between"... by teaching FRACTIONS and Words of Quantity (see Language Section) as I called them... words that helped illustrate the "partial" or "in between" situation. I tried this and it worked exactly as I had expected. This was sssssssooooo exciting!!!

The idea here was to teach the CONCEPT of "parts" versus the "whole". This was key to teaching the "in between"...what lies between the "nothing" and the "all". Once Zachary saw how "parts" made up the whole, then I could apply that to many, many things in life. He would now have that critical "label" (the fraction) he needed to make sense of his world when it came to the "in between" situation and to figuring out how "parts" can come together to form a whole. I expected this would greatly increase his flexibility in how he looked at things and his ability to cope with the real world. For example, when he wanted to open the door completely, I could say: "let's open it halfway"... when he wanted me to roll down the car window all the way, I could say: "no, let's leave it up 3/5th of the way" and so on. I could show him how trucks or trains were only partially filled... I could show him that his sandbox buckets could only be filled 1/3 or the way, or 9/10th of the way - instead of him always filling them up completely all the time and not being able to allow for the "in between" situation. I could take a measuring cup and show him the various levels by filling it up 1/4 of the way and showing him "1/4" on the cup, etc. So, the key was just to teach the CONCEPT of "parts" verses the "whole".

Note that the tools I used (below) were for grades 2-6... but, that did not matter. Zachary did not need to learn how to add or subtract or multiply or divide fractions... he just had to learn the concept behind them - that parts made up a whole - and then apply that to the "in between" situation so that a task did not have to be done "completely". It could be done "partially"... and that... any child could learn from a very young age.

At first, I just took out the "new tools" I bought and let Zachary play with them. Below were pictures of the "tools" I decided to use: The Fraction Stax (by Ideal School Supply Company) and Fraction Pieces (by Didax Inc.).

I chose these for specific reasons. The Fraction Stax was a 3-D tool... and it had a lot of color to it. I felt "one color" per "fraction concept" or "piece" would help reinforce the lesson. I also felt that in the past, Zachary responded more to 3-D objects than to products that were simply kind of like a puzzle... a flat surface. He found the 3-D products much more interesting. This particular product was made by Ideal School Supply Company (they also make the plastic shapes I used. This company was located in Alsip, IL). The Fraction

Stax was product no. 7749. Parents should be able to get this product from pretty well any school supply store in their area. It cost approximately 25.00 US (when you included shipping and handling).

A company that sold this product was Summit Learning at 755 Rockwell Avenue, P.O. Box 755, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-0755, Phone: 800-777-8817, Fax: 800-317-2194, E-mail: info@summitlearning.com,website:http://www.summitlearning.com/ent/search_results.cfm.

The Fraction Pieces by Didax cost me 15.00 US. They provided more of a 2-dimensional exercise but, you can use them to create your own 3-D masterpieces! The item no. for the Didax product was 2-497. Didax was located in Rowley, MA. Again, I obtained these at my local school supply store. Note: Both products say they were for children over 3 years of age (chocking hazard), therefore, parents should always be there, monitoring young children while they work with these!

Tool 1 - The Fraction Stax - by Ideal School Supply Company

What I believe could be the best tool yet for the autistic child!!!

First, I took the fraction stacks and put one of each "fraction" on a stack in descending order and/or ascending order - good to try both. This way, I was showing Zachary, 1) the whole and then 2) the parts from "bigger" to "smaller" parts. This tool was nice because the fractions were marked on the pieces... 1, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, 1/6, 1/8, 1/10 and 1/12. I called off the "fraction" with each piece I placed... each and every time I put a piece on the stacks... that was key in getting across the concept of "parts" versus the "whole". When I did the "calling out" for exercises shown further below... where an "entire stack" was made, I called out the pieces, one at a time, in addition to showing the "relation" to the whole. For example, when making the stack of "quarters" (the pink blocks), I would say, as I picked up the first 1/4 piece: 1/4 (and put the first block on), then, I would say: 1/4 + 1/4 as I put the second block on and I would provide the answer... "equals 2/4".

Note: I did **NOT** say "=1/2"... we were working with "quarters" and so I had to stay with the "quarters" in order not to confuse Zachary (**I did not want to "simplify the fraction"** by calling it 1/2...that would ruin the "concept" of the "part" of a "whole").

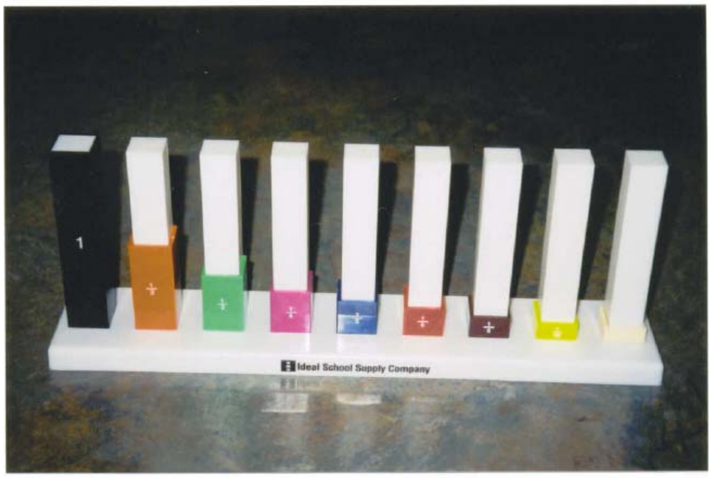
I then took the third piece and said: 2/4 + 1/4 = 3/4 and then I took the final piece and said: 3/4 + 1/4 = 4/4 and I ended with 4/4 = 1. I did this for every "stack" of fractions - taking each piece or part and working up to the whole for each stack. I did this "calling out" for the entire 2 hours we worked on this.

Note: Zachary was so fascinated by this concept, that he had absolutely no problem working with this tool for several hours nonstop!

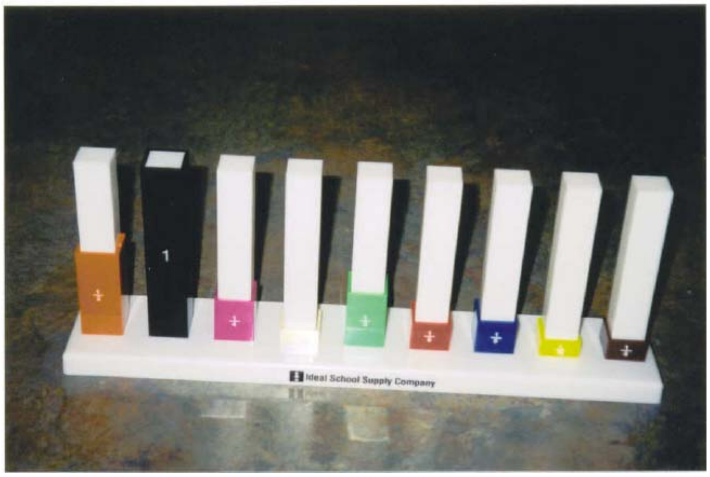
In no time, Zachary was calling out "the additions" himself. :o)

Note: The first arrangement of the stacks provided a somewhat "ordered" visual for Zachary... the tool was still fairly new... so, he was still "enjoying" just watching for now. I then took some of the pieces and started to mix them up... putting them "out of proper descending or ascending order"... as shown in the second picture below.

1



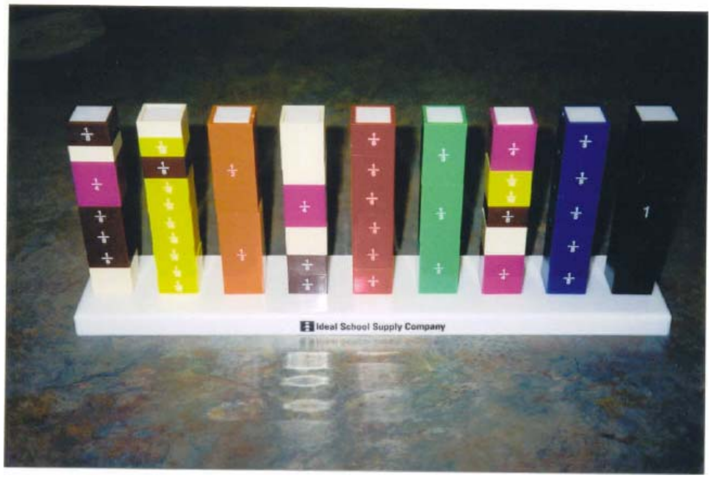
2



Now, it was Zachary's turn to play with this item. He immediately sensed anxiety and/or frustration from seeing things "not complete"... so, he turned the stacks around to make all the fraction pieces fall off - as I had expected! He then "started over" on his own... doing things the way he wanted them... in an ordered, "all or nothing" manner as shown in the first picture below. By this, I meant that ALL the pieces had to be on the stacks and in the right place. For Zachary, at first, there could be no pieces left on the floor and no mixing of colors... his "all or none" world mandated that! I worked with him a long time, calling out the "parts" and adding them to make the whole for each stack, as described in the example above.

1

2



I then took the stacks and started to "mix them up", calling them "mixed up stacks" as I did this - to provide that all too necessary "label" - labeling everything, I found, was key to helping Zachary cope with the "unusual", the "unknown", and/or "the new". Notice I still used **all** the pieces. I then waited to see what Zachary would do with the mixed up stacks...

1

2

To my surprise... Zachary did not flip over the stacks to "undo" the mixing and matching of sizes and colors. Instead, he ran his fingers "up and down" each "mixed up stack"... he was "taking in" the variation. After doing this a little, he then flipped over the stacks to "undo" them. So, mixing of colors and sizes was no longer "as big an issue" as it had been slightly earlier. Zachary adapted rather well to that.

The variation that absolutely drove him crazy - as I knew it would - was the "incomplete" or "partial" stack! I stacked the pieces as shown below. I did not "complete" the task and put the missing pieces aside where he could not get to them. Right away, Zachary went ballistic, screaming and then taking the stacks and flipping them over and scattering the pieces everywhere so that they were no longer seen as part of a "whole" (exactly the same behavior I had seen in the past with the plactic egg exercises - See Plastic Eggs section)! I had fully expected this to happen... and sure enough, it did!

Zachary played with the Fraction Stax for over 4 hours that day... at times with me there, and at times, on his own... just to "experiment" by himself.

When "partiality" became too much of an issue, the result was always the same (see Exercises for more on this) - Zachary either looked for that all important "order fix" and if one could not be found, then the "partial" had to be completely, and again, as in this case, actually physically separated from the whole... so that the pieces were no longer perceived as something associated with the "whole". Those pieces he had so much difficulty making sense of were forced into randomness... an unexpected coping mechanism for the autistic child... yet, when looked at in terms of inability to deal with the partial in "anything", even this coping mechanism now made perfect sense!

There was, however, one very interesting thing Zachary did start to do... **he started stacking the pieces so that they went "beyond" the stack... something totally new!** These were "labeled" as "**smokestacks" (a "new", whole entity – a "smokestack") by Zachary.** For example, he would take the 1/2 piece, top it with a 1/3 or 1/4 piece and then top that with another 1/2 piece so that the stack now went "higher" than the normal level... beyond the others... and he was totally fine with that - **because this was now a new entity**.

1

2

So, this was very interesting... the "beyond the whole" was ok... it was really just the "partial", the "less than whole" that seemed to be an issue and still was... and that was why understanding fractions was so key to children like Zachary. To recognize that parts made up the whole would be critical... and would be applicable to everyday life to help autistic children cope with the "partial" or "in between" situation. For example, opening the door 1/2 way... the fraction provided the "label" that was so critical to Zachary for him to accept this as "normal"... to be able to say: "Oh, this is 1/2 way"... to understand that concept! And actually, when I used the 1/2 open door example with Zachary, I could see him "clicking"... understanding what I was saying and "thinking this was cool"... providing that label... I was convinced this was key!

The importance of labels in the life of the autistic child simply could not be overestimated. It was the use of labels that allowed the child to perceive the "part of the whole". For example, in the pictures below, Zachary decided to make a "Fraction Stax Truck". He decided to create "**a new, whole**" with the "parts" before him... yet, another coping mechanism... only this one had a double-edged sword!

1

2

The creation of the "Fraction Stax Truck" allowed Zachary to cope with "the in between", the "partial", because, now the object before him was no longer a "Fraction Stax" with missing pieces that caused so much frustration, the object **became** a Fraction Stax TRUCK! It was no longer its previous "self" and had been replaced by a "**new entity**". This object, now, was labeled by Zachary as his Fraction Stax Truck and Trailer.

Since trucks and trailers varied in real life, he seemed perfectly fine with having "partial" pieces on the truck... it did not have to be perfect... just to look like a truck was sufficient. A trailer could have "pieces" on it, because trailers hauled stuff... and so, even fraction pieces were ok. Zachary now saw the "Fraction Stax" not as the tool it was intended to be but as a whole new entity... a truck. He was happy and content with that new entity. Frustration had left him since he was even able to "walk away" and "leave his truck" all by itself. Gone was the need to scatter all pieces - my valuable tool, once viewed as too frustrating, had been replaced by something Zachary could better cope with... a new, whole entity... in this case, a truck and trailer... and this now became his focus.

The point here was that this coping mechanism allowed Zachary to see this Fraction Stax as a new entity... a truck and trailer... and with that came the problem**. His coping mechanism, literally, had done away with my teaching tool – a very detrimental result indeed!** Zachary no longer wanted to use the object as a learning tool to teach fractions. He simply wanted to "make his truck" - no matter how hard I tried to simply use the tool to teach fractions again. So, the "creation of a whole and new entity from partial entities" became a coping mechanism with a double-edged sword. The trick, perhaps was to make absolutely sure Zachary had learned the concept of fractions before allowing him to use the tool as "something else". As a person "blazing the trail" on issues of partiality, however, for me, this had been a **huge** problem!

Over and over again, I had seen Zachary "take" to a specific task and then not want to do it any longer -ever! He "just did not seem interested in learning the concept any more" (although I think he did have a very good understanding of it simply because I worked with him for just over 2 hours to start with and I knew he understood what I was doing). He had turned my tool into something with which he could better cope and so, it became very difficult to teach using any repetition - something believed to be so necessary in many learning situations. Yet, his coping mechanisms prevented that repetition from occurring. This had been a very difficult issue to overcome with Zachary - and I suspected it would be, similarly, with all autistic children. This would certainly explain why behavior therapy could be so difficult with these children. The creation, or simple "perceiving" of a "new entity" made it very difficult to go back to the original task/lesson at hand.

Interestingly, the "Fraction Stax truck" then completely took over and it too became a source of frustration. The Fraction Stax, literally, had become a truck in Zachary's eyes and now, that "new entity" presented frustration in and of itself, too! Now, this "new entity", if not perfectly aligned or "just right", resulted in the eruption of tremendous frustration once again. Now, there could be no truck without a trailer... the wheels had be able to sustain the whole, with no pieces falling off as that would send Zachary screaming.

I had spent $25.00 on a tool that had been turned into something I now had to find new ways of using. This demanded a great deal of creativity. I suppose I could have called the stacks "brick stacks" to create yet another entity in Zachary's mind. Unless I was able to "constantly create new entities" with my tool, that precious Fraction Stax would become completely useless!

Of course, there were ways of getting around this. A simple option of "putting it away for a while" and then, later, taking it out again to try once more to use the tool for its intended purpose was something I had done with many other tools and that often seemed to work. In spite of these difficulties in overcoming Zachary's coping mechanism tactics, however, I had accomplished what I wanted. Zachary did after all understand the concept of fractions... and to me, that was key. I could then apply that concept to so much more in his life... to help him cope with his world and issue with partiality!

The need to constantly be looking for "something new" in teaching these children - to keep one step ahead of them - I had found to be true in so many things I did with Zachary. I wondered how I would teach concepts like math, language and so much more that seemed to necessitate repetition. Often, working with Zachary felt like an overwhelmingly difficult and exhausting task - in spite of the progress we were making. Patience, understanding and creativity - if you did not possess these qualities, working with an autistic child was certainly a way of working on that! :o)

Tool 2 - Fraction Pieces - by Didax

Another great tool for the autistic child...

Parents could buy a lot of different fraction products – you could probably make your own, too! I also liked this one in particular. I would have preferred having the pieces labeled as were the Fraction Stax, however, there was also something to be said for having the child learn to count the pieces for each "whole"... thereby helping him learn the fractions even more... so, I went with this particular product... and found it worked well too!

Pieces that "snapped together" and "stacked on top of each other" would have been great... but I found none like that! It was rather time consuming and distracting to try to always “put these together properly” and that was why, ideally, “snap on” type pieces would be much, much better. Anyway, the idea here was pretty much like that described above in Fraction Stax... startinf with the ordered and moving to the mixed up... then taking pieces, counting up to the whole ... each time. Having various fraction tools on hand, in my view, was also a good idea. When one tool assumed another identity, I could pull out another! When that one, too, took on a new identity, I could pull something else out (i.e., I could use a pair of scissors and paper and make my own fraction pieces and put them together or I could use a pencil and draw fractions, etc.).

1

2

The first picture below was the one that turned Zachary "ballistic"- obviously - when my circles looked like "pacmans"... with a piece or two missing from the whole. I also "stacked" these circles on top of one another as I did them, adding the parts to make the whole each time...calling them out each time... same thing for the squares... then, I removed pieces and worked backwards to give Zachary enough exposure to the task at hand... this resulted in "some stress" - when I removed parts... but, if I called out "how many were left" (i.e., 12/12th minus 1/12th = 11/12th) as I removed the first piece from the completed stack, I found it provided a coping mechanism in that there was the "anticipation" of the next "complete circle" followed by the stress of the "partial" as the "next" circle or square was "slowly pulled apart" while calling out the "subtraction" of fractions. For example, 12 twelfths minus 1 twelfth = 11 twelfths and all the way down.

Note: It was important to do "proper labeling" to "maintain" the concept of "part versus whole". For example, I would NOT simply say 12-1 = 11... that would be wrong... these were FRACTIONS and **they needed to REMAIN as FRACTIONS**... that meant TWELFTHS (in this example) and so on. **The ONLY whole number that should EVER be used in this entire exercise was the number ONE**...when you reach "the whole"... pronunciation was also key... I was not working with "twelve" but rather "twelfths"!!! Since Zachary could read, I could show him the actual spelling of words dealing with fractions and that was helpful too (i.e., half, third, quarter, fifth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth)!

1

2

Words That Teach Quantity!!!

There were several words - words to teach quantity - that, if used in conjunction with the above "fraction" exercises, really helped Zachary gain a greater understanding of the entire concept of the "part" verses the "whole". There were certainly many more, but these words were a good start to help teach the concept of "quantity".

a couple	each	how much	none	some
a few	empty	in between	not quite	somewhat
a piece of	enough	just about	one	sparse
all	equal to	less than	only	too little
all but	every	a little	part of	too much
all done	exactly	Many	partial (ly)	totally
almost	few	Much	plenty	various
any	full	Multiple	scarce	very little
as good as	group	Nearly	several	very much
as much as	how many	No	sole	whole

There were undoubtedly more such words, but these gave me enough to work with!

I used these words in asking Zachary to give me a certain amount of the fraction pieces I had for the exercises above. When Zachary was able to give me the "correct amount", I knew the lesson of "fractions" had been learned and I could apply the concept of parts to the whole and generalize to the "real world". I could now say: "Give me "some sand in the bucket".... or "fill the bucket 2/3 of the way up", etc., etc., etc.

In no time at all, I was already seeing this work in some aspects of life for Zachary and I was confident teaching the concepts of "fractions and words of quantity" would work for many, many other autistic children as well! The only thing was to work at avoiding those "coping mechanisms", like the creation of randomness and the creation of a whole, new, entity. Perhaps the trick to that was simply to do much shorter "sessions" in teaching these concepts. Enthusiasm could sometimes have a way of working against you. :o)

The key was to constantly come up with "new labels" for the task... to show the child that you were using the same tools to do "something different". This was a very difficult task... but this was the key to having "continued use" of these excellent tools that could so help the autistic child deal with his world and his issues with partiality!

Using Body Parts

Perhaps the cheapest and easiest thing to use when it came to helping Zachary cope with issues of partiality were my physical body parts... my hands, my feet, my arms, my legs, and my eyes.

I found that for Zachary, anything out of the "ordinary" caused frustration. Knowing the "adversary" allowed me to use it to my advantage.

Consequently, I could use almost anything to help Zachary deal with his frustration... even my body parts.

For example, I used my body parts as teaching tools. I could lay down on the bed, with one knee up, the other leg flat on the bed. This created an "in between" situation... whereby the "legs" were no longer perceived as a whole but more as two separate parts. To Zachary, both legs belonged together - he could not tolerate the fact that "one was up" while the "other was down" and so he would come and literally push my knee down to make my second leg flat. As he did that, I raised the other knee. Or, I would sit down on the couch and put one leg up straight while the other foot remained on the floor. Zachary would come over and try to push down the leg that was raised, either by sitting on my leg or pushing it down with his arms. I could do much the same thing with my arms... using the ability to bend at the elbow for one arm while the other was straight out... or I could have one arm at my side, and one up. I could use my hands and put some fingers up... and some down...at the same time. Again, Zachary would try to put them "all up" or "all down". Or, I would open one eye, and close the other. Anything "out of the ordinary", any "partial" provided an opportunity for therapy.

As I did these things, I explained to Zachary the "odd position"... letting him know that "this was 'arm up' " or "left eye closed" showing him that “I was stretching” as I put one leg up was another good “explanation”. I always tried to make a game of things for him, joking as my body parts went up or down, closed or opened. These simple things allowed me to work on issues of partiality and to help Zachary increase his flexibility in terms of coping with real life. I found I could easily distract Zachary and make him see that sometimes, it could actually be fun to have one leg up and one down. For example, crossing my legs at the knee, although it caused Zachary frustration could also be fun as I could give him a "ride" on my legs and bounce him around. That was an easy way to help him see that things that were "out of the ordinary", such as crossed legs, could actually be fun too rather than simply being stressful! :o)

As with so much, many of the exercises I did with Zachary, things that were "everyday" activities for most children, were actually "therapy" for mine! :o) When I started these exercises with Zachary, there was always quite a bit of resistance, and indeed, a few screams too, but I had fully expected that to be the case. Knowing that helped **me** to cope as well as I could anticipate his response and “know how I would handle it” prior to it happening. It was important to never lose patience when I did these things… as difficult as they were for both Zachary and I to go through.

The Random Walk...

Going for walks provided many opportunities to "deal with issues of partiality". For example, instead of walking forward, I walked backwards, sideways, etc. - and I always made sure to label the specific "walk" for what it was. As I walked backwards, I said to Zachary: "walking backwards... mommy is walking backwards". At first, he tried to stop me... pushing me from behind in an attempt to make me go forward...so, I would entertain him and go forward a little... but, soon, I would "walk backwards" again. In no time, Zachary figured out that this "thing" mom was doing was "walking backwards" and having a label now made this an entity in and of itself... and as such, now, it was ok to "walk backwards".

Another thing I did was that instead of walking left, right, left, right, left, right (the way you normally walked), I went against the "normal" left, right, left, right, etc. , way to walk by moving my legs in a random fashion... what I came to call, "the random walk".

For example, I might do: right, right, left, right, right, right, left, left, left, right, left... As I did this, I called out each step (left or right) as I moved the appropriate leg (kind of like dancing down the street). I just made sure I was using a "random" pattern... something that had "no order" because that would have defeated the entire purpose of "the random walk". Every once in a while, I would throw in a "twirl", or "walking sideways", etc... labeling those motions too! It was just another way to "break order" and increase flexibility. Zachary was not able to "follow along" with his feet yet... but, this activity still frustrated him. Just seeing me do this was enough to increase his frustration level. As time went on, the randomness and silliness of the random walk became perfectly acceptable. If I spoke very slowly, and moved very slowly, Zachary would now try to do the random walk with me, but he still had trouble doing this activity (I suspect because of issues with motor coordination more than his lack of desire to do so).

"The random walk"... another simple way to help an autistic child deal with issues of partiality. For more on issues with direction, and how each direction, in my opinion was seen as a "part" to the concept of "direction", see my sections on "Odd Behaviors" and "Safety Issues" as they related to direction changes.

I could basically use the same concept while in a store shopping and "changing directions" or aisles... going down one aisle and then in the middle of it, "going backwards" as I said: "going backwards". This was fairly easy to do since Zachary was sitting in the cart, although, screaming somewhat. But, I could think of no store that did not have “some child screaming anyway”… so, I was not particularly worried about that. :o) I would just slightly begin to go down a new aisle and then, I would turn the cart completely around and go down another, saying: "no, not this one... let's go left, or let's go to aisle 3, not aisle 2". Labeling the aisles helped him cope... doing this in a grocery store or store that actually had numbered aisles helped tremendously because Zachary could focus on the "counting" aspect to each aisle as I did these things. The numbers to each aisle provided a coping mechanism to help him deal with "mom's indecision" as to where to go, what to do, while providing me with a great opportunity to further help him deal with issues of partiality! :o)

Using Household Items To Help With Issues Of Partiality...

Pretty well anything around the house, I could use in some way for therapy...as long as it provided an opportunity to "break order", "do the unusual", or "mix things up", thereby creating "parts" to a whole.

For example, I would put a bandages (a very colorful one that I knew Zachary would notice) on my face. I used to put bandages on my hands and fingers, but, I found Zachary could get to those too easily. To Zachary, a "bandage" was "not part of the skin"... it "did not belong there" and as such, that "part" had to be removed... so, he tried to rip these off my body (that was the reason I placed them on my face... they were harder for him to get to). When he was very young, Zachary had actually ripped a mole off my skin...now, I understood why... the mole, to him, did not "belong" there... it was a "part" that did not belong with the whole (the skin) and as such it had to be removed. In place of bandages, I could also use a piece of duct tape and place that on my face. Creativity, I found, was a definite plus. Of course, there always had to be an explanation as to the purpose behind the bandage – so an actual scratch or slight injury on the face was a plus! This was definitely something dads with shaving cuts could participate in! :o)

Or, I could simply put rubber bands in my hair...or barrettes...or clips... or clothes pins... anything that Zachary was not used to seeing on me was fair game. These were all "parts" that to him made no sense - until labeled! Once labeled, he could much more easily deal with these things.

I found even laundry to be useful in working with Zachary. His need for "order" made him think that "clothes were clothes and as such, they all belonged together"... the clean with the dirty. Now, I purposely left my pajamas on the bed in the morning...kind of hanging over the edge. I made sure there was a laundry basket somewhere nearby in the bedroom...and made sure there were a few pieces in there. Once he knew “hair clips” wee to “hold hair together”, he was fine with them being there!

Within seconds of noticing the "lack of order" or the "creation of a partial" by physically separating "clothes" and putting them in "different places", Zachary would try to put them "all together" again. . I then made sure I explained to him that the some clothes were "dirty" or "stinky"... and I showed him that those needed to go in the washing machine. Of course, Zachary then tried to put all clothing in the washing machine... so, I had to explain to him, over and over, that some clothes smelled good, and were clean and so they did not need to be washed. Just "telling" Zachary the difference between clean and dirty, however, I found not to be enough. I actually had to show him the difference. I actually made Zachary smell the "stinky" clothes and then smell the clean clothes , as I labeled each type, in order to help solidify the difference in his mind.

Even in this simple exercise, the inability to cope with partiality was so evident. Everything had to be "all or nothing"... for Zachary, integrating the parts into the whole was indeed a difficult task... one that had to be done consciously in each situation as opposed to the "automatic" integration of parts into a whole that was how his brain "should" have been working.

This was the same for pretty well anything... clean vs. dirty dishes, toys in the sandbox or the bathtub - they had to be in or out of the sandbox or bathtub...not some in and some out - piles of wood, sticks, rocks, acorns, etc. Zachary needed to learn that "mixing things" was ok ...like having both rocks and acorns in the same pocket...something he absolutely refused to do. He had to be taught that life need not consist only of the "all or nothing" - and in fact did not - only then could he truly come to cope with the world all about him.

Note: One of the beautiful things about doing this with Zachary was that I no longer needed to have the "perfect home"... for Zachary, some lack of order was actually a good thing and something he needed to adjust to/cope with because that was part of the "real world"! Although I was a rather neat person, I loved the fact that if I was ever behind on housework, I was now able to tell a visitor to my home that my house was in a slight mess "for a reason"... that it was “therapy”!! What a wonderful twist! :o)

Of course, there were limits to "disorder"... too much was NOT good. I found Zachary needed to be able to "perceive things as belonging together", or else the "disorder did not bother him". If things were just "one big mess", then he "could not spot those things that should belong together" and the "lack of order" in these "like things" was not bothersome to him. **He had to be able to "perceive" that some things should probably "be together"** (for more on this issue, see sections on Plastic Eggs and Wooden blocks to fully understand what I mean).

The Basket

Another exercise I did with Zachary was one whereby I gave him a small basket (anywhere from 4 inches to 8 inches across and perhaps 6 inches high) along with a whole bunch of everyday items in my house (small toys like blocks, plastic eggs, plastic toys, rattles, keys, beaded necklaces, rubber bands, very small stuffed animals, small plastic cups, etc.... really anything was ok here as long as it was not a safety hazard - scissors for example would be a definite "no"). I threw in a few medium size objects as well and gave him the basket and "other objects" I could not fit in because there were just "too many" objects to start with. I put all these on the floor next to him.

The idea was to give Zachary more than he could possibly put in his basket. I knew that Zachary would try to stuff absolutely everything into "his basket"... and he tried very hard to do so. The trick was just to make absolutely sure he had more than he could possibly fit into "his basket". Inevitably, no matter how hard he tried, however, some items fell out. At first, that caused him a great deal of frustration. Eventually though, he realized that it was futile to continue trying to "put everything in there" and he would eventually leave a few items behind... leaving a part to the whole behind. Once I saw him "ok" with leaving some things "out of the basket", I then did something else to work on the "all or none issue".

I would gently take something away from him...telling him, "I have to show this to daddy..." or something else like that to help him cope with the fact that I was "removing" something from "the basket"... taking away a "part to his whole". I would take the item and go show it to his father (who was in the same room), then I would bring it back to Zachary and let him put it back in his basket.

Zachary really screamed when "I stole something"... and he forcefully placed his hands over "his items" to prevent me from taking any of them. But, I would still manage to get one away and "go show daddy". Then, I would also take one of his items and place it on the refrigerator **as he watched me do that**. Again, this really sparked his frustration...but, I knew that each time I did something like this and I made his frustration "come out", that I was on the right track! In that situation, I would just tell him that “this was mommy’s and he could not have it” – again providing a reason or explanation as to why I was doing something – providing that all critical label and purpose!

Eventually, he learned to cope with what I was doing and his frustration decreases a lot. Again, it was all a matter of increasing his flexibility, decreasing his fanatic need for complete "all or none" order.... and of course, labeling everything I did for him - the label was always the golden key in helping him cope!

Using Puzzles In A Nonsense Way

It was a well known fact that autistic children were usually fantastic at putting together puzzles. Given that putting a puzzle together involved the creation of a whole, I now understood why this was a preferred activity among these children. Putting a puzzle together allowed autistic children to do away with the "parts" to form a whole... to integrate the parts into a whole!

I decided to use puzzles to do the "unusual", to "break order"... to use them in a nonsense way to help Zachary deal with issues of partiality. I found this exercise particularly troubling for Zachary. Of course, in making a puzzle, each piece had a specific place. I had one puzzle, in particular, that worked well for this exercise. It was a train puzzle (see below). It had two big wheels (blue and red circles), two small wheels (yellow and purple circles), two cars (yellow and red squares), etc. Each circle or square had a specific color and went in a corresponding colored place... at least that was how the puzzle had been "intended" to work. The particular puzzle I had was made by a company called Small World Toys. It was item number: 2547 and was called Loco Shapes. This company could be reached at 800-421-4153. I had purchased this puzzle through a local school supply store that provided multiple wooden puzzles. Any puzzle similar to this would work though.

The "colors" to the puzzle were supposed to be used to match the corresponding shape/color that fit into each part. That was the "normal" way in which this puzzle was supposed to be used. In dealing with issues of partiality and the "in between" situation, however, there were several things I could do with this simple puzzle to address Zachary's issues. :o)

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Obviously, putting all the pieces in the appropriately colored place was no problem for Zachary. But, what drove him absolutely insane was the fact that I put the small purple circle where the small yellow circle should go, or the red square where the yellow square should go, or the large blue wheel where the large red wheel should go, or the red triangle where the blue triangle should go. I also put some pieces "upside down (i.e., the conductor), or I flipped a piece around so that its color did not show but rather, Zachary saw its back wooden surface (see square in center of puzzle in picture 2 above). As I worked with this puzzle, I started by only making one thing "odd" or out of place and started from there.

This simple activity resulted in tremendously heightened stress levels for Zachary... much more so than any previous activity. I suspect the fact that colored pieces went in specific colored places had something to do with the intense stress level in Zachary. With the Fraction Stax, all stacks were white and so, they could more easily be moved around... but, with the train puzzle, each piece had a very specific place based on shape and color! This was by far the hardest exercise for Zachary to deal with! I had not done this one in a while since I had misplaced a couple of pieces but, once things settled down, I would be looking for those and pulling this one out again! I just hoped that Zachary did not decide to throw some of these pieces in the trash - perhaps a coping skill I had not have caught yet! :o)

To Zachary, the purple "wheel" went where the circle was colored purple on the wooden frame, the red square went where the square was colored red on the wooden frame... he absolutely could not tolerate the pieces being "mixed around" and not being "in their proper place".

In picture 3, Zachary "draws" something for me with his puzzle pieces – **again, creating a new entity out of something frustrating**... in this case, he was attempting to make a "tractor". You can see that the little yellow circle, big red circle, conductor piece and purple rectangle, when taken together, do form a tractor. Once again, he had created a "new entity" to better be able to cope with the situation before him. He would tell me what he was "drawing" with the pieces. Usually, it started out looking like what he said he was making, but then, his need to "use all the pieces", all the parts to the whole, inevitably made it so that the object no longer resembled what he was trying to make at all. But, to me, at the time, that was ok... he was still using the pieces in a manner that increased his flexibility... rearranging them in several ways on the floor...using them in a manner in which they were not originally intended to be used... and that in itself was good too! It was only much later that I came to realize the whole thing of "creating a new entity". At the time we actually first started these exercises, I was just thrilled he was using things in a "new way". But, later, I realized that "new way" could actually be a "detrimental way". So, now, I still wanted to work on his overall "flexibility" in how he used objects... but, then, I always had that "new entity" in the back of my mind, too and the fact that creating "new objects" from frustrating situations was also clearly a coping mechanism... but, I decided I would take things one step at a time. I understood the issues I had to deal with, and that made things a lot easier for me going forward! **When the new entity was created, perhaps I just had to treat it as I would any other imaginary play – defining it as "representing" something new, but "not really being" something new and making sure that the "old purpose" or way of using things was still understood! In the future, when I worked with this puzzle and any other such activities, I would always be careful that the "creation of something new" was understood for what it was and that "the original purpose of my tools" was explained concretely too!**

I worked with him on trying to use just "some" of the pieces as opposed to his having to always use "all of them"... again, it was always the "all or none" principle with Zachary. I took a few pieces away (here the blue triangle) to help him slowly learn to cope with an "in between" or "partial" situation. Zachary still ended up putting it back. Actually hiding a piece or two also helped with issues of partiality.

Ultimately, I wanted Zachary himself to be able to put puzzle pieces where they did not belong and be ok with that - even if some pieces were upside down, flipped over, etc... and to be able to "draw" things without having to use every single piece. **Leaving one piece out and providing a label of "unfinished" or "incomplete" also helped. This concept, I was sure would help with many areas as would my labeling our work as "working together"!**

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In the above, note how, again, I flipped some pieces over so that the "wood color" showed instead of the bright color on the face of the puzzle piece (see picture 1). Note that by picture 2, Zachary was already at work "flipping back" the pieces so that the bright side showed. Note also, that in picture 2, I added an orange "plastic egg shell half" on the large blue circle (barely visible, but definitely there). Finally, by picture 3, note that all pieces were "flipped back"... but also notice that Zachary has removed the orange egg shell part... since it "did not belong"... it was not part of the whole.

Note: Color pictures for all information in these materials could always be viewed on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com, for those readers who wanted to view the color images. It was just that to print this document in color, would literally have cost about two hundred dollars per copy because of the color involved (each color page costing about .79 cents to reproduce)! Those pictures that I absolutely had to provide in color, were found in the Appendix to these materials.

When I saw Zachary able to "leave the egg shell there" - I would know he was making progress. To me, it was all a matter of allowing for "in between", "out of the ordinary" situations. I could pretty well do this type of exercise with any puzzle. I did the same type of thing with a wooden puzzle I had for the alphabet.

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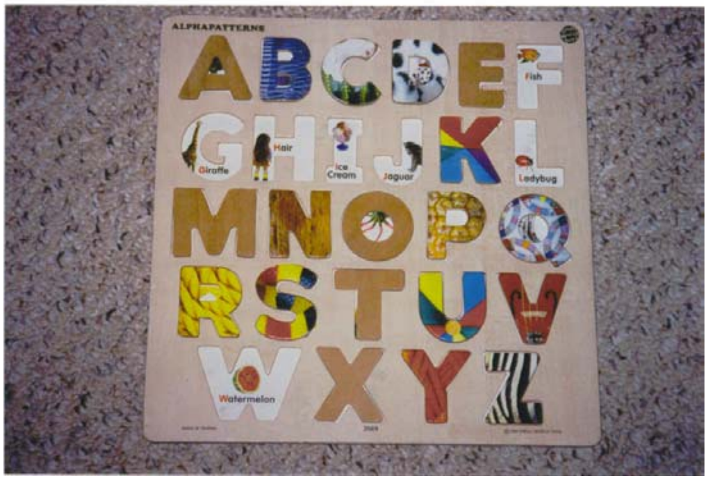

I left some pieces out on purpose and usually placed them somewhere on the carpet nearby so that Zachary could see them. He could not tolerate that - he wanted them "in place". It was always an "all or nothing". If I removed some of the alphabet after he had "put them where they belonged", he got very frustrated and threw the whole puzzle in the air...making all the pieces go flying. I also turned letters around, so that he saw the back or "wood" instead of the color on the face of the letter. I could do that for letters like "A", "E", "M", "O", "S", "T", "W", "X", "Y", Z". Again, that drove him totally insane. But, I kept "mixing things up", "breaking order" - trying to increase his flexibility. To a normal child, this would be something "funny to do", and certainly, not that stressful. That was definitely not the case for Zachary. These puzzle exercises definitely "hit a nerve"! He needed a lot of understanding, hugging and verbal reinforcement when I did these things. I always said, "let's make it different", or "that's so silly"...but, still, this was a very difficult one for him...labeling things as "upside down" made them easier to deal with... more proof that order, labeling and partiality were key!

In April of 2002, I thought I had found the trick to helping Zachary with this whole "puzzle thing".

I was so thrilled... but, that would soon be short lived as I realized that again, the issue still had not been resolved.

I had put away Zachary's train puzzle for about 2 months. In late April of 2002, I pulled it out again. The same thing happened... if the pieces were out of place... he got very upset (not as much as he used to...but, still too much). So, I did not do much with him on that first day working on this again.

That day, I just thought about the best way to go about breaking his “all or none” need for order when it came to these particular puzzle exercises! The next morning, I really thought I had figured it out!

Zachary had a good understanding of "broken" and "fix it" - so, I used those concepts. I took out the train, and said, let's make a "broken train". At first he resisted a little as I showed him a "broken train"... by putting the pieces in the wrong place. As I did this, I told him, "you can fix it later". Of course, the first time or two, he tried to put the pieces back where they belonged...as he did that, I said, "you fixed the broken train"...and he happily said " the green train is all fixed" (green was the primary color for this little engine puzzle).

I then asked him to "make me a broken train"... and he did! He was finally able to put pieces where they did not belong. If we used the words "broken train", he was fine with putting pieces in wrong places and then leaving them there and walking away.

I could now use the concept of "broken" to my advantage in helping to teach him flexibility. Phrases like "let's do it the "right" way" to have him place pieces in the appropriate color coded spot...then, "let's do it the "wrong" way to have pieces in places they did not belong (equivalent of the "broken train"). The next step would be to add "let's do it another way"... where some pieces were in the right place, and others were not. The introduction of "another way" would be key to so many things... once he understood that concept, I was sure flexibility would carry over into so many other things! I was very very excited about this.

Well, my joy was short lived on this one. As thrilled as I was to have Zachary make a "broken train" and see him finally be able to put the train puzzle pieces where they did not belong, I soon realized that again... this still was not an "in between" situation. It took me no time at all to realize that now, Zachary wanted to make the train either "all broken" - with no pieces in the right place - or "all fixed" - with all pieces going exactly where they belonged. I then tried to make it a "mixed up train" (some pieces in the right place, others out of place)... that did not go over so well. I had not done the "train puzzle" in a while as I had let him enjoy the summer while I worked on sharing these insights, but this would be one we tackle again soon. I knew we were almost there though! I think if I worked on labeling it as "a mixed up train" then Zachary should be much better able to cope with the "in between situation". :o)

Sometimes stepping away from exercises and coming back to them a few weeks later, I found, was the better way to go... allowing me to look at something in a slightly different way the next time. Putting things away for a while was less stressful and allowed me time to get that new insight and at times, those new insights could open up so many more possibilities and opportunities for advancement. Finding the right label to teach everything and to minimize stress... that was indeed the challenge!

Plastic Eggs

Note: Although Zachary never tried to place plastic eggs in his mouth, some children may do so, and, that could certainly cause a choking hazard. I was always with Zachary when we did these exercises with potential chocking hazards.

In working with Zachary, I discovered that plastic eggs were a fantastic tool. I used about two-dozen in all (more than I could fit in one egg carton).

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Although I did not show it here, the first thing I did with Zachary had to do with color only. I made some eggs a solid color, and others "mixed" ... but all eggs were "whole"... there were no "shell pieces". Zachary was not particularly troubled by "mixed color" challenges. That rather surprised me. Of course, I these eggs had been around our home for a few years and perhaps he had simply become familiar with the fact that they could be “whole” or “mixed” colors. I had done the "whole egg" exercise well before writing my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, and actually figuring out what was wrong with Zachary. When I really started to figure out Zachary's problem, I discovered the "golden eggs" ... because these plastic eggs were fantastic for working with Zachary. I could do so much with them.

The first real exercise I did with Zachary was that shown in picture 1. In picture 1, I had put together both "whole eggs" with "egg shells" or halves. When I first sat down, all the eggs were in pieces or "shells", broken in two. There was not a single "whole egg" in the bunch. As I started to "put some eggs together", Zachary went absolutely insane.

He wanted all of them to be "shell pieces", not "whole eggs". As I put some together, he worked to pull them apart as fast as he could. When he saw he could not keep up to me, he literally got up and started stomping the eggs with his feet in an effort to pull them apart faster... and as he stomped, he screamed. I kept working with him on this and within just 10 minutes, already he could better tolerate the "whole" verses "partial" egg thing. Having egg parts and egg wholes together, had proved quite stressful for Zachary... and given his issues with partiality, I now understood this completely.

I then went to "phase 2" whereby I placed a few "whole eggs" and "egg shells" slightly away from the "pack". Again, Zachary could not tolerate that. To him, they belonged "all together". Unable to keep me from separating the eggs slightly, a coping mechanism set in... the creation of randomness. He kicked the eggs all over the living room so that they could no longer be perceived as somehow belonging together.

I found that with every exercise, Zachary had to perceive the "group"... meaning that things had to be close enough for him to perceive they "belonged together". When they were all scattered (usually by him), it was as though he did not "perceive" them as part of a group... they were just scattered objects all over the living room, and the distance between them made the fact that they were not "together" more tolerable. Thus, in attempts to cope, I found Zachary either physically separated himself from the objects of frustration, or separated the objects themselves!

Finally, picture 3 shows the addition of an egg carton. Here, I put some eggs in the carton, but others outside of it. Once again, Zachary could not tolerate the lack of "order"... the "partiality" in the situation... he always had to put them back "where they belonged"... all together. If I tried to prevent him from doing that, by removing eggs as he put some in, he literally took the carton and flung it in the air, again, scattering the plastic eggs all over the place.

Another thing I did was to provide more eggs than he could fit in the carton. There were a ton of things I found I could do with these simple objects. I also did "combos", as I called them.

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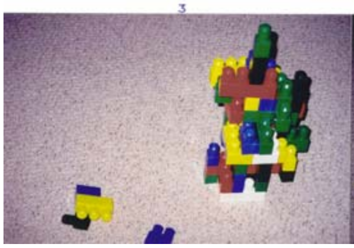

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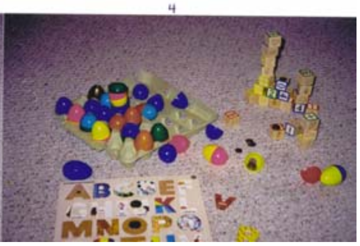

In picture 1 above, I put solid colored eggs and two colored eggs in the carton... along with both whole eggs and shells in the carton... in the lower right hand corner of the carton in picture 1, note how I stacked a bunch of shells one inside the other. Then, I added something that just did not belong, a couple of large Lego blocks. Of course, again, that drove Zachary absolutely insane and he quickly removed them – not understanding how these “parts” fit into the whole. “Parts” that could not be understood, were quickly discarded!

Picture 3 showed how I could do basically the same type of thing with large Lego blocks. Again, I just stack them in an odd manner and made sure there were a few left over pieces on the floor. I found, at first, Zachary had a very difficult time if the stack "tipped over", but, as I worked with him and kept telling him, "let's make it sturdy", or "it's ok... it's ok", he adjusted much better to the "tipping over". Picture 4 showed how I used a variety of objects at once... again, making sure normal order was broken... introducing many "parts" to the situation and scattering various pieces, slightly away from the rest of the group, etc. In picture 4, I used coins. **I later decided to refrain from using any metal objects, including coins... they were just too dangerous...and it was not worth the risk! Many autistic children are known to have eaten metal objects, including metal safety pins, paper clips, thumb tacks, etc.** I included this picture in order to make this point on safety, specifically because I knew that if I, as cautious as I now was with Zachary, had personally used coins or other small metal objects, chances were someone else may, too, and I did not want to see that happen!!!

There were plenty of everyday items that could safely be used in these exercises (i.e., puzzle pieces, egg shells, Lego pieces, pieces of paper, stickers, rubber bands, bandages, spoons, etc.) . The next set of pictures showed Zachary's reaction to the "lack of order"...

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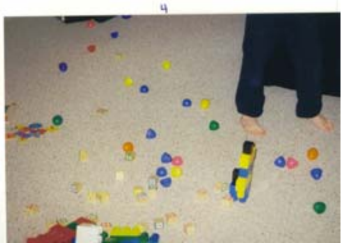

Note in picture 1, Zachary (very top and center of picture) was happily "drawing objects" with puzzle pieces - until he noticed the "lack of order" I had created all about him as he had worked quietly. Zachary got up and scattered the objects all about him... The wooden blocks were usually the first to go. I did not know if it was because they were more noticeable from a "3-D" perspective, but, in 99% of the time, they got kicked about first.

After that, the plastic egg shells, Lego blocks and puzzle pieces were scattered about in no specific order. For Zachary, there was an intense need to "scatter" everything so that he no longer "perceived" the need to "group" similar objects. There were many times when he literally removed himself physically from the room so as not to see the similar objects I had "unarranged" or "unordered". Finally,

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I also used a large cup in working with Zachary (a pot or other container of any kind also worked). The idea here was simply to give Zachary more plastic eggs than he could possibly fit into the container. Again, as he attempted to put all the eggs and egg shells into the cup, in vain, frustration set in and ultimately, the cup and its contents went flying throughout the room, as clearly shown in picture 2. Note that in wanting to deal with the stress, Zachary immediately went for an "order fix"... that was when his coping mechanisms came through... the "spinning" of the wheels on his little orange car, as shown in picture 3, the creation of randomness, the physical removal of himself or of objects, the echolalia, the ordering language, etc. Over and over, I had found that if Zachary became too frustrated, he needed his "order fix", either physically, or through the use of his ordering language.

With Zachary, I could explain all his ordering language based on his need for order and the fact that ordering language was a coping mechanism he used to deal with frustration. If he was stressed out, Zachary started uttering things that made sense, or "had order".... things like, "circle, square, triangle....", "fan, fan, fan" (if you think about it, a fan and "spinning" provide "order"... a fan turns in a predictable way... and spinning went in a predictable way too, eliminating the "parts" or blades because as the fan spun, the blades became part of the whole!).

For Zachary, everything I saw in him in terms of behavior was rooted in his inability to properly integrate his world... in his inability to understand the whole without first understanding the parts that made up that whole – and anything he could not understand, in relation to the parts and the whole – he eliminated either physically or through the creation of a new entity!

Wooden Blocks

Wooden blocks, much like plastic eggs, were another great tool I used in working with Zachary.

It seemed to be human nature that when we were given a bunch of wooden blocks, we normally wanted to make a pyramid out of them or some kind of precise "stack". I found this to be true for Zachary also. But, again, for Zachary, my goal was to increase his flexibility, to allow for the unusual or the "non-perfect order" and to break the "all or none" need. So, I went “against” that innate desire to create the “perfect stack” to see how Zachary would react.

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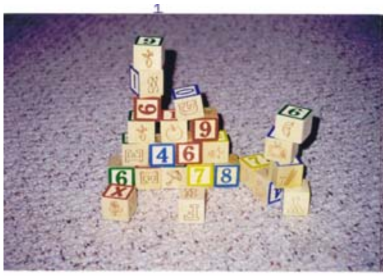

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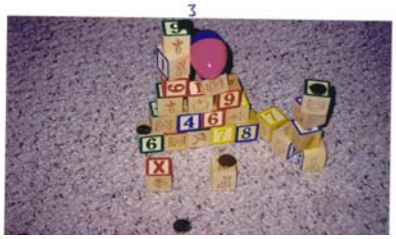

Note that I did not stack the blocks in perfect order. I always create "odd piles"... and I always made sure I left a few blocks off to the side, either in a smaller pile, or as a totally separate, single block on the floor, close to the "main pile". Note also that the blocks were arranged in random order, some upside down, some right side up, etc., and that the "vertical stacks" or the highest part of the stack was "staggered" – allowing for the introduction of an almost invisible “part” to the whole… “cracks” and “ridges” within the structure (see pictures 1 and 2 above). I had lone blocks, angled blocks, upside down blocks. I then added in "other objects" that did not belong, like a plastic egg or coins (again, as mentioned under the section on plastic eggs, I no longer used coins due to their potential hazard - there were plenty of other items around the house that could be more safely used).

For Zachary, it was always important to make sure he "perceived" the objects belonged together... if they were scattered all about, he did not "perceive" the need for grouping them as strongly. But, blocks arranged as above, with a few "stragglers" definitely made frustration surface! Having worked with Zachary on the "wooden blocks" exercises for about a month, I was already beginning to see small coping mechanisms set in. For example, Zachary now referred to piles as shown above as "smokestacks" (I did not know where he learned that word, but he was using it) to cope with the "lack of order"... he was associating what he saw with something similar in "real life"... and that was good, but there was also the issue of creating a "new entity" of my tools, too (see coping mechanisms).

Note that, if left to do as he pleased, Zachary preferred to make something that had a semblance of order... as in picture 1... it was not perfect, but very close – and **all** the blocks were used to make his “wall”. There were never pieces "outside of the whole"... he never left one piece "by itself" on the floor... everything was part of the whole... as was always the way things were with Zachary. Also, note especially in picture 2... how Zachary enjoyed "going over" the perfect pile he had made... not one block was disturbed as he did this. Fascination with order... and the whole... again! Note also that the actual "order" of the blocks in terms of whether or not they were upside down did not seem to matter. It was the fact that they were "part of a whole" that mattered!

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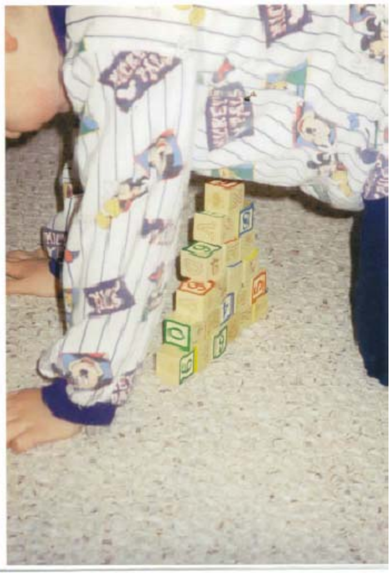

Play Dough

Play dough, or modeling clay was another excellent tool. If given the chance, Zachary would simply stack it all up in one huge pile...because to him, based on the need for order, "it all belonged together". I let him do that a little and then worked him away from the need to "clump" it all by showing him how to make things he liked... a snowman, a tree, a dog, etc. Providing labels for objects that we made had made it ok to make these objects. There was still that need to then "pile the rest on", however.

I tried to make things fun and different for him, and to show him how to cope with the unexpected, the unusual - the parts that did not seem to belong (at least until they were explained in terms of how they belonged in the whole), etc.

For example, when I made a tree, I had a bunch of branches sticking out of it. Then, I tried to "add apples" to the tree. I told Zachary this was an "apple tree". At first, since to him, the "dots" or "apples" just looked like little round balls on "his branches", he did not want them there. But, I kept adding them on, each time telling him my tree had "another apple", and eventually, he was ok with the fact that I had added these to the tree.

I then put a few apples in a separate spot, on the table, away from the tree and told him these "apples had fallen off". Of course, he resisted that, since apples "all belonged on the tree". So, that was another thing to work on a little more. Then, I added bananas to the apple tree....or I told him we had a broken branch, and I pulled one off the trunk and place it away from the tree. I added a "sun" and placed it a little further away. Obviously, there were countless things like this that I could do with play dough. The possibilities were endless.

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Simple play dough... another fantastic tool... something that could be fun and helped maintain interest as I continued to work on Zachary's need to learn how to integrate the parts into the whole. In picture 1 we were just starting to play with many, many colors. To Zachary, if left alone to do as he pleased, he figured all this stuff "belonged together" in one big pile... thus, bringing order to the "stuff". If pieces fell off the pile, he got very, very frustrated. I then took some away and asked him to make me a tree with the green. He started doing that. I then added "red dots" to his tree... he tried to remove them... to him, they did not belong there... until I labeled the tree as an "apple tree"... then the red dots were ok. I also had him add a "broken branch" (at first it was just on the "ground" below the tree). Labeling it as a "rotten" branch worked better... that way, it could stay on the tree rather than having to have "fallen down". I also had him add "rotten apples"... in the form of "brown dots" on the tree (in pictures 3 and 4). Note: I later learned that play dough had gluten in it although Zachary himself never seemed to react to it. There were gluten free play dough recipes available on the Internet though.

So again, it was really all a matter of allowing for the "in between" situation and showing Zachary how all the parts fit together to form a whole. Labeling absolutely everything was key! Labeling allowed Zachary to make things "different" from what he had rigidly put in his mind and allowed me to help him expand his understanding by generalizing these simple concepts to many other situations!

Plastic Shapes

I also purchased plastic shapes from my local school supply store. They came in various shapes, sizes, and colors. I went through their catalog to see what was available and had to order these special since they were not in stock. One of the sets I had was made by Ideal (item no.:7948). Wooden shapes would work too but they were much more expensive. These plastic shapes had cost, I believed, approximately $15.00 US. I simply gave these to Zachary and let him make anything he wanted – and the results were basically the same. He always strived for that “order” and did not want to leave any parts out. Once in a while, I would then "add something" or "take something away" from his creation, much as I had done in other exercises. When I left the room to work on the computer once, I came back and Zachary had made himself a perfect little bulldozer with a "front claw" (using white pieces), a "window and door" as he explained to me. He had made this in approximately 5 minutes (it probably would have taken me much longer to do the same thing :o)). But again, we did both the "ordinary" and the "not so ordinary" in working with these. One thing was for sure, Zachary would probably make a fantastic engineer!

In working with plastic shapes, the first few times, Zachary literally tried to use all of the pieces – not wanting to leave any “stranded parts”. Soon, though, as with everything else, he figured out that he could “make new things – new entities” out of these shapes and as such, he slowly was able to move to using only “some pieces” but, that was because he had “created that new whole” in order to help him cope with issues of partiality and as such, that “new whole” always became his complete focus. If a part of the whole was disturbed, and say, a “crack” appeared, the entire thing would be quickly scattered all about!

Interestingly, I recently noticed that when I asked Zachary to pick up his plastic shapes, he picked some up and put them in the bucket, but not all of them… and he was able to walk away. So, that was very new and exciting for me. I truly believed that having provided for him that understanding of fractions now made it so that it was finally ok to leave that bucket only half full – and to walk away. This, I had only seen the one time, the day just prior to my completing this book. As such, although I believed it was due to the fact that the concept of fractions had played a part, it could have been that something else simply captivated his attention more… but, I did not think that was the case, since he was only very slowly walking about the room when he had stepped away.

Increasing Eye Contact In The Autistic Child

I encouraged parents to be aware of all the issues I had mentioned as they related to eye contact in terms of digestive enzymes, cod liver oil, color, light, motion, and of course, partiality and coping mechanisms involved in eye contact issues.

These exercises I did well before coming to the conclusion that breaking eye contact was a coping mechanism, but they did help Zachary to learn to focus on my eyes a little more. The best thing I did, however, in terms of the eyes and eye contact was in actually defining the “right eye” verses the “left eye” and by hiding each, showing Zachary that he needed “both” to see everything – that had provided for him the purpose, that critical label behind the need for “having two eyes”!

Eye Contact Exercises

Zachary knew his colors...so, one of the things I did was to ask him: "do you see purple in my eyes?", then, I would answer the question for him, "no, I do not see purple in your eyes"... I pretty well went through every color I could think of that was not in my eyes, and ended with the actual colors in my eyes, "brown, white, black, and yes - even red".

Zachary loved circles...that was his favorite shape and so I used that to my advantage too! I would say: "do you see the circle in my eyes?"... "do you see the brown circles?"... "do you see the black circles?", etc. Then I would say: "do you see my oval eyes?"... "do you see the red in my eyes?" Of course, at first, he did not really see the red, so then, I pulled down on the area just below my eyes to show him the red. I then ask him: "do you see the red squiggle lines in my eyes?" ... and showed him the red lines/blood vessels of my eyes. That made him aware of new "fascinating things" he had not noticed before. I also said: "do you see Zachary in mommy's eyes?"... to make him focus on the reflection in my eyes.

I asked him to "blow on my nose"...or "blow some wind between my eyes" with his mouth. I did anything at all to help focus his attention on that part of my face. I used similar questions to make him focus on my eyelashes, my eyebrows, my eyelid... of course, I always made sure I "labeled" everything for him...that was always critical! What I did not see until recently was that I had to also label the **PURPOSE** of each eye... this was what I addressed in the sections noted above on eye contact... and that label of the PURPOSE of each eye was critical to helping Zachary really move forward in terms of eye contact. His eye contact was much better since that simple definition of purpose had finally been provided (see sections on More Than Meets The Eye and Breaking Eye Contact As A Coping Mechanism)

Like so many autistic children, Zachary had preferred looking at the mouth area for some reason. I now understood why that was... the mouth provided a single entity in and of itself. The eyes did not provide a "whole" as did the mouth... the eyes provided "parts" to a whole (a face)... there were 2 of them for some reason... and Zachary could not integrate how they fit into the "whole picture" in terms of the face - until I explained that to him as described in my section on Eye Contact - More Than Meets The Eye.

I had tried the "look at me" exercises, but found Zachary did not respond well to that. I had always been of the opinion that things should not be "forced" onto Zachary... that there had to be a way of reaching him gently and in a fun way. I always focused on making things as fun as possible for him... on building the relationship. I knew that always saying "look at me" was supposed to help, but, in my heart, I truly felt there had to be a better way... I just had to find it!

I also worked on emotions as I worked on eye contact, saying: "do you see mommy's happy eyes?".... "oh, look, here are my sad eyes", "here are my surprised eyes", "here are my mad eyes", etc., and then, I tried to express “degrees” of each emotion, via my eyes and facial expressions.

This required constant creativity and work, but slowly, Zachary was making progress! Once the purpose of "eyes" had been provided, Zachary leaped forward in this area! :o)

Given the above examples in terms of exercises I did at home with my son, there were obviously countless ways to work on issues of partiality processing in the autistic child and his need to understand how to integrate the parts to his world in order to make a whole. Anything that allowed me to "mix things up" and to "make things different" - even if in just one way - was fair game. I could put things upside down for example and label that as "upside down" to help Zachary learn this concept... it was often as simple as that.

All this still required a great deal of work... but, once my energies were focused, Zachary made a lot more progress. In knowing and understanding the issues, I could then totally focus my energies in addressing those issues! In everything - labeling was key , as was explaining how things "fit together" and the purpose – the why things were the way they were (i.e., 2 eyes) or why they were done a certain way (i.e., item put on my refrigerator because it was “mommy’s” and he could not have it)!

In doing all of these things with Zachary, the challenge was always in keeping him the least frustrated as possible – althought that was very difficult at times.

In my view, as with everything I did with Zachary, I found the answers were in quickly identifying "what worked" and "what did not work"... in keeping what did, and in quickly throwing out the rest! In working on these issues, however, the “what worked” was always that exercised that caused him the most frustration. When I saw frustration, especially intense frustration, I knew I was on the right track!

Thus, in devising future therapies for these children that was always what had to be kept in mind. If you “hit a nerve”, it was for a reason – it was a “clue” as to the true underlying issue!

And, if a nerve was not "hit", then I knew "that was not a problem area" and I moved on quickly. In these exercises I did with my son, it had been as I had done with all other tools… I identified what worked and kept that, and threw out the rest – quickly, because, in my view, if I was not "hitting that nerve", I was "off base" and had to look elsewhere for the answers!

As overwhelming as these materials had surely been for parents, thus far, unfortunately, with the closing of this section, came the beginning of what I saw to be the most critical and yet, potentially emotionally devastating section for all parents of the autistic.

It was with a very, very heavy heart that I now shared with all parents my thoughts as to what I saw happening in the brain of the autistic child. :o(

The only comfort that I could provide for parents was that there was hope – but the road ahead was a very long one. Truly, understanding these issues was the first step in overcoming them… and, as overwhelming as this information would be – **it was that hope that parents needed to hang on to, and the fact that many, many children had indeed overcome greatly these limitations – and, that this could be true for many others as well!**

This was but a theory, and as such, parents needed to ask themselves if what I was putting forth made sense in terms of what we saw in the autistic. There was an inherent danger in "not wanting something to be true", often resulting in denial of the facts, but, the facts were what I had attempted to put before you in these materials, and as such, I simply asked that all parents consider them objectively.

As with all my sections, I provided for parent thoughts on ways to perhaps overcome some of these issues! **These key suggestions could make a world of difference in terms of helping parents in the recovery of their children**!

When The Parts Are Not Understood And The Whole Is Lost!!!

What's Going On In The Autistic Brain?

Before I could explain to parents what I believed to be going on in the autistic brain, I felt it was necessary to provide for all parents a very, very basic overview of the brain.

The human brain has two hemispheres joined by a mass of fibers in the middle, known as the corpus collosum. This mass of fibers allowed the two hemispheres to speak to one another. The two hemispheres of the human brain were further subdivided into regions called "lobes". Specifically, the brain had four lobes:

Frontal Lobe	Temporal Lobe	Parietal Lobe	Occipital Lobe
Location most anterior, below forehead)	Location side of head, above the ears	Location at the back and top of the head	Location most posterior, back of the head
Function motor activity motor planning and execution activity in response to environment memory as it related to habits and other motor activities olfactory cortex language production higher functioning (i.e., imagination, concept of self) controls emotional response assigns meaning to words (i.e., word associations)	Function auditory and olfactory processing memory acquisition emotion understanding of language voice recognition face recognition categorization of objects some visual perception ability to distinguish between truth and a lie	Function somatosensory processing spatial processing visual attention touch perception manipulation of objects goal directed movement 3 dimension identification **integration of sensory information that allows for the understanding of single concepts (integration of the parts into the whole)**	Function visual processing

If Frontal Lobe damaged results in	If Temporal Lobe damaged results in	If Parietal Lobe damaged results in	If Occipital Lobe damaged results in
paralysis difficulty problem solving and sequencing inability to produce/express language lack of flexibility or spontaneity persistence in thoughts (i.e., obsessive – compulsive) inability to focus (attention deficit) changes in social behavior variability in mood/emotions	selective attention in terms of sight and sound difficulty understanding spoken word issues with interest in sexual behavior short term memory loss and interference with long term memory emotional issues (i.e., increased aggression) difficulty in face recognition categorization issues persistent talking if damage to right lobe	inability to recognize self inability to attend to more than one object lack of awareness of body parts and/or surroundings (somatosensory issues) difficulty in focusing visual attention reading difficulty difficulty with spatial processing (i.e., math) difficulty with eye-hand coordination and/or drawing of objects difficulty differenciating left from right difficulty locating words in terms of writing difficulty with associations (i.e., naming of objects)	problems with vision in terms of identifying colors locating of objects in one's environment illusions – including hallucinations inability to recognize words (issues with reading/ writing, recognition of symbols/drawings etc.) difficulty with objects in motion

Although I would not attempt to cover all parts of the brain, there were a few other key areas that would help to explain the issues going on in the autistic brain.

Other Key Parts To The Brain That Resided **Outside Of The 4 Lobes** Included:

Amygdale (part of "limbic system)	Involved in the processing of emotions
Basal Ganglia	Involved in the regulation of movement and the learning of skills, controlled intensity of mental activity
Brain Stem	Located in the upper, back neck area and responsible for "life functions" including heart rate, breathing, digestion, swallowing, reflexes to sight/sound, regulation of body temperature via sweating (autonomic nervous system), blood pressure, alertness levels, sleep, balance (vestibular issues)
Cerebellum	Motor coordination and motor learning, some memory for motor reflex functions
Corpus Collosum	Major link between the left and right hemisphere - allowed the two hemispheres to communicate
Hippocampus (part of the "limbic system)	Involved in long term memory formation (damage here would prevent one from making "new memories")
Hypothalamus	Maintained body temperature, etc.
Medulla	Controlled "life functions" of breathing, heart rate, etc.
Midbrain	Visuomotor functions, visual reflexes, auditory relays, motor coordination
Pons	Auditory and vestibular functions (balance), sensory and motor. Area of the brainstem between the medulla and the midbrain. That part of the brainstem that links the medulla and the thalamus!
Spinal Cord	Input-output of sensory information to/from the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and the peripheral nervous system (everything else outside of central nervous system)
Thalamus	Acted as a "gateway". Sent information to specific parts of the cerebrum and controlled information flow to cerebral cortex (the 4 lobes). A gateway between sensory (except olfactory) or motor neurons in the peripheral nervous system (anything outside the brain and spinal cord) and the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). Also involved in matters of the conscious and unconscious .

Based on the above information, we would now take a closer look, at what I believed was happening in the autistic brain.

Explaining So Much In The Autistic Child Based On Brain Structure And Function Alone!

In looking at the above overview of the brain – its structures and its functions – parents of the autistic children were undoubtedly thinking to themselves that the damage to their child appeared to impact almost all areas of the brain - and indeed it did!

For parents, the next two sections, in particular, would be among the most difficult emotionally. There was no simple way for me to "break this gently" and, it was with a very, very heavy heart, indeed, that I shared **what I believed** to be happening in the autistic child.

In my opinion, everything that we saw in the autistic child could be explained based on one factor – the fact that the autistic child did not properly process, integrate and relay information within the brain as it related to the "parts to the whole".

But, what exactly were "the parts" to the whole? If you truly thought about that, you would come to understand, as I did, that the parts to the whole included absolutely all sensory information that was incoming…via sight, sound, taste, touch and smell.

It was my belief, that within the autistic child, the failure to understand the "parts to the whole" (i.e., all sensory information) was due to the fact that the brain's critical "integration" function as it related to all sensory information – was simply not there – almost completely gone!

In other words, it was "as if" each part of the brain was working on its own, almost completely independent of "other parts". Sensory information could "come in", but, it basically "went nowhere" in the sense that it was not relayed to all the critical "other parts" of the brain that needed that information in order to do "their role". As such, in order to teach the child key concepts that were "not getting through" the way they should (such as one's name), it was "as if" you were forcing that child to use a part of his brain never intended for a particular function in place of that part that should have captured and processed that information.

In my opinion, as the child came to decode more and more of his world, the small overlap in functionality among the lobes (i.e. visual capabilities existed in occipital, parietal and temporal lobes) helped the child to decode more in each area within one lobe, but, the fact remained that tremendous limitations were still there and that the various brain regions, in spite of decoding more aspects to life over time, still appeared to be very much working independently.

With time, as autistic children devised coping mechanisms to deal with their world, or they finally did "break the code" to so much involved in sensory processing, many children could indeed overcome the huge limitations I believed existed within them, but, as was so painfully true, there were many, many children who simply had not learned to "break the code" to sensory processing, because in order to break that code, I believed, **a burden was**

placed on the autistic child to use his brain in a way in which I believed, it was not designed to be used, as the child was forced to use one part of his brain to decode something that should have been understood within another.

As a result of what was the root impairment in autistic children – the inability to integrate and relay sensory information – I believed that the only way for the child to begin to "recover" from this devastation was by painstakingly doing *consciously* a critical function that should have been performed subconsciously!

It was "as if", as a result of this impairment, the child was being asked to use a boat to get from point A to point B – on a road! A motor may help him move along a little, but the distance traveled, could be very limited! Yet, if the code was broken, the child could indeed go further because, perhaps he could come to understand that even a canoe, with no motor, in a flooded ditch could indeed move one along a road and get one to where he needed to go – even if the journey was a little slower!

As with so much in life, the key was always in finding an alternative when the road seemed impassable, and, fortunately, many autistic children did find that alternative that helped them to finally escape the strong and overwhelming shackles of autism! Thus, I did believe "limited communication" may exist among the lobes, but, what was there, surely, had to be very, very limited!

The best way I could explain this, was again, via the use of specific examples, given the many things we saw in the autistic child!

For example, instead of teaching Zachary his name via auditory processing, I taught Zachary his name via the sense of touch!

As such, I believed the autistic child – indeed, any child - to an extent had what could be viewed as "backup systems" in the sense that if one was not working properly, another could be used to try to teach the importance of that information. This explained why some skills were more easily learned than others. For example, structures related to language existed in both the frontal and temporal lobes. Thus, if one was not getting the information it needed to properly develop language, then, another area could take over – somewhat, but that "takeover" would have to be based on the other functions available within that region. As such, in producing language, for example, a function of the frontal lobe, given that no visual processing occurred there, the only way to teach language to an autistic child would be via use of motor activity or olfactory processing! In understanding language (temporal lobe), you could make use of some auditory and olfactory processing, categorization and some visual perception.

But, this ability to "take over" for other areas, in many cases, was extremely limited. This was especially true in terms of information passing between the peripheral and central nervous systems… information, for example, related to issues of touch, etc.

I did believe that by using digestive enzymes, many issues were much better in Zachary (such as the perception of "hunger", etc.). The natural opiate effect of casein and gluten impact more than simply the brain… I suspected it impacted the peripheral system as well. I say this simply because of the fact that since Zachary had been on enzymes to help break down casein and gluten (i.e., from hidden sources), he was much better in areas of touch, for example.

If the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten did indeed impact the peripheral nervous system in addition to the central nervous system, then I suspected that the elimination of this natural opiate effect via the use of enzymes and the adherence to a cfgf diet would help in issues as they related to the relaying of information between the peripheral and central nervous systems, if only through a greater "awareness" of sensory input. The sensory input in terms, of for example, "the need to go to the bathroom" may still not get to all the places it needed to in the brain, but "greater awareness", at least should help in addressing these issues via behavior modification techniques or the "teaching" to the child of what needed to be done "when you had this sensation".

Example1: The "deaf child" – and other issues with sound!

When the autistic child heard his name, that sensory information did indeed come in, in the sense that "the name" was heard. Based on the above summary of the brain, one could see that "hearing one's name" involved the temporal lobe – that lobe involved in auditory processing. So, the temporal lobe "perceived" the name and "heard it" because the sensory information had made it from the ears to the temporal lobe. However, that was basically "where it ended". If the information was not properly integrated and "passed on" to the frontal lobe (the lobe involved in consciousness, and memory) where the child's concept of "self" and any past memory of "his name" resided, then, that child would not perceive this sound as meaning anything in terms of his awareness of "self". Again, saying the name "Zachary", to Zachary would have been no different than saying "chair" – or any other word!

When I thought back to my own son and how I had to teach him his name, again, this all made perfect sense. Zachary had been a "deaf child". I taught him his name not by using auditory input, but rather visual and touch input. I literally took my hand, placed it on me and said: "mommy"… and then, took my hand and placed it on him and said: "Zachary". This was how I had taught Zachary the concept of "his name".

If you looked at the areas in the frontal lobe, you would see that in addition to "self-consciousness", within the frontal lobe resided motor functions. As such, I believed that by using physical motor functions, Zachary was better able to "understand his name" and hence, capture his sense of "self".

Hearing involved both the temporal lobe and the midbrain and if information was not flowing from one to the other because the "auditory relay" function was impaired (in the midbrain), then, of course, the child could not respond to sounds, especially given the fact that the production of sounds and motor functions were located in the frontal lobe!

With Zachary, I had also noticed that there was a difference in terms of his ability to retain information better if the "sound" came from him as opposed to me. As such, I believed sound "he generated", somehow, was better understood, as evident from the fact that my "making him repeat sentences and answers" worked so well with him.

Voice recognition was located in the temporal lobe, along with auditory and olfactory processing, memory acquisition, emotion, understanding of language, categorization of objects, and some visual perception. Damage to this area resulted in selective attention in terms of sight and sound, difficulty understanding the spoken word, issues with sexual interest, short term memory loss and interference with long term memory, emotional issues (i.e., increased aggression), difficulty in face recognition, categorization issues, and persistent talking if damage was to the right of the temporal lobe.

Thus, it certainly seemed probably that this explained Zachary's apparent issues with "self generated sound" verses sound generated from anyone or anything else. If this were true, then teaching the autistic would best be accomplished via making them repeat things out loud – in their own voice!

The fact that auditory relays were processed in the midbrain certainly made this "conclusion" even stronger. If sounds were not being properly relayed to the appropriate section of the brain, this, certainly explained a great deal in terms of the "deaf child". The sounds could come in from the "outside", but not be processed, integrated and relayed to the appropriate area needed to interpret that sound. This certainly explained why autistic children had no fear of danger. The sound of a car was not making it to the brain stem where reflexes to sight/sound were located. This also explained why "anyone else talking" – anything involving sound relays (in midbrain) usually resulted in a "deaf child" – especially if that voice was not recognized. Given auditory processing and voice recognition were both in the temporal lobe, only "recognized" voices would really make any sense to the child. As such it was critical the child be "taught" to identify/ recognize each person's voice by actually having that voice labeled for the child (i.e., by going up to the child, gently speaking in his ear and saying for example, "This is John's voice and I want you to remember John's voice and recognize it").

Example 2: Motor issues

Likewise, if sensory information was captured by the eyes, for example, a ball being thrown, again, unless that information was "passed on" to all areas of the brain that needed to process this information, it would basically "end there". Visual information came in via the occipital lobe yet, motor functioning was primarily done in the frontal lobe. As such, if the visual information was not relayed to the frontal lobe, the child would be unable to "catch a ball" in that he would not know that certain motor functions needed to be done based on this visual input. Likewise, if visual information was not properly relayed from the occipital lobe or auditory information relayed from the midbrain, then, this also explained issues in the condition known as "attention deficit" because without having the appropriate information relayed, the appropriate motor response would be missing too! In teaching Zachary how to "catch a ball", I used the sense of touch, literally putting out his hands for him, to teach him how to catch a ball. Again, visual or auditory input had not worked until he was physically shown how to catch a ball.

Likewise, issues such as difficulty drinking from a straw or with going down stairs could also be explained based on the fact that "visual information" to the occipital lobe was not being sent to the appropriate parts of the brain involved in motor functioning (the cerebellum involved in motor coordination, the basal ganglia involved in learning new skills and the regulation of movement, the pons, involved in vestibular functioning (balance) and the frontal lobe, involved in motor planning and execution). It was also critical to note that memories associated with motor functions were located in the frontal lobe, also responsible for control of emotion, motor planning and execution, language production, concept of self, and the assignment of meaning to words. Understanding language, however, in terms of motor functions, was located not in the frontal lobe, but the temporal lobe, along with emotions and memory acquisition as it related to emotions, the categorization of objects, some visual perception, auditory and olfactory processing.

Example 3: No fear of danger

As in example 2, the same concept applied. A child could "see" a car, but if that information was not "passed on" to the appropriate part of the brain that needed to "respond to" that information in terms of safety, in terms of triggering the need to "watch out" or to physically move away from the direct path of that car, then, again, the incoming information, was basically useless. The child could "see" but he could not "act" based on what he saw! Fear was considered an "emotion" and as such should involve the temporal lobe. In addition, the processing of emotions involved the amygdale (outside of the lobes) and as such, **if the visual input of "a car coming" was not passed on to the temporal lobe and the amygdale, the emotion of "fear" simply was not there!** The area of danger perception was one of great concern for me. In this area, I felt I had "no other way" to "teach danger" because it was not something Zachary could "see" in the lobe it needed to be in – that lobe that also processed emotions – and as such, abstract concepts that were critical to life, such as the perception of danger and emotions were much more difficult to "teach".

I suspected that, given "emotions" were involved in the temporal lobe, that perhaps, teaching emotions such as fear needed to be done via the use of "hearing and smell" since these functions also existed in the temporal lobe. Yet, I feared even this may not be enough given the fact that the amygdale (part of the limbic system) was involved in the actual processing of emotions and the fact that the **midbrain was involved in visuomotor functioning, reflexes, auditory relays and motor coordination**.

I did notice something very interesting in Zachary. As I tried so many times to teach him to "stop, look and listen" before crossing a street, I came to understand that "if he actually saw a car", he could process that somewhat, but, if a car "was not there", then he had tremendous difficulty. For example, if a car was actually coming and I said: "do you see a car coming?". He could provide the appropriate response of "yes". "Do you see a car coming?" was a question I had always tried to make use of in trying to teach Zachary about the danger of cars. Recently, however, I once again noticed how his "reference living" was working as it related to this too. As we went for a walk and stopped at an intersection, I once again asked Zachary to look both ways. I literally had to position myself behind him and make him look both ways as I moved him head to make him do so. Zachary was relying only on my "auditory cue" of "do you see cars coming" and was not doing a visual scan himself… nor was he doing an "auditory scan" for cars. All he could hear was "my voice" (voice recognition) saying a familiar sentence - "do you see any cars coming?". To the familiar question ("Do you see a car coming?"), he answered: "yes" – but there were no cars coming - at all! I could hear cars a few streets over, but, **at least 10 times** I asked him "Do you see a car coming?" as I literally moved his head to make him look both ways and he responded "yes" – each time - when there were no cars coming. **Visual input was worthless! Zachary was depending totally on "my auditory cue", and giving me a "canned response" by saying he could see a car coming when there was none. <u>Zachary preferred to rely on "reference living©" than on incoming sensory input!</u> Memory took precedence over actual incoming sensory input**! A dangerous situation indeed! On other walks, when cars were coming, I knew he could see them, but he was not processing the danger associated with them. So, both seeing and not seeing cars was an issue… in all cases, Zachary simply "drew" from a past memory in trying to "come up" with the appropriate response… a walking Russian roulette game!

It was very clear to me that parents could easily think their child understood concepts of danger if "the appropriate" response just happened to be given. Yet, in working with Zachary and trying to make him understand this concept of how to determine if it was safe to cross a street, I now understood that he truly did not understand "danger" but rather, simply responded to "my question" based on past experience – a past answer given to that question. He was not "looking about" to determine the appropriate answer… he just assumed what had worked in the past would work in the future. In situations such as crossing the street, however, the answer usually changed with each situation. There was also the danger of "more cars"… if more than one was coming, how would Zachary respond to that? Would he assume it was ok to go after one had went by? We lived in a very, very quiet area, and this was something I really had not had the opportunity to observe much in trying to teach Zachary about crossing the street. The fact that we usually crossed after a car went by made me wonder if he would continue to do so in a busier street. I suspected he very well could cross - based on past references that "you can cross after a car goes by". The danger of reference living©! How was I ever going to get passed this issue for my son?

Teaching danger in the autistic child was truly a challenging area. Memory for "danger" had to be provided via "familiarity" and as such, that meant somehow exposing these children to concepts related to danger. Videos in my opinion, had to be the way to do this and given the structure and function of the brain, I felt those videos had to involve "categorization" of dangerous situations. Only then, did I believe the child could use that information to “produce an emotion of fear” when danger was “seen”. There was some visual perception in the temporal lobe, along with categorization, emotion and memory, and as such, these were the variables that had to be combined in order to teach these concepts. Auditory processing, although in the temporal lobe would not work in teaching danger, since auditory relays were in the brain stem. Visual processing was also not the best option given the above example with “Do you see a car coming?”. I simply had no good answer on this one and my son’s safety was a concern that weighed very heavily on my heart. At five, I knew Zachary had absolutely no concept of how to properly assess danger – in spite of my having worked so hard with him on the simple issue of “crossing the street”!

Example 4: Potty training

I believed the child perceived the “need to go to the bathroom” – the physical sensation. Yet, unless this information was relayed to the basal ganglia, involved in the regulation of movement and the learning of skills, then, once again, the child’s brain “did not know what to do with that information”. Likewise the information from the peripheral nervous system – the “urge to go” felt in the lower part of the torso was not being relayed to the thalamus that acted as a gateway for information between the peripheral and central nervous systems and on to the parietal lobe where somatosensory (information relating to the physical bodily and sensory functioning) information was processed. So, even though the child “felt” the need to go, he did not “understand” what to do once that information was received. This indeed, could very well explain why it was so difficult to potty train these children. The flow of information between the peripheral and central nervous systems was also definitely impacted. If you looked at those areas also present in the parietal lobe, they involved spatial processing and attention… so, the challenge was to teach potty training based on “spatial” or attention factors. That was a challenge indeed! Perhaps using “math concepts” in terms of counting “poops” on a wall chart would be the way to do it! The fact that “attention” factors were also in this lobe concerned me in that it could mean children were more concerned in terms of overall “attention” with issues related specifically to the body. This certainly explained why, for example, my autistic nephew was so totally obsessed with the fact that he was about to lose a tooth.

I suspected potty training and toe walking were related. Again, my theory that there was a breakdown in communication among the various parts of the central nervous system and peripheral nervous system, again, seemed to agree with that. Toe walking resulted in a greater sense of “touch” as the feet were more firmly pressed against the floor. I honestly believed this allowed the child to control his bowel movements in that he could “stop them at will” by toe walking – at least for some period of time. I also suspected that toe walking helped alleviate pain somewhat in that it altered how much pressure there was on specific parts of the back. If autistic children did feel any pain in going to the bathroom, perhaps toe walking helped to alleviate some of that pain.

Example 5 Issues with "touch"

As in example 4, the sense of "touch" involved both the peripheral and the central nervous system. As such, if a child "perceived" touch physically on his skin, yet did not "understand" that touch, I could truly understand how that could cause intense frustration for so many of these children. In my opinion, many of these children could not understand the "who" behind the touch, because there was no information to allow the child to understand that "by being touched" by someone else, for example, did not change one's concept of "self".

Yet, the act of "touching a child" made it so that he "perceived" something on his skin… and in my opinion, causes confusion in that child in the sense of "self". This also explained the fact that so many of these children did not properly sense "pain".

When Zachary was quite young, he burned his finger on a stove. He did not remove his finger for a long time. He did not "feel" the pain in the sense that it was not interpreted by his brain as "something that hurt", but, I knew he felt discomfort from it because he kept touching the burned area on his finger.

Thus, the physical sensation of something happening had been there, but it had not been perceived as something that hurt and as such, Zachary showed no real motor reaction in the sense of quickly removing his finger from the stove…nor did he show any emotion. He did not cry, though, to me, the burn looked like it should have caused him some fairly serious discomfort. Again, I believe the sensory input simply had not made it to those parts of the brain that needed the information in order to have the appropriate responses from both a motor and emotional view. I also believed that the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten also impacted the peripheral nervous system, perhaps numbing the sense of touch, and as such, the use of cfgf diets and digestive enzymes aimed specifically at minimizing this natural opiate effect should help in terms of how well the child perceived information from the peripheral nervous system. I believed pretty well all issues with touch could be explained by this theory (i.e., brushing teeth, cutting hair, clothing issues, etc.).

Issues with touch also explained spinning and other activities more concretely. I believed there was more to spinning then simply a "visual stim"… and now, I was more convinced of that then ever. I also now understood that there was more to spinning than simply "making the parts whole" – although, for Zachary, I knew that certainly played a part. Spinning, however, could now, further be explained by issues with touch as they related to brain structure and function. Touch perception was located in the parietal lobe – as was object manipulation and visual attention. Thus, if "magnified communication" between functions existed in each region, it would stand to reason that the more someone touched an object, the more one would want to continue to touch that object. If my theory was correct, touching an object would trigger the desire to continue doing so. For Zachary, I truly believed this to be the case. If I let him spin, he would move from a slow spin to a very intense spin, completely focused on that activity. If I removed the object he was spinning, however, he usually made almost no fuss. Just "breaking touch" was enough to stop the activity and move his visual attention to something else – and I could always do so quite easily.

Example 6 Issues with specific food textures

Again, as with other issues related to the peripheral system, I believed the information from the "sensation" of certain foods was simply not being properly integrated into the central nervous system. Again, issues of touch were also at play here, in my opinion in that the child had difficulty making out "slimy foods" that almost "become part of him" as they sat on the tongue (unlike more crunchy foods that were much more discrete in how they were perceived). If the child did have difficulty in distinguishing between "what was food" and "what was tongue", as in the case of "slimy foods", then, I could certainly understand why a child would have difficulty eating "slimy foods".

Example 7 Somatosensory issues … Not asking to eat when hungry

An area I had forgotten to mention on several occasions had to do with the fact that in any physical discomfort, be that the need to go to the bathroom, the sensation of a burn, or the need to eat, the information flow between the peripheral and central nervous system, again was simply not there. Zachary could go for hours without eating and would never complain. The information from his stomach in terms of the "need to eat", information from the "peripheral system" again was simply not properly processed. Thirst was somewhat better processed – although Zachary could certainly go for hours without drinking too if I let him. He did learn to ask for a drink. He still only rarely asked for food.

Example 8 Issues with language

Language involved several key areas of the brain… the frontal lobe for language production, the temporal lobe, for understanding language and auditory sensory information and the occipital lobe for the processing of visual information as it related to language. Given my theory that the "integration" of sensory input and relaying of information to "other parts of the brain" was simply absent in the autistic child, again, as with so many issues, issues with language made sense too. Visual inputs came in through the eyes, but if that input failed to make it to the temporal lobes (to understand language) and to the frontal lobes, to produce language, then one could easily see that language, indeed would be a very difficult thing for many autistic children. Teaching language in an auditory manner may help given that the lobe for "understanding language" was also the lobe involved in auditory processing.

This may explain why Zachary loved to spell out loud and often asks me: "how do you spell…?", as opposed to asking me to actually "write" a word (a visual input). He definitely seemed to prefer auditory spelling… although he now liked the challenge of visuals too! As such, in teaching the alphabet, what I believed to be the first building block to language, it was my opinion that auditory input should be provided more so than visual. I did believe visual was critical too, but perhaps the auditory input would be better in actually "triggering" the understanding of the alphabet given that understanding language and auditory functions both resided in the temporal lobe. Also, in considering language production, I now understood why it was so difficult for autistic children. If you looked at the functions within the frontal lobe, that lobe where language production was believed to occur, the only "sensory information" available in terms of "what was processed there" was sensory information as it related to the sense of smell. So, how could you teach language when other areas of strength in that lobe in terms of sensory information consisted only of "smell"… auditory and visual sensory processing was totally missing in this critical area of language production! Thus, there were really no "other" sensory inputs related to language acquisition to draw from in this particular lobe.

This also explained why some autistic children could apparently learn to read with no understanding whatsoever of the alphabet. In my opinion, these children had been unable to break the code to the alphabet – visually, but had apparently done so phonetically. They had come to decode the fact that "sounds" - put together - made words, but had yet to understand the basics behind those sounds – the alphabet. Given that auditory processing and understanding language both resided in the temporal lobe, yet visual processing resided in the occipital lobe, I now understand why this could indeed be the case – that a child could actually learn to read phonetically without understanding the alphabet. **There did exist some visual perception in the temporal lobe (along with auditory processing) and as such, this could certainly explain why visual input could somewhat contribute to the understanding of language, although, I now felt that motion and auditory input (especially when coming from the child himself) were perhaps, for these children, more important. For these children, it was truly a blessing that at least "some" visual perception existed in the temporal lobe – where language was understood. When used in conjunction with the "categorization function" also in the temporal lobe, I now believed we could truly begin to provide valuable tools for these children!**

This also explained why Zachary always seemed to know more than he let on. This had indeed been true in that he knew the entire alphabet and I did not even realize it. Given the fact that understanding language and producing language resided in different areas, of course, once again, this made sense. The fact that Zachary could not communicate all he knew in no way meant that he did not know much more than I had given him credit for!

Echolalia and ordering language© or reference language© now made sense too! Given voice recognition, memory, understanding of language, categorization and auditory processing were all in the temporal lobe, I now understood why Zachary understood language better if he himself repeated it or categorized it via the use of echolalia (parroting) or ordering language©/reference language©. For the autistic child, "language categorization© was necessary in that to be understood **all aspects of language - itself - also had to be "categorized"**. Again, it now totally made sense based simply on brain structure and function. Zachary obviously recognized his voice better than anyone else's, as such, he learned best upon hearing his own voice parroting words or categorizing words in order to commit that to memory.

This also explained why teaching phonics through the use of specific motions had worked so well with my autistic nephew, Andrew. This was a type of "**motor phonics**©" or "**phonics in motion**©" in that specific motions were made with the body as one verbally gave the child specific sounds. My sister-in-law had often commented to me that even to this day, years after learning this technique, her son still made use of these "**motor phonics**©" in his communication! Perhaps videos where children, together formed letters with their bodies would be a good way to teach the alphabet too as this would involve a great deal of motion.

Although the production of language had to be via olfactory or motor functioning, the understanding of language would best be accomplished via categorization of information (i.e., bubble graphs). Although auditory processing did reside in the temporal lobe, auditory relays resided in the midbrain, and as such, auditory methods were not the best way to go!

Again, based on the fact that motor functioning also resides in the front lobe, the lobe associated with the production of language, this made complete sense!

Example 9 Issues with socialization

In terms of socialization, again, this too, was truly explained by my theory. Socialization involved input from all senses and involved the use of all frontal lobes for the processing of that information. The frontal lobe, the parietal lobe, the temporal lobe, the occipital lobe, and many other structures as well… the amygdale, the basal ganglia, the cerebellum, the midbrain, the pons, and the thalamus. Given that sensory input came in from the five senses and needed to go to all these areas in order for "socialization" to occur, it was no wonder that this was perhaps the most difficult area of all for these children.

Example 10 Issues with process completion

The completion of a task, by definition, involved some kind of a process. A process was basically anything that involved a sequence of events (i.e, getting dressed, brushing teeth, etc.). As such, several things were usually involved: visual input, spatial processing, attention, auditory input (i.e., in the form of verbal instructions), motor functioning, coordination, etc. As such, again, several key areas of the brain were involved in task completion and if those areas were not receiving the information they needed, in terms of how "their part" helped to complete the "whole", then, obviously, there would be difficulty in accomplishing that process. The fact that goal directed movement resided in the parietal lobe whereas motor activity, motor planning and execution resided in the frontal lobe, obviously, made process completion even more difficult. In process completion, "drawing from memory" was also difficult for the autistic child given the memory associated with motor activity was in the frontal lobe also.

Although meaning assigned to words resided in the frontal lobe, the fact that this lobe had no visual or auditory processing, naturally, explained why, based on brain structure and function alone, even seeing or hearing instructions for completing a task would not, for many children, be enough to have that task accomplished in more severe cases of autism where communication among lobes was perhaps completely missing!

Example 11 Issues with eye contact

Issues with eye contact were also explained by this theory that the necessary integration of parts (sensory inputs) into the whole, in terms of getting that information to all necessary parts of the brain that needed that input for it to be properly understood and reacted to – was simply not there!

This explained why autistic children had blank stares or appeared to be looking through you. Blank stares were usually an indication that something was not understood. Again, this made perfect sense given that the visual information from the eyes coming in via the occipital lobe was simply not making it to all the parts of the brain that needed to decode that information for it to make sense. Visual processing was fairly limited – to the occipital lobe and as such, if that information, so critical to so many other functions was somehow prevented from being “passed on”, it was understandable that “blank stares” and “looking through you” would be characteristic of the autistic child. This also explained problems with issues relating to safety, attention deficit, visual attention (i.e., spinning), etc.

Example 12 Issues with pretend/imaginary play

Again, issues with imaginary or pretend play, in my opinion were also explained by this theory. Higher functioning (as I believe would be the case for “imaginary play) occurred in the frontal lobe – exactly where one also had functions related to “consciousness”, or the “concept of self”. If my theory was correct, as I sadly believe it was, then, the issue of pretend play and one’s concept of self was indeed a very serious issue as I explained in my sections on The Potential Danger Of Imaginary Play as it related to “imaginary friends” and schizophrenia. Add to that the fact that “language production” and motor activity as well as memory associated with motor activity were also in this same lobe and the potential for “talking to oneself” or to “imaginary friends” and constantly engaging in activities with imaginary friends was certainly there! Damage to the frontal lobe also resulted in “persistence in thoughts”.

If my theory was correct and each region of the brain had “magnified” communication within it, as stated earlier, that could either be good or bad. In issues of pretend play and the losing of one’s concept of self, this could not be more true. Although “magnified communication” may be seen as a “good thing” by many scientists, in the case of the frontal lobe and the fact that the concept of self resided there, I believed the potential for “losing one’s concept of self” was also magnified. Magnified communication within the frontal lobe would result in more harm than good as this “abnormal” communication could lead to persistence in thought (obsessive compulsive behavior), inability to focus, changes in social behavior, variability in mood/ emotions, and the loss of the concept of self . All of these things were associated with damage to the frontal lobe! As such, it was my very firm belief/opinion, that pretend play should not be encouraged in the autistic – especially if that pretend play involved the child/adult "being someone else". In my opinion, autistic children should ONLY be referred to by **their** name and if pretend play did surface, it had to be labeled very quickly for what it was – "not real" – in order to keep the child/adult grounded in reality! Based on this issue alone, I felt it was critical all therapists and/or teachers of the autistic, whether PhDs or high school students, be trained in these matters as they related to the autistic child and the concept of self. There were simply too many therapists out there currently encouraging "pretend play" in the autistic and in my opinion, that had to stop immediately because I truly felt these therapists could unknowingly do irreparable damage to these children!

To any therapist who would come out "defending credentials" and saying that my theory was just "a theory", I wanted to say that this "theory" made a great deal of sense when examined in terms of brain structure and function alone. Ego and pride aside, you could "defend your credentials", but in my opinion, if your credentials were more important than a child's potential wellbeing, you could "defend your credentials" by testing them with your own child – not the child of another! I had now raised this "red flag" and I certainly hoped that therapists and parents would see it for what it was – a huge "red flag"!

Those in psychology had long suspected that schizophrenia was "adult autism" – perhaps now, we could understand why that was!

I encouraged all parents of the autistic to make absolutely sure they or anyone else did not do anything to destroy, in any way, their child's concept of self, because in my view, this was a very real possibility when it came to issues of "pretend play". The easiest way to solidify one's concept of self, in my view, was obviously to **always refer to a child by his given name – and nothing else**!

With Zachary, once I became aware of the possibility that he could actually lose his concept of self via imaginary play, I determined not only to refer to him only as Zachary (and make sure that was what everyone else called him too), but I also encouraged his concept of self by always reminding him of who he was (mommy's boy) and saying that "Zachary was the best boy" often in order to make him want to "remain" Zachary – to help him be "happy" with being "who **he** was"!

I also made it a point to show him pictures of himself and identify him in pictures. Doing this allowed him to have not only a greater understanding of "himself" but also of "himself in terms of being part of a family unit". I used as many new pictures as I could since I knew that "once labeled" in one picture, Zachary would commit that to memory and simply "draw from memory" when asked "Who is that in the picture?" in the future.

Using the mirror was another good way to help reinforce the concept of self. Although Zachary still had a little trouble with mirrors, he was much better with them then he had been in the past.

Example 13 Issues with body temperature regulation

Many autistic children, although too hot, or too cold, would say nothing even though they were experiencing sensory discomfort as clearly evidenced by extreme sweating, for example. Thus, again, sensory input in the peripheral system was not making it to the central nervous system in order to trigger the necessary motor response in many of these children.

Example 14 Issues with emotions

As with so much, issues with the processing of emotions could also be explained by this theory. For example, a child may be able to visually "see" a person crying (visual sensory input), but, unless that input went to that part of the brain that dealt specifically with the processing of emotions, the amygdale, then to an autistic child that information meant nothing! There were plenty of times when I cried deeply as a result of autism and Zachary never really particularly seemed distressed over that. Yet, if I said: "I'm a sad mom", he often came running with a kiss! Sensory input as it related to sight was primarily in the occipital lobe. Auditory processing, understanding language, voice recognition and memory as it relates to emotion were in the temporal lobe… so, **my saying**: "I'm a sad mom", obviously would have a greater impact on an autistic child than would **seeing** me cry.

As with everything else, with emotions, all sensory input was but a part to the whole. Thus, things were either "this way or that"… the part was either there or it was not… the sensory input was either there, or it was not – everything was an "all or nothing" in terms of the "stimuli" perceived via all the senses… and as such, this explained why even in emotions, too often, everything was an all or none too! Aggression was either there, full blast, or it was not present **at all**. Anger was either there as complete anger, or it was not. Sadness was either there as complete sadness, or it was not. Joy was either there as complete joy, or it was not. Frustration was either there as complete frustration… or it was not!

Another critical emotion, that of fear was also not properly processed and as such did not make it to the brain stem, so critical in life functions (i.e., fight or flight instinct necessary to survival).

Since one's emotions came simply in "one piece", an all or nothing, there could be no "in between" emotions, given that, emotions within the temporal lobe did not make it to the amygdale for the proper processing of emotions… where I suspected "degrees" of emotions may be perceived. Perhaps most critical of all, however, in terms of the issue of emotions, was the fact that the control of emotions resided not in the temporal lobe where the formation of emotions and the memory relating to emotions were actually formed, but rather, control of emotions, resided in the frontal lobe, along with motor activity, planning and execution, memory as it related to motor activities, and the assignment of meaning to words. Auditory relays, existed in the midbrain and goal directed movement resided in the parietal lobe.

It was because of this, that I now, honestly believed, a person could literally do something and not only have no control over it, but perhaps have no memory of it

either! In my view, this was the most serious of all issues for parents of the autistic and society overall!

A lot of other things now made sense too… like the old saying: "A way to a man's heart is through his stomach". Given that the control of emotion was in the frontal lobe, the lobe also associated with the sense of smell, this, too, now made sense. I now believed that the sense of smell was indeed very misunderstood in that it could have much more to do with all of man's emotions than previously believed. The frontal lobe had no other real "sense" within it. There appeared to be nothing in terms of sight or auditory processing and nothing in terms of touch in the frontal lobe. The temporal lobe did have olfactory and auditory processing within it, along with emotion and memory associated with a specific emotion and some visual perception. Yet, the actual CONTROL of emotion, clearly resided in the frontal lobe – where only the sense of smell resided also! I now understood why so many women ate when depressed and found comfort in food and why smokers found cigarettes so "relaxing". This all certainly had major implications for so many areas of study. In my opinion, surely, the sense of smell, could be used to help control emotions in the autistic too! I was convinced that the sense of smell would be key in keeping emotions under control in the autistic. Given that olfactory and auditory processing resided in the temporal lobe, these could also be used to help with emotions and the memories associated with emotions too – although, in this lobe, I truly felt that auditory processing worked better when the "sound" came from the individual himself! The autistic child could teach the world so much in so many areas – of that, I was absolutely convinced!

Example 15 Issues with motion

The perception of motion involved at least the occipital lobe (visual input), the parietal lobe (spatial processing), and the midbrain, and several other areas as well if the object in motion was part of oneself. Thus, again, several areas were necessary to perceive motion, yet, if the "visual input" was not relayed to all necessary parts of the brain, then motion was not properly perceived, explaining why autistic children had no fear of moving objects. To an autistic child, looking at an ant was probably no different than looking at an oncoming car in terms of the emotions this would elicit. Neither would result in fear – in my opinion. Also, in terms of motion, there was a huge difference also in how motion from "outside" was perceived verses motion the child himself perceived based on the various brain structures and their functions. This again, gets to the "Do you see a car coming?" example provided above. Zachary's internal functioning, I found, would override any visual input. **He preferred to rely on "reference living©" than on incoming sensory input! Memory took precedence over actual incoming sensory input!** Using my hand to "motion a coming car" as I said, "Do you see a car coming?", seemed to help Zachary provide the correct answer… but, this was a huge area of concern for me! I had no assurance Zachary "understood" matters of safety at all and was convinced sensory input took a back seat to past memories! Reference living© - a very dangerous way to live!

Example 16 Issues with the sense of smell

My theory also explained something I had seen in Zachary, when he was very, very young and had not yet been diagnosed with autism. It was the fact that Zachary loved to be "sniffed". I had made mention of this when I discussed issues of "smell" in Zachary in my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, in Chapter 6, a chapter I had called: Signs So Easily Missed Or Dismissed. In this Chapter, I had identified, looking back, over 50 signs of autism manifesting itself in my son. Signs that were so clearly there, and that had so often been so totally missed! What followed was the comment I had made in that first book as it related to the sense of smell:

"What I did notice from quite early on was that he liked to be "sniffed" around the ears, in his hair, on his tummy, and especially, around the neck. Actually, "sniffing" him often served to calm him down. If he got upset, often all I had to do was to start sniffing him around the neck and he would calm right down. This actually also helped him to fall asleep. I never thought much of anything other than the fact that it was kind of "cute". In fact, he "sniffed" my neck and ears first and that was how I came to recognize and use this behavior to calm him down."

I know understood this behavior. It had been Zachary's first attempts at actually communicating with me. Since the sense of smell was the only sensory input available to the frontal lobe, that lobe responsible for language production, Zachary's sniffing had been his attempt at communicating with me.

This also explained why later in life, he came to absolutely love the children's show Bear In The Big Blue House, because – almost always – at the beginning of that show, the "bear" sniffed around and said: "hey… what's that smell? … it's you!" as he moved so close to the camera that the "bear's nose" covered the entire television screen. Thus, clearly, Zachary was relating to the use of smell for communication purposes! Zachary's "sniffing" (and mine) were almost identical to that of this "bear"… a few quick sniffs (anywhere from 3 to 5), done all at once.

I now believed the sense of smell was greatly underutilized in humans. **Interestingly, the sense of smell was the only "sense" not processed in the thalamus – the gateway for relaying central and peripheral nervous system information.**

Example 17 Issues with memory

The area of memory was truly a complex one, however, a brief overview of this area would help all parents understand these issues, also, in terms of how they related to the autistic child and my theory that the integration and relaying of sensory input was simply absent in the autistic child!

There were two types of memory: 1) short term (lasting anywhere from a few seconds to a few days, and 2) long term memory.

Of these, only long-term memory was embedded into the brain cells.

Memory was very much dependent on one's attention. Data considered interesting or relevant was obviously considered more relevant in terms of being committed to long-term memory. Those things considered "dry" or irrelevant data were generally only committed to short-term memory.

In addition, memory could be either conscious or subconscious! Conscious memory involved the active recollection/retrieval of specific facts and as such, involved the function of "searching" the brain. This type of conscious memory was referred to as "explicit memory". Unconscious memory, however, was more of an "automatic" memory and dependent on specific cues and as such, "familiarity" was critical here. Explicit memory was believed to lead to "aware" memory whereas implicit memory was believed to lead to "unaware" memory.

Furthermore, memory could be defined as "direct" or "indirect". Direct memory involved yes/no, forced-choice recognition, cued or free-recall. Indirect memory involved judgments, object decisions, categorization and word/picture associations.

The best way to trigger the recall of a memory was by association – especially when that association involved emotions! Memories were greatly enhanced by emotions associated with them. Emotions impacted priorities, attention and the creation of meaning.

In addition to being defined in terms of short or long term memory, memory could be further defined as one of the following:

Working memory – consisted of "how much" information one could hold at one time. Of course, the content of working memory was greatly influenced by emotions.

Procedural memory - consisted of motor memory as involved in "body learning" (i.e., why hand-over-hand was such a good technique for the autistic).

Reflexive memory – consisted of automatic or "instant" associations and, of course, were also heavily impacted by emotions (i.e., fear, pain, etc.).

Episodic memory - consisted of memories based on specific events, experiences, etc. These were enhanced by the senses as well as by movement. Recall here was triggered by emotions and specific cues (i.e., locations, "reference living©", etc.)

The subject of memory formation was a complex one and, as such, I provided a link on this subject for those who wanted to further study this subject, although the above information was certainly enough to explain the issues we so often saw in the autistic as they related to my theory that sensory integration and relay failure was at the root of almost all issues we saw in the autistic: http://cognet.mit.edu/MITECS/Entry/baddeley.

The first critical thing to note was that memories could be either "conscious" or "subconscious". If you looked at what we saw in the autistic child, there was no doubt that conscious memory was working, as evidenced by the amazing ability to recall facts, etc. However, there was also no doubt that the subconscious memory was not working properly, as evidenced by the fact, for example, that these children apparently had no fear of danger, no "fight or flight" instinct so critical to safety and survival. Based on my theory and the fact that there existed within the autistic child complete sensory integration failure, in looking at the brain structure and function overview, one could see that sensory integration functions clearly resided in the parietal lobe. Functions relating to emotions, those things so critical in the creation of memories, however, resided in the frontal lobe, temporal lobe, the amygdale and the brain stem. The function of emotion was completely absent in the parietal lobe.

Thus, if my theory that sensory integration and relay was absent in the autistic child was correct, sensory information from the senses, as it related to say, danger, would not be perceived since the information was simply not making it to those parts of the brain that needed to use this information in order to result in the appropriate response – the fight or flight instinct. This, indeed, clearly explained why memories as they related to danger, for example, were basically non-existent, but that, with time and exposure to such information, the autistic child, because of "familiarity" issues could come to recognize dangerous situation.

If one looked at all the senses, and where their specific functions resided within the brain, more could be explained, yet. For example, the sense of sight, so critical to emotion, be it joy or sadness, resided within the occipital lobe, with only minimal visual perception in the temporal lobe. As such, emotion from "seeing" anything was very much non-existent. In those areas where emotion and sight functions were both present, such as in the temporal lobe, one could clearly see how those things that would cause – for example – joy, in the autistic child, as we saw it today, were clearly present. For example, auditory functioning and emotion were both in the temporal lobe, and, as such, autistic children could indeed, enjoy a song. Categorization was also present in the temporal lobe, and as such, activities involved in categorization could also result in joy, or, say, frustration, for the autistic child. Some visual perception also existed in the temporal lobe. Not surprisingly, as such, activities like spinning created an intense "joy" or frustration, too, in the autistic child. Finally, although the controls for emotional response existed in the frontal lobe, sensory input, in this lobe, was very much absent – the only sensory input really being that relating to the sense of smell and motion. And, indeed, given the presence of olfactory and motor functions in the frontal lobe, the autistic child was very sensitive to smell and to motion (i.e., spinning) and definitely exhibited emotion in response to both of these stimuli!

Although I did not have much to share in terms of memory as it related to emotions, there was one incident I did have to share that made a very poignant examples of how these children, in my view, had been so devastated, in absolutely everything.

I had literally completed this book and was working on including my Appendix materials when this occurred. One of the things I had wanted to include in the Appendix for all parents to see, were two of several pictures I had taken of Zachary as he went through what I believed was an allergic reaction to something in cod liver oil (I suspected heavy metals, such as mercury). I will have the contents of that bottle tested and make the results available for all on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com along with the many pictures and account of this particular event already found there.

As I cut and pasted this picture in the Appendix section to these materials, Zachary was sitting next to me and working on his computer – located just next to mine. He had a confused look when he saw the picture "pop up" on my screen. I said to him: "who's that?". I knew he had issues with recognizing himself in pictures, especially, older pictures (long term memory issue – he was much better now at recognizing himself in more recent pictures). When I asked Zachary to tell me who was in the picture in front of him, he responded: "a baby". He had not "recognized himself" because this picture did not look like the "everyday Zachary" and as such, he apparently did not associate it with himself (issue with concept of self – note concept of self is in the frontal lobe, whereas memory and emotions were in the temporal lobe). I told him: "No, that's Zachary – when you were sick". Immediately upon my telling him that, Zachary went completely ballistic, screaming and showing an intense sense of pain… he also put his finger into his inner right ear – almost in an attempt to block what he was hearing! I did not recognize this for what it was – for about 20 seconds… and then, given I had been so consumed with this project, the thought of "memory" popped immediately into my mind.

I knew memories were associated very strongly with emotions… and in this case, Zachary's ***recall*** **of a very unpleasant memory had been a very traumatic experience –** ***in and of itself!***

My husband had been standing next to us when this happened. I think, he too, was in utter disbelief! I immediately pulled out my "brain chart" as it related to functions within the temporal lobe, since I had only recently come to understand all this, I wanted to make absolutely sure, as I attempted to comfort Zachary based on my new understanding of brain functioning in the autistic child, that I would definitely trigger a way I thought would calm him down. As my eyes scanned the page quickly, I noticed "auditory and olfactory" processing right away – an ice cream cone (rice ice cream and cone both cfgf) had to be the answer I needed. I had tried to comfort Zachary right away verbally when this reaction first happened, but that did not work (I suspect due to fact that "auditory relays" were in the midbrain).

Sure enough, as soon as I said: "Zachary, do you want an ice cream cone?", he calmed down right away… from intensely emotionally distressed to almost normal. I hurried to make the ice cream cone for him and as I gave it to him, I asked him to "smell it" as I showed him "mommy smelling it". He smelled it, and went to sit on the couch to eat it. He was perfectly fine after that. Given my chart, I suspect using categorization techniques would also have worked to calm him down (i.e., puzzles, etc.).

I knew that giving any child "ice cream" was a great reward, yet, again, this had really been a matter of "degrees" of emotion. To have been able to take a child from completely "ballistic" emotionally one moment to almost completely back to normal within 30 seconds, was in this case, attributable to more than just the fact that "all kids like ice cream".

I encouraged all parents to make a copy of the charts within this document as it related to brain regions and functions and to post several copies throughout their homes.

I was absolutely amazed.

Both short term and long term memory (temporal lobe) had played a role in terms of his inability to recognize himself short term (given the picture did not look like he did, normally), but once he identified himself as a result of my auditory response to "a baby", (concept of self was not in temporal lobe, where emotion and memory resided, but rather in the frontal lobe), long term memory kicked in and the emotion (emotion resided in temporal lobe) associated with that memory was extremely magnified, making the "recall" (memory in temporal lobe) of a painful memory, almost worse than the actual event! :o(

Once his attention was moved to something else (the ice cream), he was able to cope and was fine afterwards. The memory of that painful experienced had once again slipped into his subconscious (at least, I hoped, that was where it had gone! Only time would tell).

Obviously, this too, had serious implications for all parents of the autistic and their children!

Of all issues related to memory, however, as stated earlier, the most critical were those in terms of memory as it related to emotions (temporal lobe), the control of emotions (frontal lobe), motor activity, planning and execution (frontal lobe), and the assignment of meaning to words (frontal lobe), and the fact that auditory relays resided in the midbrain, while visual processing resided in the occipital lobe and somatosensory processing and the sense of touch resided in the parietal lobe, along with goal directed movement!

Zachary's world was indeed, **A World Of Order©, A World Of Form And Function©,** and once you understood the structure and function of the brain it became much easier to deal with these children!

Example 18 Attention Deficit

"Attention deficit" now plagued children worldwide. You simply never used to see this before! And, there was "so much of it", that the answer was not simply in "better diagnosis". **To those who would vainly try to make that claim, I had but one comment: Wake Up! – And Stop Giving Parents Bogus Excuses!!! We now had over 2 MILLION children on Ritalin across America… and Ritalin was not the answer to their woes – therapy and teaching tools using "alternative sensory information" based on brain structure and function were!** Attention deficit was also a disorder on the autism spectrum…what many considered "mild autism", as I truly believed it was! This disorder, too, was explained by my theory as it related the brain's processing of sensory information and the fact that within the autistic child, the integration of sensory information and the relaying of that information was basically nonexistent!

If you looked at "attention deficit" in terms of the brain's structure and function, once again, all of this made perfect sense. **Visual *processing* was accomplished in the occipital lobe. So, when these children "saw" something, unless that information was properly integrated and relayed to other parts of the brain that needed it… those parts of the brain involved with "attention", there would definitely be impairments, in this area as well. Visual *attention* was not in the occipital lobe, but rather in the parietal lobe, with auditory processing and the understanding of language found in the temporal lobe and motor functioning, language production and ability to focus associated with the frontal lobe. Auditory relays, however, were located in the midbrain!** As such, all four lobes of the brain were involved here in addition to the midbrain – and these were not communicating properly, resulting in "attention deficits", blank stares, no appropriate motor response to sound, and a host of odd behaviors or coping mechanisms (i.e., moving of objects quickly in front of one's eyes, staring at objects, etc., not providing the appropriate motor response, apparently "not hearing" instructions, etc.). **Given I now also understood Zachary to "live by reference", past memories took on a whole new importance! It now seemed to all make such perfect sense!**

Example 19 Issues with sexuality

Many autistic children developed inappropriate sexual behavior as they grew older. Although all humans became aware of their own sexuality via the sense of touch, in autistic children, as with everything else in their life – the issue was really one of "degree". These children often touched themselves more then normal children did, and touched others inappropriately as well.

Again, based on my theory that there existed basically no communication among the various parts of the brain in the autistic child, this too, also now made sense. Sexual interest was located in the temporal lobe. This lobe was also responsible for emotions, memory acquisition, auditory and olfactory processing, the understanding of language, the categorization of objects and some visual perception. Yet, issues relating to somatosensory processing, the sense of touch and overall sensory integration were in the parietal lobe. Auditory relays were in the midbrain. Motor activity, motor planning and execution, memory as it related to habits and motor activities, the meaning assigned to words, and the control of emotional response were all in the frontal cortex.

These structures and functions, when viewed from a sexual perspective made for a very, very dangerous situation in the autistic child – especially, in the autistic male – especially given the fact, that in autism – everything was a "matter of degrees" and appeared to be, greatly magnified! **Given the structures and functions of the brain these children could violate social norms in terms of sexuality or worse, commit crimes, and perhaps not even realize what they had done! Interestingly, the ability to distinguish between the truth and a lie was also believed to reside in the temporal lobe.**

Obviously, no parent wanted to hear that the potential for such behavior was within their child, but denying these issues would do nothing to resolve them – denial, if I were right, would only make matters worse as more precious time was lost!

This was not simply a possible issue for the autistic, it was an issue for anyone having difficulty in the control of emotion or the concept of self, anyone with issues relating to memory, etc. As such, persons suffering from bi-polar, depression, personality disorders, self-image (i.e., self-injurious behaviors such as "cutting", suicidal tendencies, anorexia/eating disorders, etc.), and perhaps many other disorders were also very much "at risk" when it came to this issue. Criminal behavior, from shoplifting to the most heinous of crimes, could also, perhaps now be explained by a lack of proper activity within the brain as it related to emotions and memory associated with those emotions (temporal lobe) and motor activity and memory associated with motor activity (frontal lobe).

Example 20: The Autistic Savant

In general, this theory also explained why we often saw autistic who were "savants" in so specific areas – music, memory (i.e., ability to recall amazing amount of factual information), mathematical genius, etc. – because given the fact that there was limited communication between the actual areas of the brain in terms of its various sections, within one section, I believed there was intense specialization occurring as it related to each functioning within a particular lobe, for example!

Thus, in an attempt to compensate for lack of overall integration, integration within a specific area could be tremendous! As such, herein was also the key.

Example 21: Immune System And Diet Issues

Although my knowledge of immune system issues was very, very limited, based on what I had come to understand of the autistic brain a great many issues relating to immune system disorder and as such, many dietary issues, could perhaps also be explained somewhat by this theory. The immune system was primarily located within the digestive track and given that digestive processes were controlled via the brain stem, if those "control" mechanisms were not working properly in terms of receiving necessary inputs from the central and peripheral nervous systems, then, obviously, that digestive process, and hence, the immune system, would also be impaired.

I understood all too well that the immune system involved a great deal on many fronts, however, surely, a part of the dysfunctional immune systems of the autistic could also be explained by this theory of a lack of communication between the various parts of the peripheral and central nervous system. With the immune system, the consequences of such a lack of communication would be devastating as the brain would not be able to send a message to “attack” various “intruders” (such as viruses) and as such, with no “attack call”, there would be no “response” either! Thus, vaccinating children with autism, indeed, could simply result in them “having the virus” but no way to “respond to” the virus and as such these children could literally be “made ill” and simply “given a disease” rather than be protected by a vaccination. For health officials, parents and society, overall, again, this was a huge issue in terms of potential “outbreaks”. In an effort to “protect society”, vaccinations could now, if my theory were correct, create deadly disease outbreaks. It had already been scientifically shown that many autistic children were not developing appropriate antibodies when given specific vaccinations. Perhaps now, we could understand why that was!

The immune system was primarily found in the digestive track. If the brain stem was unable to properly communicate with the digestive track, obviously, there would be serious immune system as well as digestive system issues… and this, indeed, was true for autistic children.

If I was correct on this issue, then Zachary not only had major immune system issues to overcome (if that were even possible), he would also need enzymes <u>for the rest of his life</u> to help break down casein and gluten proteins in his body and prevent their natural opiate effect unless there was some way to “reconnect” his brain. Since phenols were also an issue for these children, he also took special enzymes for phenols too (phenols were found in all fruits and vegetables). These enzymes currently cost me approximately $100.00 per month and now, with the pharmaceuticals wanting to make all vitamins and supplements by prescription only (already underway in EU – surely, US would be next), the cost of these enzymes would, surely increase. In my opinion, there was no reason to make these prescription items – they had never necessitated a prescription in the past! More evidence of the strong pharmaceutical arm in Washington! If these were to be by prescription only given the devastation of autism on these children and their families, immediate audits were necessary into vaccination issues via subpoenas and if there was a possibility of an autism-vaccination link, then pharmaceuticals and/or the government should be required to provide all supplements and vitamins to the autistic - free of charge!

The evidence for an autism-vaccine connection was growing indeed. In 1997, there was a study on the effects of mercury on brain neurons. Brain lesions were said to be similar to those found in 80% of human Alzheimer-diseased brains. In their research, Dr. Fritz Lorscheider and Dr. Naweed Syed of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Calgary as well as medical student Christopher Leong showed that mercury causes brain neuron degeneration.

Those interested in reading more on this subject could do so by going to: <u>http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gauntlet/eg/news/stories/20010329/news05.html</u>.

Neural degeneration was clearly shown in the time lapsed 1999 video provided by these scientists, showing how mercury impacted neurons within the brain. Researchers and parents wanting more information on this subject or a copy of this video may contact: Dr. Fritz Lorscheider, (403) 220-6892, email fllorsch@ucalgary.ca, Dr. Naweed Syed, (403) 220-5479, email nisyed@ucalcary.ca . More information was also available by going to http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/unicomm/Gazette/April4-01/mercury.htm. These results were published in the British journal NeuroReport (Leong CCW, Naweed IS, Lorscheiderae FL, Retrograde degeneration of neurite membrane structural integrity of nerve growth cones following in vitro exposure to mercury, NeuroReport, accepted for publication Dec. 21, 2000, 12(4): 0733-0737). Although researchers speak of dental fillings as a source of mercury, it is interesting to note that the amount of mercury used in the experiment was shown in the video to be significantly less than that given to children via their vaccinations. I encouraged all parents of the autistic to obtain a copy of this video or view it online and to take the time to read the materials I referenced on this subject. Truly an eye opener! Note, you need Quick Time to view this online. This link allows download. http://movies.commons.ucalgary.ca/mercury/.

The video showing neural degeneration as a result of mercury could be viewed online by going to the following site:

http://movies.commons.ucalgary.ca/showcase/curtains.php?src=/mercury/Lor2_QTS_300kb_QD.mov&screenwidth=320&screenheight=256.

Interestingly, evidence presented in congressional hearing seemed to indicate that there were virtually no long-term studies related to vaccines and/or immunizations. Could this be why the CDC was refusing to allow documents relating to vaccination research to be made public – because, perhaps, they simply did not exist? Although thimerosal

(mercury) had been used as a preservative in vaccines since the 1930s, it was only in 1999 that the FDA was forced by a Congressional mandate to disclose how much mercury there really was in vaccines. Upon mercury content information being disclosed, needless to say, many parents, professionals and government personnel alike became, justifiably, gravely concerned over the fact that for years infants had been routinely given 25 to 50 times more mercury than considered safe by the US Environment Protection Agency standards. Government officials, scientists and parents were now realizing that by age two, children, via vaccinations, could have been exposed to up to 100 times what had been considered safe levels of mercury by the EPA.

Up to 12 of the 18 childhood vaccinations contained thimerosal. Although the government to this day denied any link between vaccinations and autism, perhaps this helped explain why by 2001 all vaccines were now to be free of thimerosal.

It appeared the government and the pharmaceuticals, in their zeal to promote vaccinations and eradicate diseases had themselves, perhaps, been asleep at the switch – for decades!

The pieces of the puzzle were now truly falling into place! Mercury had scientifically been shown to cause neural degeneration. This, in turn, fit hand in hand with my theory that the autistic brain was basically devoid of communication among its various parts… all parts of the brain acting almost independently from one another!

The allusive "missing link" had been missing and allusive for so long because in looking for a "missing link" we failed to see - or admit publically - that the answer lay in the fact that there was - "no link" – in anything! And now, this missing link – if indeed the true missing link - connected with absolutely all aspects of society - worldwide! Everything we saw in the autistic child could now be integrated by my theory that the autistic child had a breakdown of all sensory input integration, processing and relaying of information between the central nervous system and peripheral nervous systems!

The Pain Of Today… The Hope For Tomorrow…

Now that so many pieces of the puzzle were falling into place, society had some very difficult issues on its hands. Governments around the world would have to work very hard at regaining public trust in the area of vaccinations. No one doubted that vaccinations were necessary to help eliminate deadly disease outbreaks. Vaccinations, however, could be produced without mercury – and that had to start now!

In my opinion, discussions to make mandatory any shots containing thimerosal, had to be tabled until those vaccinations were made available safely – without mercury! Mercury was the second most toxic substance known to man – second only to uranium – and the fact that it could be given to children and adults, basically, unregulated spoke volumes! The government and the pharmaceuticals had made a grave error and now, that error had to be addressed and corrected! This was no longer a "republican" or "democrat" issue. This issue spanned all party lines, all borders, all nations! Unfortunately the more time wasted in trying to hide the facts, the worse this situation could only become. There were now too many parents and too many scientists working these issues to stop the truth from coming out.

There would undoubtedly be a great deal of pain felt on many fronts – not only by parents, but by government and, yes, perhaps even pharmaceutical executives as well who may have unknowingly contributed to this devastation of children worldwide. To understand each and every piece of the autism puzzle was a huge task indeed. Executives were usually "generalists" not "specialists" and in issues of autism, one needed to be a "specialist" in so many areas! The simple fact was that once something was done in a specific manner for decades, there was a perception that "things were fine and as such, why make any changes?". For decades we had seen diseases eradicated – almost completely eliminated. It was only when they began to resurface as outbreaks that "red flags" started to "go off" in the minds of scientists and parents alike. The accumulation of mercury in the human system, and the likely lesions between the central and peripheral nervous systems it appeared to cause, could certainly explain why "resistance" to so many illnesses seemed to be occurring on so many fronts and why so many people were sick in spite of being vaccinated for the very illnesses they were suffering from.

It had been so easy to focus on the "good" of vaccinations that they were mass produced and given in more "compressed" time periods so that infants were now getting close to 21 immunizations. With diseases apparently being eradicated from the face of the earth and profits higher than ever in the pharmaceutical industry, it surely, had been easy to focus on the "good" and turn the other way in the face of any "negative". In our zeal to control disease I feared we had damaged our children in ways unimaginable to even the best of scientists and government officials working on disease eradication. Even persons with the best of intentions now found themselves in a very, very nasty predicament.

In looking at all this, surely, not all involved were "guilty" of willfully injuring children for profits. I believed some may have been, but, in my heart, I believed the majority of those involved in this predicament found themselves within the storm before even realizing it was on the radar!

The once glorious partnership of the government and the pharmaceutical industry was about to make a sharp about face as each side prepared to battle the coming storm, fueled by the fury of parents! Had there been negligence? In my opinion, the answer to that question – was yes! Someone should have caught the fact that we were injecting all this mercury into our children a long time ago… that we were giving them levels of a toxin much, much greater than what was considered safe by our government agencies. Should someone in the pharmaceutical industry have caught this? Again, the answer was – obviously, yes! The reality of life, however, was that all too often, scientists worked on one vaccine or perhaps a few and in their focus and zeal to eradicate "their opponent", they failed to see how the parts came together to form the whole! Why had the government not caught this as it prepared its immunization schedules? The government dictated "safe levels" of mercury, yet the CDC did not seem to have an understanding of those "safe levels". Was this simply a matter of "miscommunication" between huge government agencies? Perhaps – but maybe not! Anyone seeing these issues from within the confines of the government would surely be "encouraged" not to say anything. These were, after all, issues of national and international security. But now, too many parents and professionals had been awakened to these issues… and in matters of national security, protecting our children - for all voters - came first and foremost for a nation without healthy and functioning children - can not survive!

Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.
John F. Kennedy

How true the words of a President – the words of a father!

What had we done to our children!!!

The challenges facing this nation and the world would now be the truest test of its people. We had united against terrorism and the death of 3,000+ at the hands of terrorists. The unity we now needed as a nation - as a world - to resolve and overcome these issues, would be our greatest test yet – of that, I was sure!

The issue of autism now touched all aspects of society. This was no longer simply an issue of "autism". There were many other diagnoses that could now, very much, be explained by vaccination related issues. In the autistic, there were issues with digestion (i.e., diabetes), the immune system, sensory integration, motor activity and memories associated with those activities, emotions and the control of emotions, goal directed activity, and so much more. Any person with disorders in personality, self-image, control of emotion, depression, immune system problems, motor functioning issues, speech issues, etc., could now also potentially, be persons who had suffered in some way from vaccine injury.

No government or industry could possibly fund all that would be necessary to help societies, worldwide, get back on track in issues of disease control while caring for those potentially injured by vaccinations. The victims, I now realized, were more than simply the children of autism. Victims, potentially, could involve those facing countless diseases, and those, not themselves injured physically, but, perhaps emotionally as they came to the realization that something had gone horribly wrong – and as much as parents hated to admit that – autism had created innocent victims in both government and pharmaceutical agencies as well. In my heart, I simply could not believe that all this harm could have been done – willingly! I knew money was a very powerful motivator and for those for whom money had been a factor, yes, I believed in all my heart that they belonged in jail – as did those who tried to hide these issues from the public. The potential devastation to so many children and to the world in terms of what this could do to "disease control" was overwhelming indeed. It was too much to take in for any individual. Overcoming these issues, especially issues of trust, would require the cooperation of governments and of parents worldwide.

As the mother of an autistic son, I now looked at autism in a new light. As I looked at my son, playing beside me, the problems of "the world" drifted into the distance and now problems of "autism" had landed squarely in my living room - again. "Autism", more strongly than ever, came back to haunt me – personally! Governments of the world would have to work "global" issues as they related to vaccinations. I, however, had to once again focus on my son – my family – as I believed all parents of the autistic had to do! Yes, there had to be inquiries into all of these issues but I also knew those inquiries could take years and I did not have years to wait. Saving Zachary would require all of my energies, all of my focus.

Understanding my son's issues was the first step in my overcoming those issues and now, although the battles for society raged on many fronts, as a mother, my battle with autism had become even more personal. I was more determined then ever in "saving Zachary".

All the anger I had so painfully felt as I had lived with autism and learned more and more about autism each day – I knew I had to let go! Anger would do nothing to save my son… to help him cope with life given his current situation. As I went over "brain structures and functions" in my own mind, I thought constantly of what I could best do to help Zachary. I could build on areas of strength, but there were definitely huge areas of concern for me – as a parent! If my theory was correct, as I now so painfully suspected it was, there was a great deal of work to be done. Although Zachary had come a long way, there were, potentially, huge hurdles still ahead.

The possibility that Zachary could one day commit a crime and perhaps not even remember it weighed heavily on my mind. The difficult issue of possible future crime in the life of any autistic child was a difficult topic to address as a parent. As much as I did not want to believe this could be true of my son, the reality of life was, that given what I now thought to understand in terms of how I truly believed the autistic brain functioned, I had to address this issue specifically, not only for parents of the autistic, but for all parents – worldwide!

The increasing statistics in terms of the autism epidemic necessitated that discussions include this very difficult subject. I encouraged all readers to read this example for the information it provided – as difficult as I knew this would be! I knew that the entire autism parent community and indeed, the government and pharmaceutical industry as well, would be very upset at the very fact that I would even suggest anything like this, but, my concern truly was for these children, because if I were correct, and there was indication to believe I was, then, denying these painful issues would do nothing to help address them.

As such, this issue had to be brought to the forefront, discussed and researched – not from an emotional view – but from one based on those issues presented. I was just as pained as any other parent of an autistic child in having to come to this realization – and, perhaps, moreso – because I had to be the one to deliver this very, very painful message, a message horribly painful to all parents of the autistic, and to society, overall, as well! Truly, it would have been much easier for me to simply "pretend" this issue did not exist – and I hoped all parents and government officials would understand that as they read through this very difficult section!

Before getting into this example, let me once again state that I was in no way saying that the majority of autistic children would be led down a path leading to a life of crime. Today, there was more hope than ever for recovery of these children. What I was saying, however, was that, the possibility of a life involving crime – the potential (n my opinion) – could be there!

Nonetheless, given the potential consequences of "this theory" being correct in view of the many, many things it seemed to explain in autism, I felt this issue had to be raised as soon as possible because even 1% of 2 million autistic children was still 20,000 boys!

As parents of the autistic, and as society overall, however, even if only 1% acted in a way that could lead to serious problems down the line in terms of crime, that was still too many children. And, as such, as adults, it was now time to address what could be very difficult issues, if indeed, my theory was correct. I asked all parents to keep these important points in mind in reading this section… this was simply a theory examining "a potential" issue.

I wanted to provide for all readers a very serious representation of what I believed could be happening in the autistic mind, if my theory was correct and communication between the various parts of the brain had indeed been impaired. I could have used a simple example of shoplifting, but, truly, the best example of what could happen in these children was better exemplified with a more extreme example. As such, I decided to provide for readers my interpretation of what could happen in the case of a very poignant example – rape!

According to the US Justice Department, a woman is raped every 2 minutes in the US, as of 2001 figures. That meant 30 every hour or 720 every day. Thus, **over one quarter million women** in the US alone would be raped each year! Of these "women", it was estimated believed 1 in 2 was under 18, and 1 in 6 was under the age of 12. That would translate to approximately 125,000 girls under the age of 18, and close to 42,000 young girls under the age of 12.

Given I now believed the human brain was not working properly in persons injured by mercury, and that neural connectivity was either inadequate or missing almost completely, we will now take a look at what could happen in the case of rape involving a person suffering from such an injury to the brain. I will use the example of an autistic male – although as stated earlier, this could be true of any person with such neural dysfunction – of anyone who unable to properly control emotions, of anyone with personality dysfunction disorders, of anyone who suffered mercury poisoning.

Note: Vaccines and dental fillings were believed to be the two biggest causes of mercury poisoning in the general population, and, as such, anyone who had received vaccines or silver dental fillings, could potentially be used in this example. I used the autistic male because, as with so much I now came to see, the autistic child could best help man understand "what can happen" when things were not working exactly as they should because of mercury poisoning. Undoubtedly, there were many, many "labels" or "diagnoses" that could also have been used in this example. For society to assume that this was simply an issue for the autistic would be a grave error in assumption indeed!

Let us now look at the example of rape – specifically.

Sexual interest functionality was located in the temporal lobe. Thus as the autistic male or mercury injured male matured and his interests in sex awakened, he would undoubtedly begin to notice women. Indeed, within the temporal lobe, there did exist visual perception. As that perception occurred, an emotion would also occur and undoubtedly trigger the "interest" in sexual activity (also in the temporal lobe). The ability to control emotions, however, resided in the frontal lobe, as did memory related to habits and other motor activities. What would happen, from a sensory processing perspective if an autistic male or mercury injured male acted upon his interest in sex and actually raped a woman based on the fact that although he experienced a strong emotion – the emotion of desire for sex (in temporal lobe) – he had been unable to control that emotion (frontal lobe) because of the lack of communication between these two areas?

If my theory were true, then, the act of raping a woman would have now created another emotion, satisfaction, and committed that emotion to memory since both emotion and memory associated with that emotion were in the temporal lobe. Yet, given that damage to the temporal lobe could result in both short term and long term memory being impacted, then, there may be inaccurate, incomplete or completely omitted information in the autistic male or mercury injured male's memory in terms of what had happened.

The ability to form "new memories" resided in the hippocampus (part of the limbic system). Given the fact that memory as it related to emotions were in the temporal lobe but memory as it related to motor habits and other motor activities and actual motor planning and execution resided in the frontal lobe, this could make for a very, very nasty situation! Motor planning and execution could be acting completely independent of emotion and memories tied to those emotions!

In other words, the autistic male or mercury injured male could continue to act out (motor function) the same behavior (rape), be unable to control his emotion (frontal lobe) in relation to that rape due to the fact that the emotion of satisfaction and the memory associated with that satisfaction resided in the temporal lobe and possibly the parietal lobe as well (somatosensory processing). The fact that increased aggression resided in the temporal lobe (along with the emotion of satisfaction and short and long term memory) and that somatosensory processing and the sensation of touch were in the parietal lobe simply made matters worse! This could also lead to more violent crimes over time. Furthermore, given the fact that auditory relays were in the midbrain, and that meaning assigned to words resided in the frontal lobe, the screams of a woman would simply not "be heard" or "understood" – the "deaf child of autism", the "attention deficit individual" could now, **potentially** be - "the deaf rapist"!

Interestingly, it was believed the ability to distinguish between the truth and a lie was also located within the temporal lobe. The concept of "self" was in the frontal lobe, whereas emotion and memories associated with emotions were in the temporal lobe.

As result of injuries to the brain and the fact that there was possibly no communication or incomplete communication among the various parts of the brain, yet, magnified communication and functionality within a specific area of the brain, the autistic male, or mercury injured male would – literally – have no control over the situation!

Below, was information taken from U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Conference on Sex Offender Registries, Proceedings of a BJS/SEARCH conference, April 1998, NCJ-168965. This information, I obtained from the following website: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/ncsor.txt. At that conference, this had been presented as the profile of a sex offender – I quote:

> *"The offender is likely to be a **white male** between the ages of **25 to 35 years old**; **very low self-image**; **likely to have committed a similar crime in the past**; **may have some physical deformity**; and is **likely to have had a recent stressful event in his life** which would have precipitated the high-risk approach taken in this crime. The high-risk approach also indicates the offender may have attempted similar acts recently and failed. The offender is **likely to be in an unskilled or semi-skilled job** that **does not include contact with the public**. Persons who know the offender would likely notice heightened anxiety on the offender's part since the crime occurred."*

Unfortunately, if mercury indeed did cause neural degeneration, any male who had suffered injury to his brain as a result of vaccinations, mercury fillings or any other source of mercury based on how I believed the autistic brain to work, fit this profile almost completely! I knew parents of all male children – autistic or not - would be very upset at my saying this, but, again, denying what could be a very serious issue, would do nothing to address this issue if **my theory** were correct. Furthermore, **this was not simply a "children's issue"**. **Mercury was also found in flu shots given to adults**. The issue of mercury-induced brain damage was a serious issue for all members of society – not only those currently diagnosed as autistic.

I asked all parents and all members of society to truly "take a step back" and consider the above without the interference of emotions (as difficult as I knew this would be) – to simply look at the "coincidences" between the autistic male or any male suffering from personality disorders, self image disorders, or disorders relating to the control of emotions and the above profile. There was no denying that persons suffering from issues with the concept of self, with self image, with the control of one's emotions, etc. were all candidates for the above profile!

As the mother of an autistic boy myself, this realization had been very, very painful for me – but there was no denying it based on what I now understood in my own son and the fact that my theory on the workings of the autistic or mercury-injured brain explained almost everything we saw in autistic children and indeed, in many personality disorders and emotional disorders as well. It was this that parents and societies had to keep in mind.

No parent – including myself – wanted to admit this could be true, but this certainly was a highly probable case for anyone who had suffered from possible mercury-induced brain damage. In addition, readers will see that persons undergoing anesthesia were also very much at risk of having such issues (more on that later). As such, again, this simply was not an issue "just for the autistic". Autism only provided a "window" into what mercury induced brain damage, and perhaps, anesthesia as well, could do to the human brain.

Jobs for the autistic had often been identified as "assembly type work" (as in the above profile) – although given the understanding of the skills within these children, their potential, once encouraged, could make them among some of the most highly productive and contributing members of society in areas of mathematics, engineering, computer science, etc.

I had stated throughout this document that Zachary's life, indeed, that of autistic children, in general, was one of frustration. There were simply "too many coincidences" not to take this issue of brain lesions very, very seriously! Could any parent – truly - simply ignore these "coincidences"? Would "simply waiting" to see if this materialized be the answer? That was a risk, as a mother, I was not willing to take.

I certainly hoped all women and men around the world now understood exactly how critical it was to get to the bottom of this issue in terms of the possible autism-vaccination link… and that if my theory was correct, how critical it would be to get all these children, as well as all children displaying issues in controlling emotions, children with self esteem or self image issues into therapy as soon as possible in order to prevent not only serious consequences to them, but to women, and indeed - little boys and girls

- around the world as well! Appropriate socialization, for these children was now more critical than ever!

In my opinion, reinforcing the sense of self-worth was critical to these children. If anything, the fact that autistic children had "violent outbursts" and then "it was over" made them perhaps less vulnerable to having a life involving crime than would perhaps be the case with children who "kept it all in". Because autistic children had a very "magnified set of emotions", I believed they would also have a very magnified sense of "right verses wrong" and that was truly a saving grace for the autistic. I would be much more worried about children who were more "borderline" or who had only suffered "less damage" but yet had emotion control issues. We now had close to 2 million children in the US on Ritalin for attention deficit – the mildest form of autism. We had countless more in jails and mental institutions for aggressive behavior or self-injurious behaviors (i.e., cutting, attempted suicide, etc.).

To those who would argue that we were simply "better" at identifying problem children than we had been in the past, or that everything we were now seeing was "simply normal" behavior in rebellious adolescents and preteens, I suggested you pull your worthless degrees off the wall and get a reality check by leaving the confines of academia and walking the halls of juvenile detention centers and psychiatric wards to look at the young faces to be found in these facilities. You could then compare those "statistics" to population statistics of years ago… do a little "regression analysis"… and see that the numbers simply did not add up! Although I personally had ten years of university, common sense alone, would tell you that if the population was decreasing as it had, you should not be seeing increasing numbers of children in such facilities – not to the extent that we saw them today! This was not "normal" and anyone who tried to say it was truly was out of touch with reality! Families used to be much larger – now, they only had on average, approximately 2 children. I had been raised in a family of ten children. As I was growing up, more common were families with 4 children… yet, today we had on average 2 children, and more than ever, we had children in such detention facilities. Something – truly – was not right and it was time society awakened to that fact! How else could you explain more than 2 million children on Ritalin in the US? Had we simply "missed" the fact that there were that many children like this in the past and no one "saw it"? Had the genetics of one generation become so bad that we now had all these "hyper children"? I hardly believed that to be the case. Parents were not the worst parents ever. Those who had children today had often gone through painstaking planning to have those children – and they made sure those children received the best medical care possible – usually never missing appointments for vaccinations and wellness checks. I doubt the same could be said of all the children born to previous generations. These children were not simply "hyper children" or children that were "oppositional-defiant" (the latest buzz word) – these were children, whom I believed had been very, very failed by "the system" overall – first via its unchecked vaccination programs and then by its educational, medical and recovery institutions as well.

What had we done to our children? – Indeed!

When we could no longer "explain" what we saw in our children, we simply came up with "another negative label", putting the blame on the children who were already very, very misunderstood, rather than putting the blame where it rightfully belonged – on the adult perpetrators of this injustice.

America, and other countries had some very serious issues on their hands – from both a moral and safety perspective.

If indeed some of the criminals in our justice systems indeed suffered from autism or mercury-induced brain damage and had committed violent crimes, could their shackles be removed also from what could be learned from autism? Unfortunately, based on what I now believed to understand of the mercury-damaged brain that had crossed over into a life of crime, the answer to that question was a resounding "No"!

These individuals, indeed, would be in need of therapy, however, given what I had believed to come to understand of the workings of the mercury-induced damaged brain, to release these prisoners would only further jeopardize society given the magnification of memory/emotion issue and the possible inability to actually remember having done something. If I were correct, these persons, having been unable to control their emotions and actions in the past, would be unlikely to be able to do so in the future. Of course, I was no therapist, but, I was concerned given the memory/emotion factor and the fact that "control of emotion" resided elsewhere. The "magnification" effect within specific parts of the brain in terms of emotions/memory, in my view, was a very, very serious issue in that each offense would only lead to greater gratification and no control over that emotion. **The danger to society, in removing the shackles of anyone in the criminal justice system found to be mercury injured – especially if that person had been involved in a violent crime - were overwhelming! In my "non-therapist", "non-behaviorist", "non-medical" opinion, these offenders would only continue to commit such crimes, at an increasing rate, potentially with increasing violence each time, based on what I believed to understand of the workings of the mercury damaged brain. As such, as painful as this realization was, there simply was no way to ever set these criminals free!**

The only shackles to be removed had to be those of autistic children and others in society who had suffered possible mercury induced brain damage - those who could still very much be helped with intervention and who had not committed violent crimes.

Finding the true criminals – those responsible mercury induced brain lesions - and stopping all mercury-induced brain damage along with the autism epidemic would be the only way to even begin pushing back the tides of this hurricane that now raged on so many fronts and on so many shores!

I had once very much been in favor of the death penalty. Given what I now believed to understand about the workings of the human brain, I now had serious reservations when it came to this issue! I was certainly NOT saying that all sex offenders were autistic or mercury-induced brain damaged. That surely was not true!

I knew this issue could cause serious emotional distress to all families who had been so victimized by the most terrible of crimes. My heart truly went out to these families as well as to all families of the autistic and of those who may have been victimized by mercury damage as a result of vaccinations and/or dental fillings – especially given the fact that all this was **but a theory**. These issues, however simply had to be raised. The autism epidemic and the epidemic of young children in criminal and psychiatric detention facilities necessitated that these issues be raised!

In beginning of my journey with autism, I knew not where it would lead me. Now, given my concern for my own son in regards to this issue and his magnified emotions I already saw in him – as a child – the thought of what could happen to him in the future was absolutely devastating to me as a parent. **What was I supposed to do in regards to this issue? Not raise it and hope it went away? We all knew that it would not!**

The statistics from the US Department of Justice clearly indicated the huge increase in death row inmates. By year-end 2000, there were 3,593 prisoners on death row. We now had 2 million plus autistic children in the US alone. If I was correct in my theory, how many of these children would end up on death row, too? Even if 1% acted on their increased aggression, that could still end up sending 20,000 young men to jail or to death row – and how many more innocent victims would there be – the numbers could truly be overwhelming! And these were only numbers "for autism"… what about all those "other illnesses" that had to do with personality disorders, lack of emotional control, etc. Given the "magnification" effect on the emotions of these children, and the increased aggression associated with possible temporal lobe damage, in my view, this issue was so serious that it absolutely had to be raised – as painful as it was to do so! If I was correct, early intervention was the best way to recover these children and adults and truly make them valued and productive members of society as opposed to social outcasts.

Although I personally had only limited experience with "other illnesses" as they related to personality disorders or the inability to control one's emotions, as far as autistic children themselves were concerned, I knew that **the fact that these children were so determined to "break the code" and get out of their world – to understand the real world – was truly a testimony to their cry for help and willingness to be helped – to the fact that they wanted to have a meaningful life and be part of society, too!**

I was not saying the people on death row had not committed their crimes. Obviously they did. But, the thought of my child, or any mercury-damaged child ending up on death row given what I now believed I understood in terms of a mercury damaged brain, was an issue I simply could not remain silent about – not for the sake of my own son nor that of every other autistic child or mercury damaged child/adult out there! These persons needed therapy and they needed it now.

I knew the majority of Americans supported the death penalty… as I once had. Given what I now believed to understand, as I looked at my own son, the thought of what could lay ahead for him pained me to the very deepest of my being.

Surely, families who had so been devastated by those currently on death row had to understand the concern for my son, and all autistic children in this regard, and truly, for all children and all women. Raising this issue now, was the only way to begin addressing it! I knew, I myself, could get death threats for raising this issue – but, what was I supposed to do? This theory of total sensory integration, processing and relay failure seemed to completely explain everything in not only my son but, autistic children in general and it could certainly explain behaviors in many other disorders, too. I had identified an issue that, very potentially, could totally destroy not only my son but many other children in later life – what was I supposed to do? I cried deeply as I wrote this section, knowing fully well the emotions it would ignite, but was I supposed to sit by and do nothing? Should I not have tried to warn parents of what could be huge issues for their children down the road? Should I not have tried to warn society? What would any of you have done had you been in my situation – had you come to understand these issues as I did? Hating or killing the messenger would do nothing to kill the issue! I preferred dying myself, the most horrible death possible, than seeing my son or any other child on death row for something, I believed, they very possibly could have no control over given what I now believed to understand of the workings of the autistic or mercury damaged brain! What was I supposed to do?

I did not want to see criminals go free – nor did I believe they could be set free - but neither did I want to sweep under the carpet an issue that could destroy countless children. There was no avoiding this issue. Each year the numbers on death row increased. The explosion in autism statistics had now reached epidemic proportions. Boys were four times more impacted by autism than were girls. We had more children in jails and psychiatric wards than ever. This issue would not go away – of that – I was certain!

<u>So, what was I supposed to do?</u>

Directing anger in my direction would do nothing to address this very painful issue. I had only been the very unfortunate person to deliver a very, very painful message. Killing the messenger would not change these issues… not now… and certainly not in the future! How could I possibly remain silent given all the children who now had autism? **<u>How much devastation would be enough before government and societies around the world finally acted?</u>** For me, there would be, a great deal of hatred and misplaced anger on many fronts… the government, the pharmaceuticals, parents, generally, and now – also – parents of the autistic as well. Perhaps all would have preferred for these issues had never been raised, but, morally, in my heart, I simply could not pretend everything was fine – not in knowing the potential harm ahead for so many children! I preferred the wrath of parents, industry and government leaders to the devastation of completely innocent children. Writing this document had not, by any means, been an easy thing for me to do – I cried constantly knowing its potential impact - and I hoped all readers understood that. But, in my heart, the children, so often children with no voice - had to come first!

Being the parent of an autistic child, at so many turns, was like having a knife driven into your chest and twisted… only recovering from one wound long enough to have another painful stab inflicted! Could society not finally understand this? So many of us had lost our children… so many were still in their own world. Some of us had finally been fortunate enough to see a ray of hope in recovering our children to give them some kind of a meaningful life. Would society now ignore our pleas again, and let these children fall down a path that could be so detrimental, so painful, to so many! Would you fail to act again, only to steal our children from us – again - and possibly later send these children we had worked so hard to recover – to death row! Surely that pain would be too great for too many parents to endure! How much pain… how much anger… how much devastation… and how much suffering would the government allow before these issues relating to vaccinations and, mercury overall, were finally addressed?

The world issues of autism had once again landed squarely in my living room.

Certainly, I could be afraid for my life given the impact of this document… but, as a mother, I was more afraid for the future of a 5-year-old boy and so many others just like him. I had not caused my child to be autistic. If vaccinations had, then, the real criminals had to be brought to justice in the future – not my son! I was not a criminal - and currently - neither was my 5 year-old boy, but I had very deep concerns for his future – as should all parents of the autistic be concerned for the future of their children in regards to this issue! Indeed, anyone undergoing any procedure involving mercury – be that from a vaccination or from a dental filling – should be very concerned about the effects of mercury on the brain.

This little boy I had worked so hard to pull out of his own world - a little boy who now was finally enjoying life - could once again be stolen from me, and perhaps, even put on death row for something I now believed in my heart he may not understand! Could any person not the parent of an autistic child possibly understand the very intense emotions this could create within parents of the autistic – within any parent who now suspected their child may have suffered from mercury-induced brain damage?

For Zachary to have a real birthday cake, something that actually tasted good, he would have to suffer a natural opiate (drug) effect because a real birthday cake literally acted like a drug on his brain! Most of what he ate had to be special ordered. Almost 98% of things in a "normal grocery store", he could not eat due to the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten (milk and grain proteins). Most fruits and vegetables, he could not eat. His diet consisted of chicken, rice and potato products, primarily, a banana or apple only rarely… one egg only every 3 days, along with special bacon or sausages. I now drove 5 hours one-way once a year to buy him special meats that had no preservatives or gluten in them. Everywhere I went, every trip I took involved packing absolutely all his foods… right down to the salt and pepper since gluten was sprayed on everything to stop even spices from sticking. Many autistic children were impacted by casein and gluten at molecular level and so, Zachary's foods were very, very specialized... and very, very expensive.

Since realizing Zachary was autistic, my entire life had been painfully poured into this child… we had finally become mother and child again… the pain of possibly losing him in the future to death row or a life in prison, or to a psychiatric ward, I knew I could never bear - neither did I suspect could millions of other parents of the autistic bear losing their children! Countless families had poured not only their lives, but, their finances as well into their children. The risk to so many autistic children, to any mercury damaged children and to future families who could possibly be devastated also, as a result of the actions of brain-injured persons, was something I could not be silent on.

The more I wrote on the subject of autism, the more I truly came to see that it simply impacted all aspects of life – worldwide!

I completely understood the fact that many persons, as a result of this book, would perhaps now want to stop all death penalties or that some criminals could try to use this as an excuse in saying "they knew not what they had done". I was well aware of all these very, very painful issues. But, the fact was, the statistics in terms of the numbers of the autistic had exploded to epidemic proportions as had the numbers of children in detention facilities, both psychiatric and criminal. The impacts of this book, I knew, would be devastating to more than just parents of the autistic.

Research would now have to take on new dimensions in order to truly identify those who suffered from potential vaccine or mercury injury. MRI scans of physical structures within the brain had indeed proven there existed physical differences between normal brains and those of the autistic. Now, perhaps we simply understood a little more why that was.

For society, autism could be a great source of knowledge, but I feared it could also be a great source of sadness, too! And parents, once again, would feel that painful, twisting knife in their chest at the very thought of the "dark possibilities" that may lay ahead for their child! :o(

Adults – everywhere - now had to address very serious issues, on many fronts – all at once! As difficult as the road for the families of the autistic had been, I believed the road for society, overall, had also become a very challenging one as a result of this issue of ever increasing rates of autism, the possible autism-vaccination link, and the possibility of many in society being brain injured as a result of vaccinations.

<u>If I were correct in issues of the autistic and sexuality, as I believed I was, my heart was very pained by the fact that a child, himself, so devastated already, could later so completely devastate the children of others as well!</u> :o(:o(:o(

<u>Having an autistic son, I could not - even begin - to express how heavily this issue weighed on my heart!</u>

Society had failed to hear the cries of parents of the autistic in the past – how long would you continue to do so? Would you now, - for the safety of all women and children worldwide - finally hear those cries?

Perhaps now, we could finally begin to understand why children today just seemed "so much more aggressive" in understanding that temporal lobe damage was associated with increased aggression. Safety - in view of the autistic child - was no longer an issue for the autistic child alone, it was now an issue for all persons who subjected themselves to vaccinations or silver dental fillings.

At no time in history did we have as many kidnappings, sexual assaults and murders involving children, or so many atrocious and mass murders, but I feared we were perhaps now seeing only - the tip of the iceberg! Unless steps were taken to steer away from that iceberg – immediately – as it had been the case with the unsinkable Titanic - there would be many, many victims – and the devastation of this iceberg had the potential - like the disorder of autism or mercury induced brain damage itself - to greatly magnify the situation!

Society simply never understood how anyone could possibly commit such heinous crimes as we now saw today. If my theory were correct, it could very well be that the criminals themselves, if brain damaged, failed to understand it, too!

<u>Based on brain structure and function, I knew these children could be helped.</u> Understanding these children and allowing them to have fuller lives, and the attention they deserved so that they did not become social outcasts, but rather, were viewed as valuable members of society, could do a great deal in allowing these children to become functioning, valuable and productive members of society. I had no doubt about that. There was hope for tomorrow. Understanding the issues was the first step in addressing them.

The burden on the autistic brain and how to work around its potential limitations to help recover these children would now be addressed.

The parents of the autistic had long cried for help. If society now saw how it too was so impacted by these issues, perhaps now - the world - would listen!

The Burden On The Autistic Brain…

Forced To Work In A Way It, Surely, Was Never Intended To!

In my opinion, in the autistic child or mercury injured, a burden was placed on the brain to perform or learn critical functions by using "parts" (sensory input) in a manner they were not intended to be used. For example, the production of language in the autistic child could not be done via visual and auditory processes - at least not at first – but rather, could only be done through the use of smell and motor functions. A difficult task – indeed – although not insurmountable as evident from the fact that so many autistic children did develop speech, undoubtedly due to their focus on motion (such as the mouth, etc.)!

It was my belief, however, that once the "code to language" was broken in terms of understanding language, a function residing in the temporal lobe, that auditory and visual input could then be used to assist in the acquisition of language skills.

As difficult as it was to come to this realization, with that realization, potentially, also came the answer to helping so many of these children.

Given I believed communication did not occur as it should among the various areas or regions of the brain, but was heightened within a specific region, thereby, magnifying all functionality or "dysfunctionality" within that area, the way to help these children, surely, had to be by using all functions within one area of the brain to one's advantage in teaching specific skills, etc.

For example, in the frontal lobe, although language production had no input from visual or auditory, motor functions, memory and olfactory processing were present and, perhaps could be used to one's advantage in the production of language. Zachary certainly was good at memorizing things and he certainly did love motion and react to smells… so, the key, I believed, was simply in finding how to tap memory and perhaps motor functioning and olfactory processing in order to teach the production of language! Perhaps a focus on motion by the use of hands to teach sounds, as suggested in the use of "motion phonics©" and focus the mouth was the way to go. Indeed, many children who were autistic did prefer to focus on the mouth of an adult as opposed to the eyes – perhaps this was why! This also explained why so many autistic children had mastered sign language. The inherent trap of sign language, however, was in the assumption that these children could not produce sounds if auditory processing was not in the same lobe. That would be a very inaccurate assumption to make. These children indeed could produce sounds and as such they should also be able to develop language, given the right tools!

With the production of language, however, I would NEVER encourage the use of "imaginary play" in producing language, simply due to the fact that the concept of self also resided in this area – and as such, I did believe that the danger of imaginary play

as it related to schizophrenia was a very real one! Imaginary play had to be discouraged in these children, especially when it involved the child himself "being someone or something else"!

But, now that the issues were better understood, at least in my opinion, tools could now be generated specifically for the autistic or others suffering from potential brain lesions… and so, with the bad news, came the good news also!

As with so many things in life, it was really an issue of "awareness". Understanding these issues did not "change" the child you currently had at home… it just made you more aware of the issues within that child, and perhaps that was the benefit in all this… to look at this awareness not as something to get discouraged about, but rather as a tremendous opportunity to move many of these children forward much more quickly! :o)

Suffice it to say that my theory that sensory information was not properly integrated into the brain seemed to explain a great deal in the autistic child and in many other disorders as well.

If this theory was indeed accurate, this certainly explained why absolutely all facets of life were impacted in the autistic child and why so many "connections" in terms of understanding one's world and reacting to it - were simply missing!

Given what we saw in the autistic child, I could not help but suspect the corpus collosum, thalamus, and the parietal lobe were possibly involved in this overall inability to integrate and relay sensory information. Both the corpus collosum and the thalamus acted as gateways for information. The corpus collosum - the critical link allowing information to pass from one hemisphere to the other, and the thalamus - the gateway allowing information to flow between the peripheral and central nervous systems. The parietal lobe - the area involved in the integration of sensory input and as such was perhaps key and clearly an area needing further investigation!

Of course, I was not a neurologist, but, if I were investigating the issue of autism, these areas would be my first priority given that two were involved in the "gateway" function in terms of how the central nervous system and peripheral nervous systems "obtained" information and the third was involved in the critical function of sensory input integration. I suspected that these areas may indeed reflect physical differences than the same areas in a "normal brain" and that those areas used more frequently by the autistic child would perhaps be larger in size, much like a muscle that was used more than an unused muscle would be larger. As such, I suspected areas of over-activity would show larger than normal structures in the autistic child, and areas of under-activity, perhaps those areas that were truly damaged, would likely be reflected as smaller than normal in the autistic child. Areas involved in the prevention of sensory overload surely had to be involved since so many of these children suffered from what appeared to be sensory overload.

<u>The fact that persons suffering from epilepsy often had surgery whereby the corpus collosum was severed made me all the more suspicious that the corpus collosum was</u>

indeed involved – especially given the fact that so many autistic children developed epileptic seizures in adolescence. An epileptic seizure, was almost like the brain was "short circuiting" or attempting to "reboot" itself, much as a computer needed to be rebooted when it froze up or could not process the information it was given. During that "rebooting", from the epileptic seizures I had seen, a person lost complete control of their body in terms of motor functions, etc. and since epileptics could "sense" a seizure coming, obviously the senses, in my opinion were involved too! **Interestingly, although the thalamus was involved in processing sensory input, the one "sense" it did not "process" was the sense of smell!** This was a key observations I encouraged all readers to keep in the back of their mind as they progressed through this document! **It was a well-known fact that persons suffering from epilepsy sensed an "aura", believed to be a "smell" just prior to the onset of an epileptic seizure.** This, as readers would discover later in this document, was very, very interesting indeed in terms of brain structure and function and the possible implications for autism – and so much more!

Although the previous section had undoubtedly been a difficult one for parents to get through, the fact that perhaps the "missing link" we had all been searching for – for so long – had finally been found meant parents could move forward and focus their efforts in terms of how to address these many, many issues in order to provide for their child the best quality of life possible given these seemingly insurmountable factors.

The fact was, **many** children did end up breaking the code - much as a military decoder eventually decoded the hidden messages too, and as such, understanding the issues gave these children even more hope yet, because, perhaps now, tools and training for these children and for any mercury injured person could be provided in a much more effective manner.

There always seemed to be so much to learn when it came to autism. For example, the day before I completed this book, I came to learn that yellow was a color that was quite valuable in visually perceiving objects. Again, I had just stumbled upon something by chance… Zachary's alphabet wall, in his room of colors, had a bright yellow background and this may have helped him to better perceive the letters on the wall. Red and green were colors perceived more in the center of the eye while blues were more for peripheral vision. All these factors could greatly contribute to our understanding of what would be needed to best help the autistic. As more pieces fell into place, world issues as they related to autism and vaccinations, for me, could finally move to the back as I now began to focus more on those things I could do – as a parent – to help my child!

The challenge for parents, and indeed, for society, would be in providing these children with learning tools to get sensory information to as many parts of the brain as possible via the use of various sensory input within one teaching tool. I now understood why Zachary so loved his alphabet train video… it provided color, text, motion, and sound and the perception of a part being made into a whole as each letter was loaded onto a train car to "build the alphabet train". Tools such as these were now needed for all aspects of life, for all autistic children. This was a huge task indeed, however, given the amazing capabilities so many of these children had developed in view of what were huge limitations to overcome – the lack of all sensory integration – it was indeed a testimony to the determination of these children that they continued to persevere and move forward… and as such, so too, did their parents need to persevere! No war was ever won by giving up… and as such, parents and society now needed to do what was necessary to be victorious in this battle on all fronts.

As difficult as this message was for me to deliver, there was another strong message for all parents and society – the inherent desire to give up when faced with such overwhelming challenges was **not** an option. These children had not given up… and now, more than ever, neither could we. Getting depressed over this situation would do nothing to move these children or society forward. Yes, there was a need to grieve for the complete devastation our children had been subjected to, but there was also the need to get determined and stay focused and united – because only with determination and focus and in knowing the enemy for what it was could the battle truly be won!

Given what I now believed to be happening in the autistic brain, there was indeed much more hope in that any brain functions that had “backup” systems in that those functions were somewhat performed elsewhere could be perhaps re-routed more specifically to those “backup areas”. Once the “code” was broken in one part of the brain, surely that would somewhat help in another in terms of further breaking the code – in terms of now understanding something based on a different sense. Where “backups” existed, surely, that had to be the case!

If the ability to perform specific tasks was indeed not "isolated" to specific areas of the brain due to the fact that “new areas” were forced to take over, it could only be concluded that all regions of the entire brain, potentially, could be involved in functions for which they were never intended once primary areas of function were either impaired, damaged or inaccessible!

In my view, these "other areas" of the brain, areas never thought previously, to be associated with specific functions, now revealed that, indeed, the brain could adapt and literally “metamorphosize” its structures in terms of how they functioned and indeed, interacted with other key activities. This certainly would explain why actual physical changes were so often observed in brains that had been damaged or impaired in some way!

The implications of this - if true – for mankind, were huge! The option of using the sense of smell and motor function, for example, in the production of language, that area of potential alone, was huge indeed – for the autistic child and for anyone who had suffered any type of brain injury that had resulted in speech impairment! The ability to use “alternative” sensory input as it related to specific functions within the brain and indeed, within a specific, independent region of the brain, based on the functions available within each region, opened entirely new areas of study and, indeed, of hope, for so many whose brains had been somehow injured!

Any primary function with backups elsewhere could potentially be “re-routed”.

Although I was not a neurologist, the basic overview of the brain above had provided enough information to determine functional areas in which this theory, if true, could be applied in order to help the autistic child. No neurologist could ever convince me to give up before even trying – no matter how many degrees that neurologist had. The determination of my son to decode his world convinced me I had to be as determined as he was! :o)

I suspected no one had ever, in their wildest dreams, ever imagined that for these children, language production could - perhaps - only be achieved based on olfactory and motor functioning inputs as opposed to visual and auditory processes. How could one possibly "produce language" based on "smells" or "motions"?

Likewise, teaching the "understanding of language", a function in the temporal lobe, could be done by using "spatial concepts" or math concepts… that was why bubble graphs had worked instantaneously with Zachary and why, even after a week, he could remember the sentence: "The long steam train pulled slowly and carefully into the station and was loaded with cars, trucks, logs and coal"… the spatial concepts had made all the difference and as such, he remembered the sentence in perfect order!

Using alternative inputs and methods appeared to be exactly what was needed given my theory that the various parts of the brain in the autistic child basically performed independently of "other parts" due to the fact that the integration of sensory information, within these children, to get the sensory input to all those places it needed to go – simply was not occurring!

Yet, all this made such perfect sense and explained why the autistic child was not focused on the eyes when it came to communication, but rather, on motion… such as the moving of one's mouth. This explained how autistic children must have somehow been able to decode the "phonics" to language without first understanding the visual representations of letters! Breaking the code to language and all communication, in my view, rested in getting that first cornerstone – the understanding of the alphabet as "symbols" representing something. I, now believed that building block had to be taught via the use of motion (by using the video mentioned, for example, in my section on Language). Then, the work with "motion phonics©" could begin.

I had never been one for "reinventing the wheel" and as such, I wanted to share with all parents the information for The Phonics Handbook, that book my sister-in-law had used to teach her autistic son language via motion.

The Phonics Handbook, by Sue Lloyd, published by Jolly Learning was available by calling: 800-488-2665 in the US or 0181-501-0405 in the UK.

The ISBN for The Phonics Handbook was: 1 870946 08 1.

There were also other handbooks and videos available for those who were interested. These included:

Phonics Video, twin pack	ISBN	1 870946 66 9
Finger Phonics Books 1 – 7	ISBN	1 870946 31 6

I had only, personally seen The Phonics Handbook, but I provided these others as well as they were listen on the back of the materials I had. Anything that would involve using one's fingers though to teach language, was probably something to look at!

The other thing I could suggest in teaching language to the autistic was, of course via the use of puzzles and videos – since both involved motion. The Alphabet Train in the Language Section had truly helped Zachary with learning the alphabet. It was a video he adored to this day… providing, motion in the form of spinning letters, sound as the letters were called out and the entire video was set to the music of Mozart, visuals and motion as the letters were placed on a train and the sense of parts being made into a whole as each train car was loaded with individual letters. Given all this sensory information Zachary was best able to "make the connection" necessary in order to understand this all too critical first cornerstone to language!

Since the autistic loved puzzles and trains, potentially, both these concepts could be used to one's advantage in teaching many concepts… I was already working on a couple for time and money based on very specific ideas I had in terms of how these concepts could best be taught… and had many ideas for teaching sentence structure, etc. based on that too, but, truly, when it came to learning, teaching the autistic child via puzzles, trains, motion, and indeed, perhaps even smell, was the way to teach language to these children! The phonics as I provided in the language section could then be used as a good reinforcement tool, but, based on what I had come to, I now believed the best way was to teach phonics via motion!

As such, development of the autistic child's brain consisted of development within each specific area or region… and as such, development within each of these specific areas or regions became very concentrated and very focused, resulting in an almost overwhelming ability for the various functions within each region to communicate with one another. As such, within the frontal lobe, for example, functions once thought completely unrelated, such as the production of language, and smell or motor activity, now became much more integrated as the brain attempted to "decode" sensory input provided by the senses and applied to the specific functions within each region!

What I had also come to understand, however, was that one function - specifically the function of integrating the parts into the whole – the part or incoming sensory information into the whole functioning of the brain - that one function, and likewise, the inability to perform that one function, impacted absolutely all areas of functioning... be they related to sensory, emotional, social, behavioral, motor, sexual, imaginary, communication issues or indeed, issues as they related to the most important thing of all – one's concept of "self". It made no difference in terms of the "area of functionality"... this one function impacted absolutely all areas of the brain and as such, necessitated the brain find new coping mechanisms in order to completely "rewire itself" and make sense of the world!

I believed that given the salient examples provided in this document, and the multitude of examples within examples that existed within each of these, the case for the lack of sensory integration and relay of sensory information to other critical parts of the brain in need of that information, in the autistic child, was indeed a powerful one! There was simply no denying that this truly played a role in what we saw in autistic children. This one common thread – the inability to integrate and relay sensory information – simply explained too much in all aspects of life for the autistic child!

Given all this information, surely, a wealth of new research could now be undertaken in terms of what was going on in the autistic child. How could children who looked so normal on the outside be so broken on the inside? Surely, to answer that question would require many new brain studies. Yet, I had serious concerns as they related to "All Those Brain Studies – And The Need To Question Everything!".

All Those Brain Studies... What Do They Really Tell Us?

The Need To ... Question Everything!!!

If one thing had become clear to me, it was certainly the fact that the autistic brain processed information in a very different way than did a "normal" brain. As I came to seek further answers and looked into the area of brain research as it related to the autistic child, it also became quite clear to me that, as a parent, I had to "Question Everything!".

We cannot order men to see the truth or prohibit them from indulging in error.

Max Planck, Philosophy of Physics, 1936

This was one of my brother's favorite quotes...and how true it rang in every aspect of life... from science to religion!

My brother was a well-respected scientist worldwide in the field of MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging). Although his research focused on the areas of the heart and cancer, his understanding of MRI technology definitely made him a leading authority in this field, a man who knew and understood the whole issue of "MRI" - its benefits, and, more importantly, its limitations!

When I first came to the realization that Zachary's true problem was not with "a lack of routine" but rather with a "lack of order", (I now realize the issue was more specifically with a subset of the ordering function... with the proper processing or integration of the parts into the whole), I had naturally called my brother to ask him what he thought about using MRIs to focus specifically on the brain's areas involved in the function of "order" processing for the parts into the whole. His response (**this was the only comment in this entire text that was attributable to my brother**):

“Well, you can’t really do it because of the difficulty in obtaining what’s considered an image of the AT REST BRAIN.”

This was the **key** statement all parents needed to keep in mind throughout the discussion that followed.

Given my brother’s knowledge of MRI technology and his immense contributions to this field, I trusted his views on "practicality" when it came to brain studies done with the use of an MRI to study specific functions within the brain.

When you were studying the heart, you could pretty well determine an "at rest" state... measured in heartbeats - or lack thereof (in the ultimate "at rest scenario"). You could also determine whether or not a tumor did or did not exist, etc. But, when it came to actually analyzing the brain's functions or processing, then - that "matter" became a little "grayer" - if I may use that pun. :o)

The more I thought about this, the more I realized just how true this really was!
My brother's one comment had haunted me for several days: “Well, you can’t really do it because of the difficulty in obtaining what’s considered an image of the AT REST BRAIN”...

think about that statement for a minute...

Did we not have numerous "brain studies" on all kinds of brain functioning and processing? The more I came to understand my brother's statement, the more I came to truly see that many of these "brain studies" were plagued with design flaws and as such, perhaps, at best, could be only "half truths" in terms of what was presented as "fact or finding" resulting from such studies. As such, I wanted to address some of these issues with "brain studies", as I saw them:

First, I saw two types of brain studies: 1) those that dealt with brain function and 2) those that dealt with brain structure.

The one common thing both of these had, however, was generally a comparison of the normal brain to the abnormal or, in this case, autistic brain.

Let us begin by examining the above statement on the at rest brain. Just what exactly was "an at rest brain?" That, indeed, was quite a question! And, there should be a very good answer to that question given the “normal at rest brain” was what was needed for comparison of the abnormal, or autistic brain to the "normal" brain. I would argue that an "at rest brain" was probably necessary for both types of studies in terms of comparisons being made between the normal and autistic brain (or any other brain, for that matter).

So, what – exactly - was an at rest brain? **I thought about that for a long time, and, honestly, my conclusion was that there was no such thing!**

To any scientist that would say otherwise, I had only one response: Prove to me that what you were looking at was an at rest brain! You can’t do it! There was no such thing!

In actuality, although those in science would like us to think they understood a great deal about the brain what constituted an "at rest brain" or even a "normal brain" had yet to be defined! Let me explain why I believed this to be the case.

The fact that my brain was not engaged in a "conscious" activity did not mean that my brain was “at rest” – even though, I, myself, as a person, may be. Take for example the extreme case of a patient in a coma. In terms of studying such a person's brain structure, could you even begin to do it? Perhaps... but, perhaps only to a limited extent. After all, did the damaged brain not automatically often try to repair itself? How else could we explain the fact that patients in comas for years suddenly "woke up"? How else could we explain that an area physically damaged in the brain as a result of say, a stroke, could actually redirect an activity to another part of the brain as had so often been seen in numerous brain studies? How else could we explain what we saw in terms of brain processing in the autistic child? In such situations, both brain structure and brain function – surely - had be somehow changed for this to happen... that, somehow, by design, the brain automatically "rewired" itself by changing the physical neural paths and neural functions within specific structures.

But, even without looking into extreme cases, and in looking simply at a "normal brain", while I slept, was it not true that my brain still performed untold wonders?

It processed what I had gone through during the day, dealt with my emotions, gave me dreams to entertain me while it performed its wonders each night, healed and rejuvenated the cells in my body, triggered attacks on foreign substances, viruses or other poisons/intruders in my body, monitored the chemical balance within my body, monitored the action of my enzymes, monitored the action of all organs, nerves, muscles, etc., monitored my bodily functions so that even while I slept, I received that message to “go to the bathroom” in the middle of the night, monitored my environment so that I could be easily awakened if I heard my autistic child, an alarm, a car going by outside, or a siren in the distance, it addressed my problems while I slept and often allowed me to wake up with just the answer I needed to resolve so many of my issues, and indeed, if it perceived a weakness in one area - within itself -, it also worked at “rewiring itself” to once again allow me to function and cope with my world. Truly, the “at rest brain” was an amazing and active organ, indeed! During “waking hours” – those hours of the day, when I, physically “was awake”, these activities were magnified by the huge input of newly incoming information via the senses.

Given all that, just how exactly did science define the “at rest brain” used for comparison purposes? Well, come to think of that, I could honestly say I had never seen a study that provided an acceptable definition of the "at rest brain". Yet, science was obviously comfortable with the fact that it knew just what the “at rest brain” or even the "normal" brain was, since these were "used" in so very many comparison studies. But, did those in science truly know how to define the "at rest" or even the "normal" brain? Really? The fact that a normal brain often "re-wired" itself when –impaired, in any manner - was that not "normal" in and of itself…just the fact that the brain even attempted that! Indeed, this seemed to be kind of "by design". Hence, any brain that perceived within itself any impairment whatsoever was probably working at "fixing that impairment" by redirecting specific functioning.

And…just why did we spend 1/3 of our lives sleeping anyway? Could this be tied to the brain's need to repair itself along with the body? Again, the fact that we were not engaged in a conscious task did not mean that our brain was "at rest". I would argue that perhaps just the opposite was true -that when man thought the brain was at rest, it may actually be performing some of its greatest wonders, both in the abstract and the physical (processing all kinds of information but, more importantly repairing itself and the body as well).

Although I would have liked to be able to write of function verses structure, in the sense that "brain studies" were usually studies of **either** "function" or "structure" the simple fact was that the two were actually - inseparable. Could you really have studies that looked only at function and others that looked only at structure? Given the fact that the brain was constantly engaging in the monitoring of the overall body as well as in the monitoring of itself for potential impairment and the need to redirect specific functioning, I tend to think that you could not separate the function from the structure because both could be constantly changing as the brain physically fixed or rewired itself – physically changing neural path as well as neural function! In addition, there were several other key factors to consider, such as the brain's primary activities at specific times in life.

For example, let us look at the whole issue of memory.

How many of you had a memory from when you were an infant? - From when you were a year old? Two years old? Three years old? Four years old? Five years old? What was the very first memory you had…and, again, more importantly, how old were you when that event happened? The answer to this will vary for each and every person. But, there was obviously "a time" at which memory seemed to "turn on" and begin to imprint things in the human brain. Actually, if you thought about it, when it came to memory, only certain things were remembered at certain times.

For example, if I burned my finger on a match as an infant, I would not remember that particular "event" as an older child, or as an adult. But, somehow, the infant did remember "the lesson" that fire burned the next day and from that time on. Thus, the actual event was forgotten, yet the lesson was learned for life! So, why was that? Why did memories work this way?

There was an old saying that "you never forget…it is just your ability to recall that changes over time". But, if even I could not recall an experience, how could science possibly know that I had ever experienced something or not? How could science say that "my memory" was not working - properly? Indeed, I would argue that it could not! I would also argue that the same applied to the whole issue of the abnormal autistic brain (or any other brain – even a "normal one").

The fact that an autistic child could not recall something, did that mean he had not learned it? From what I had seen in my own son, and from what I now believed to understand in terms of the working of the autistic brain, I honestly thought that Zachary knew much more than I could even begin to imagine. He was constantly doing or saying things and I found myself asking: Where did he get that – like the incident I had described as it related to his "nudity" in my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism. Zachary had been playing in water outside and so, before coming in, I had taken all his clothes off in the garage. Someone had locked the door leading from the garage to the house. As my nephew (who had been visiting with his family) and I both knocked on the door and said: "open the door", Zachary, out of nowhere chimed in with an almost anxious, "I'm naked". Interestingly, this had been one of the first times I actually noticed anxiety in Zachary. But, in terms of the "I'm naked" comment itself, I had no idea where he had picked that up – but obviously, he understood the concept of "I'm naked".

As a child grew, his brain obviously became more active or inactive in specific functions... be those functions memories or the redirecting of specific functions to other areas of the brain as a result of impairment in one area. While the infant's brain was more worried about the next meal and overall safety, the older brain, of say a two year old, was more concerned with things in the environment, as the child became more and more aware of his surroundings and became more and more independent. So, if brain development was key to certain functions or activities taking place, as displayed by the various colors in MRI scans, then, I had another question for the medical field and all parents out there. But, before I could ask that question, I wanted all readers to look at this picture.

This was a picture of my son, Zachary (on the right) and of a child born just 2 days after him (on the left). Zachary weighed exactly 9 pounds at birth...the other child weighed 8 pounds and 3 ounces. In this picture, the children were just 2 months old. Note that Zachary was now HUGE compared to the other child. This could easily be explained by the fact that he ate constantly... always wanting the "high" from the natural opiate effect of casein (dairy protein) he got from milk. Zachary ate so much, in fact, that for quite a while he woke me almost every 20 to 30 minutes during the night. I had been so completely sleep deprived by this, that I could no longer continue breastfeeding after only three weeks. Zachary's constant feedings continued even while on formula. His pediatrician used to call Zachary "the moose". As I mention in my first book, if you, or someone else was "joking" about your child in any way - either appearance, future profession, etc., look closely... what you, or they, were laughing at may turn out not to be a "joking" matter - at all - but an indication of a possible problem down the road!

By two months, my son's brain was clearly, physically, much larger than that of the child next to him although, chronologically, both children were basically of the same age – having been born only 2 days apart! Mal-absorption, I now came to understand, could work both ways. A child could be big or small in comparison to his peers and still not be receiving the appropriate nutrients needed by his body. Eating more did not mean that Zachary was in better health. Needless to say, in looking at this picture, yet more flaws or "half truths" in brain studies came to mind.

For example, there were many studies that “indicated” autistic children's brains were "abnormally big" in some way, almost implying these children suffered from encephalitis. When I saw such studies, I now tended to ask myself a few very basic questions.

I had seen time and time again where studies claimed to make the case that the autistic brain was much larger than the normal brain. Indeed – yes - one could easily see that my son's brain was much larger than that of the child next to him. If I were only provided with chronological age and "brain size", perhaps there would indeed be reason for concern... but was there? Really? Well, I could only respond that I would be a little more worried if Zachary’s brain had not grown to fit his body. :o)

So, whenever I saw a study that tried to illustrate the autistic brain was abnormally large, the first thing I now asked was: What about the rest of the body? Bottom line - if the brain size matched the body size, then, I was ok. If, however, the brain was huge and the body had remained of normal size, then, obviously, I would be a little more worried. So, to parents, I would say, make sure you always get the rest of the story, in this case, comparative body measurements. Thus, unless relative body measurements were also given in order to evaluate whether or not "overall brain size" was appropriate, such studies were providing only "half truths" - at best!

The fact that my child's brain was so much larger than the child next to him also necessitated that the specific "connections" within his brain would also, overall, be more developed.

When I first began to consider "all those brain studies" and what they truly told us, I must admit that my initial reaction was to say that these studies were so flawed they basically told us nothing! But, as I pondered this question of "what all those brain studies were telling us", I came to the conclusion that we could indeed draw some information from "some of them". I still had many concerns, however.

How, for example did you isolate, or set aside the issue with greater overall brain development (as seen in Zachary when compared to the child next to him) and determine what within that greater "overall development", was **further** abnormally developed within the autistic child. For example, how do you distinguish between overall greater brain development and a specific area of the brain that showed greater, further development when the overall brain was bigger than “normal”. In other words, scientists needed to look at what was simply greater growth due to overeating and what was "greater development" within the brain due to the autism itself! But, how did you separate the two? This indeed, was a huge task, in my opinion!

If one were truly able to isolate these variables, then yes, perhaps we could learn something in looking at the autistic brain. If some specific areas could be determined as yet "more developed" - in spite of issues relating to overall greater brain development, as shown above

- then, indeed, these would be areas of greater interest. The fact that even within the greater overall brain, some areas of the brain appeared "more developed" - **still** - than could even be explained by differences in eating patterns, perhaps these specific, still much more overly developed areas had to be an indication of greater activity in that area in the autistic child, as I suspected under-development could be an indication of a problem area as well.

Given the overwhelming concern with the "ordering function" as it related to the integration of the parts into the whole, I believed some of these more "developed" or larger areas within the overall more developed brain as shown in Zachary, must have had something to do with this processing and integrating of the parts into the whole... with the child's constant need or attempt at decoding his world! I also believed the role of color and motion in the autistic child most likely resulted in differences in brain development too – as would the inability to properly integrate information from all five senses and the peripheral nervous system as well!

It was important to be able to isolate those factors/variables that could be explained simply based on greater overall development of the brain as a result of "overeating" and thus growing faster - from those areas that "grew faster or more slowly” specifically as a result of autism.

If Zachary's brain was so much larger than that of the child next to him who had the same chronological age, then, I had to believe that as a result of that greater and faster development only... that his "more overall developed brain" was also processing things in a more advanced way than would be the case based simply on his chronological age. I believed that the very size of his brain alone and the fact that it had "grown faster" by definition, means that it had "more connections" and that as such, it had to be "more advanced" than would be the case based on chronological age only. Through development alone, as shown in this picture, I would fully expect the larger brain to function differently than that of the smaller child - even though both children had the same chronologic age, it was much more difficult to determine the developmental age of each child’s brain.

If that was the case, then, I would argue that Zachary was most likely processing things differently, too, simply as a result of that overall greater development. Was that a good thing? A bad thing? Who was to say? I think in some cases that could be good, as evidenced by the “savant-type” functioning in so many of these children, but that it could also be bad, as I suspected was the case in respects to issues such as imaginary play.

Yet, no one knew for sure what went on in the brain…especially not in the brain of an infant or even a child…and even less so in the brain of an autistic infant or child. Science could not control the thinking of infants/young children and/or of the autistic the way it believed it could more easily manipulate an adult’s thinking in brain studies. You could ask an infant what he was thinking about at a particular time. And, although you could ask a small child what he was thinking about, they probably were not “in tune” enough to tell you absolutely everything that was going through their minds (or were sometimes embarrassed to even tell you…like when they were thinking: “why are they doing all these things to me?” or, thinking "It's kind of scary in this big machine", etc.). How did those “hidden thoughts” impact brain scans in all these brain studies?

Indeed, with the passage of time, what concerned an infant verses a young child in terms of the area of his fascination changed greatly. A two year old was not concerned with the same things that occupied a five or sixteen year old. Memories also began to be imprinted with the passage of time. Daydreams were different. Thoughts, emotions, physical changes were different, too - each triggered by the brain!

Also, in comparing the "autistic child" to the "normal child", could comparisons really be made? After all, what was to say that a child normal at birth would not develop autism later on? Was the onset of autism genetic or was it related to environmental factors? If genetic, then a child who did not have autism by the age of three or so, probably would not develop it later on. But, if autism was due to outside factors, such as vaccinations, then a “normal child” scan today, may not be normal in the future, and as such, could probably not be used in comparison studies of the “autistic child” to the “normal child” since that normal child may not “continue to be normal in the future” if he developed autism. Were all these factors considered? Was autism genetic? Was it due to environmental factors? Unless the answer to that question was clear, I suspected many of these brain studies were further, inherently, flawed! Were children followed through age 4 for example, to ensure they did not later develop autism prior to the publishing of any comparison studies of the "autistic" verses the "normal" brain? Would that brain continue to be considered "normal" or would it be changed due to environmental factors? So, were all those normal brain scans really “normal”?... or, could some of them also show signs of autism later in life? How many children once considered “normal” for brain scans had later developed autism? And, was it right to assume that because the brain had certain areas that were "larger" or "smaller" in autism that this was necessarily bad or good? This certainly led us into the whole discussion of "use it or lose it".

It was a well-known fact that with so much in the human body, the more something was used, the more it developed. The more memory exercises one did, the better one's memory. The more physical exercise one did, the stronger the muscles, etc. In my opinion, the "use it or lose it" concept could also be applied to the functioning of the autistic brain – or any human brain.

Perhaps the very fact that the autistic child was constantly engaged in trying to "break the code", in trying to integrate the parts to the whole in his world meant that those functions dealing with order processing, and specifically, as that related to the integration of the parts into the whole, explained why certain areas of the brain were indeed more developed than those seen in "normal children".

I also suspected that the use of color and the creation of one's own "code to life" were also areas necessitating further investigation.

And, how does spirituality fit into the picture? That was certainly one of those abstract subjects science tended to shy away from. But, it certainly was a valid issue in this discussion. How was it that some human brains came to a spiritual understanding at a very early age (at 3, 4, or 5) and yet others, never achieve a spiritual understanding at all? Could we simply discount spirituality and/or the soul because science could not prove it existed? No - we could not. So, how did such issues come into play?

Science could not even begin to understand these complexities and, I would argue, the same was true for the human brain in general.

We still do not know one-thousandth of one percent of what nature has revealed to us.
Albert Einstein

For decades, we thought we knew that "this specific area was related to this specific function". I would argue that if my theory on autism and the inability of the autistic child to properly integrate the parts that make up the whole was correct, that indeed, much of what we once thought to be true of the brain, could simply no longer be true – especially as that related to brain injury or impairment!

If, as I suspected, the underlying assumptions to basic brain structure and function were incorrect in terms of the “injured brain”, be that an autistic brain or any other brain, then, I could not help but conclude that the "results" of the majority of the studies we had done so far, were incorrect too! If this were true, the implications for past and more importantly, for future brain studies – all brain studies - were **huge** indeed!

Autism, a disorder that had so long been placed on a back burner in terms of funding provided in the past, had now moved to the forefront of all brain research, because, only autism, could truly show scientists how various areas of the brain could react to a brain injury… independently of one another!

The misfortune of these children had become a huge area of opportunity in discovering what truly could be done in helping anyone who had sustained a brain injury via the use of “alternative” sensory input for specific functions. Perhaps in this twist of fate, the funding that had so desperately been needed for autistic children in terms of both research and behavior therapy – since behavior therapy also could now provide invaluable insights – could now be provided for these children, in the hopes of helping not only the autistic, but all persons who had suffered any type of brain injury – be that injury as a result of a stroke, an accident – anything – the autistic mind, surely would prove invaluable in learning so much in terms of how the human brain really worked! The potential savings to society in terms of speech therapy, rehabilitation, insurance costs, medical costs, emotional costs, etc. – could indeed be huge!

Children, once so forgotten by so many, and so completely failed by society and “the system” in general, could now, through their “breaking of the code”, provide the keys to so much more – and as such, their plight, in an odd twist of fate, could unite the

world in its constant search man had in understanding “himself”. Children whose concepts of “self” had indeed , so often been lost, now held the keys that could remove not only their shackles, but the shackles of so many others!

It had been well-known and scientifically documented that often times, when one part of the brain was impaired, the brain re-wired itself and another section of it took over for the impacted area! In the past, we knew that certain language functions could take over for others, but I doubted anyone could possibly have suspected that “alternative sensory information” could be used by the brain to perform functions that sensory information was never intended to perform – at least not given man’s previously existing knowledge base!

If this was the case, what happened in the autistic child when this one function so greatly impacted all aspects of his functioning... just "how much rewiring" was actually "going on" in these children? And, more importantly, how much was actually – possible! One could not help but theorize that perhaps what man had for so long thought was “rewiring” was indeed not “rewiring” but simply the “making live” of “alternative wires” that were already there!

In my opinion, the brain of these children was undergoing tremendous "changes in its circuitry", indeed, in both its form and function, as it attempted to make sense of the world about it and attempted to integrate information on all these levels based on this one impairment alone! Indeed the child's brain needed to “reactivate specific areas” in terms of how it processed sensory, emotional, social, behavioral, sexual, motor, communication information and all other possible aspects of life also. The fact that the autistic brain could attempt to "fix itself" on so many levels as the child constantly worked to "break the code" was amazing indeed!

The best analogy I could provide was that of laying cable. It was my belief that the “cables” integrating the entire network – central nervous system and the peripheral nervous system – had been laid while the child was in the womb. This cabling, encompassing all areas of functioning in the brain, were found throughout its structure. Yet, other than a few truly “operating sections” (i.e., primary areas of function), most of that cable could still be considered “black cable” – cable not yet in use. It was there, throughout the structure, integrating the entire network, but only specific sections were actually “active” in terms of specific functions.

Those sections “most active” in specific functions, man had somewhat identified – and as such, “categorized” the brain, and indeed, the entire central and peripheral nervous systems in terms of its “structure and function”. Yet, this continuous cabling made it such that “the whole” was still very much interconnected… and as such, if one part of the cable “went down”, the brain attempted to bring “backups” online!

In my opinion, the fact that this interconnected cabling was found throughout the brain – either as “black cable” or “lit” cable, meant that the capability was there for some sections to take over the function of other sections if a “blackout” occurred. Thus, some functioning, for many functions, in my view, simply had to exist throughout various areas of the brain as opposed to being limited to one specific area within the brain. **It was all just a matter of finding the "light source", the alternative sensory input necessary, to light the "backup" cable**.

To understand not only the physical changes within the autistic brain but also the chemical and functional changes that surely also had to be taking place became mind-boggling but it also made me stand in **total awe** of the human brain in its attempt to "more fully activate" areas once less involved, but in my opinion, involved nonetheless, in specific tasks and to adapt to the changes within its own form and function as a result of any brain injury.

If you then threw in the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten and their impact on the central and peripheral nervous systems, the puzzle of the autistic mind became even still more intriguing as within that, lay **perhaps the keys to unraveling the effects of opiates on several key systems within the body – those things that "numbed" man in so many ways – as did for example, drugs and alcohol!**

Autism now touched absolutely all brain injury and brain processing and/or structure studies and held within it the keys to rehabilitation in so, so many areas – speech impairment, motor impairment, emotional impairments, disorders dealing with issues of the "self", psychological disorders such as obsessive compulsive behavior, personality disorders, countless behavioral and emotional issues as they related to aggression, hate, fear, anger, love, joy, frustration, issues of crime, issues related to the improper functioning of the body as it related to the immune system, the digestive system, instincts, motion, sexual behavior, social behavior, mathematical and language processing, issues related to the effects of opiates such as drugs and alcohol on the body… the understanding of so many issues, could now truly move forward as a result of a disorder that had so devastated so many children – a disorder, that as damaging as it had been by severing so many critical connections, for science now removed so many "variables" in the study of the human brain!

Children once so forgotten and left in their own world – their families so often devastated emotionally, financially and physically – now held the keys that would break the code to so much!

I cautioned all parents against allowing their autistic children to now be used as "rats" by those who now had the most to gain politically and financially by the study of these children – the government and the pharmaceuticals.

All research involving autistic children had to be reviewed by experts in all fields of autism, including diet, immune system issues etc., prior to it being allowed in order to ensure the safety of these children who could now, more than ever, be abused by a system that had already failed them in so many areas.

Only **independent** researchers trained in issues of autism, researchers not tied to government agencies or the pharmaceuticals could do what was in the best interest of these children first and foremost. The danger of these children becoming – now – nothing more than "lab rats", in my view, was overwhelming because these children could now - literally - save society, governments, pharmaceuticals, insurance companies, etc. – hundreds of billions – in research and therapy expenditures/programs as research could now become much more focused as these children could allow for much more specific study of very specific structures and functions within now very isolated areas of the brain – doing away with many variables that, in the past, so often made so many research studies "inconclusive". In addition, insurance companies themselves could save from what was learned via these children in areas of speech therapy, mental health care costs, and perhaps physical therapy, etc.!

Austistic children, by what they could teach society, children once thought "uninsurable" could now, potentially, save the insurance companies themselves – billions! Children and their parents whose voices the government and the pharmaceuticals had tried so desperately to silence now held within them priceless observations in terms of understanding man himself in so many areas. What an ironic twist of fate - indeed!

The further potential harm that could be caused to these children via research organizations not first and foremost dedicated to the recovery of the autistic was a huge issue indeed! Any further damage to these children – by researchers now in a professional, political and/or financial race to find the answers to so much – had to be minimized. And, that could only be accomplished by having independent centers that worked first and foremost at the recovery of these children via the least intrusive methods – and that, primarily would consist of intense behavior therapy! Only persons truly knowledgeable in issues related to autism – issues of diet, immune system malfunctions, opiate effects, etc. – working closely with parents, could truly do what was in the best interest of these children, and as such, of society overall… there was, indeed, much to be learned from autistic children, but it could not be at the expense of their well being – and the potential for that was huge!

Parents had to be united in requesting third party testing and research facilities - facilities whose focus would first and foremost be, the recovery of these children via behavior therapy methods that would first and foremost look to understand the brain through the use of specialized teaching tools using "alternative sensory input".

A great deal could be learned by simply providing that "alternative sensory information" and seeing how the autistic child reacted from a behavioral, social, emotional, and physical perspective. Brain scans and, pharmaceutical products, especially should only be considered as "last resorts".

The government complained each year of escalating health care costs, but, quite frankly, given the fact that the government was so closely tied to the pharmaceutical industry, in so many ways, I now wondered if those "complaints" were nothing more than "smokescreens" because when you complain about costs, etc., naturally, you get allocated more tax dollars – for "costs" and "research" too, of course, to further help reduce those ever-escalating costs – research that all too often, was conducted at public institutions/universities and subsidized or worked hand-in-hand with pharmaceutical research, too! That vicious money wheel ran not only corporate America – in my opinion, it ran our government institutions, as well!

As parents, therefore, before we took any of these "brain studies" - past or future - into serious consideration, or trusted anyone other than ourselves to do what was in the best interest of our children, we had to ask ourselves some very serious questions and that included always questioning who was truly funding "the labs" behind so many of what were "half truth" studies! And, I do mean **the lab**, **overall**…**not just a particular research study**. Sure - the government provided grants, but, if 20% of my funding came from the government, and the other 80% from pharmaceuticals, would a scientist really jeopardize his "lab" by saying anything bad about a particular pharmaceutical or product in even a government funded study? The fact that the pharmaceutical industry contributed so heavily to Washington made me skeptical not only of pharmaceutical funded studies but of government funded studies as well. I had serious reservations that either group could be "impartial" in its findings on issues related to the autism – and especially, vaccinations! Money spoke loudly and it was a well-known fact that the pharmaceuticals had a very strong hand and powerful voice in Washington.

A "critical" study, I suspected, probably would not get too much press and would probably be shown as having "inconclusive results". Inconclusive results, after all, had a benefit in and of themselves…they were a reason to request more government funding without offending other major contributors. It was unfortunate, but, I feared, perhaps too often true!

I cautioned all parents to carefully criticize "studies" that seemed to show, for example, that the autistic responded favorably to certain drugs. Too often, the study was presented as: "Autistic children greatly improved in this area when given this drug"... and what these studies fail to tell you was that this "improvement" would have been seen in ANY child with the same issue. For example, studies that showed "aggression" was greatly reduced in studies with autistic children when given a particular drug often failed to mention that this particular drug was actually a tranquilizer - so, yes - I would expect to see "reduced aggression" in an autistic child given this drug... but then, I would also expect to see that in ANY child too - not just the autistic!

Indeed, when it came to autism, there was a huge need in this field, in my opinion - a need for independent research…where a lab was not funded at all by pharmaceuticals or government agencies involved in vaccination programs where conflicts of interest were sure to fog one's judgment. Only then would many of the half-truths that had been put forward as "fact", such as the whole issue of the scientific community even being able to define the "at rest brain", be a little closer to the actual truth.

The benefits of technology such as MRI could only be understood from an understanding of its limitations as well, and, I would argue, also with an understanding of the many, many limitations of man himself in truly understanding the countless, complex issues that go on within the human brain!

We cannot order men to see the truth or prohibit them from indulging in error.
Max Planck, Philosophy of Physics, 1936

Seeing things in a new light was indeed difficult for man, but that was how science moved forward. Man did not always think the Earth was round! Theories came and went every day! Persons in science who were really looking for the truth would continue to seek the truth and those who attempted to hide the truth would eventually be revealed as well.

MRI technology was indeed quite fascinating and in the future, it would continue to greatly add to our understanding of the human brain, however, I for one, truly believed MRI itself was only in its infancy...and undoubtedly would have many growing pains to go through before any concrete conclusions could really be drawn when it came to brain processes. MRIs would continue to reveal fascinating things, however, cool technology with a possible answer years, perhaps decades away did little to help save our children now... and, as parents, we needed the biggest “bang for our buck” and we needed to do what best helped save our children - today!

As such, I encouraged all parents stand together in requesting that government funding be provided primarily where it could do the most good - in the areas of dietary intervention, immune system research and behavior therapy. These areas were having impacts - today - for these children. The pharmaceuticals could continue to fund their MRI research and go through the painstaking studies necessary to learn more about the human brain. Of course, that task would be much harder if autistic children, the key to so much more than autism, were not allowed by their parents to participate in brain studies, at all because of issues with distrust and possible lack of integrity due to the fact that **resistance** to investigating the possible autism-vaccination link by the pharmaceuticals, and indeed, by the government itself, had been so strong! Rebuilding a trust so blatantly violated, was going to be a huge undertaking indeed! The government and indeed the pharmaceuticals would have to take drastic steps in order to even begin rebuilding that trust.

For autistic children – and truly – for anyone with an illness or disability, time was of the essence. Parents needed to place greater emphasis on those things that worked rather than waiting for science to finally sort all this out... because that, indeed, could take a very long time, especially given the lack of trust among those involved in the autism-vaccination debate.

The issue of the “**at rest brain**” and “all those brain studies” was one I hoped parents of the autistic, especially, and society overall, were now more informed and critical about.

The “at rest brain” was an interesting issue indeed. I would argue that, physically, the body could be “regenerated” greatly from 20 or 30 minute “power naps” – that had indeed been proven. However, what too many scientist considered the “at rest brain”, the brain “apparently not involved in a task at the moment” may indeed be the “most active brain of all”! As such, I believed much of what we “thought we knew” in terms of the brain’s structure and function was now - out the window. If our underlying assumptions as to what truly constituted an “at rest brain” were incorrect, surely, “results” based on those assumptions would likely be incorrect as well.
I had many siblings... and I valued each and every one of their opinions. One of the more "laid back" of my siblings, an elementary school teacher, as I joked with her about the fact that she took a lot of “power naps”, once replied: "**Rest is work, too**!☺" Like my brother's comment on the "at rest brain", how true my sister's comment on “rest", **especially as it pertained to any "at rest brain".**

Finally, I wanted to briefly address the issue of sedation or anesthesia in the autistic child. It was a well-known fact that sedation was often difficult to achieve with autistic children. As such, I wondered if “stronger” sedatives were being used on these children in order to get EEGs, MRIs or perform surgical procedures, etc. I had serious concerns in this area of sedation of the autistic as it related to “how” children were being sedated in terms of the strength of the sedative. The fact that so many were difficult to sedate should be a warning bell in an of itself in terms of something being wrong when it comes to autistic children and the procedure of sedation.

I also wondered how studies using sedated children could possibly make the claim that EEGs obtained were “good” and were void of any “drug effect”. How could anyone possibly make that claim? We know so very little about the human brain that I doubt we could say that any “scan” obtained or any EEG reading was void of a drug effect. In my opinion, that was a rather “large leap” on the part of science! If we truly can not identify the “at rest brain”, how could we even begin to say whether or not that brain scan or image or EEG reading was void of any “drug effect”? In my opinion, the simple truth was that such “conclusions” were merely assumptions. But, what if those assumptions were incorrect?

In closing, I would hope that readers did remember the key statements provided in this section in terms of the defining of the "at rest brain" and the fact that:

The benefits of technology, such as MRI, could only fully be understood through understanding its limitations as well!!!

A Whole New Way Of Looking At Brain Structure And Function…

As had been the case as I neared the end of my first book, Saving Zachary: The Death And Rebirth Of A Family Coping With Autism, as I neared the end of this second book, with, literally, only a few hours remaining in terms of final edits, what I believed to be an absolutely critical thought – entered my mind.

I had just finished my morning walk. In writing this book, over a period of just 2 months, I had been getting up at 3:00, 4:00 or 5:00 am almost everyday and working until 10:00, 11:00 or 12:00 each night. Needless to say, as I neared the end of this document, I was completely exhausted, and as I neared the end of this book, even though I had only a couple of small sections to go in terms of doing revisions, I barely had the physical strength to continue. I was completely exhausted. I usually took my morning walk around 7:00 or 8:00 am., and upon returning from that walk, pretty well went right back to work. On this day, however, I was so exhausted that I decided to spend a few minutes on the couch to rest physically.

As I rested there a thought came into my mind. This thought had to do with the subject of anesthesia and the autistic child.

My sister-in-law had read a great many books on autism and spoken to many persons about her son's issues over the many years she had dealt with this disorder. Her son Andrew was now 11 years old. Christine had long ago told me of the "secretin story". She had heard someone else basically say that secretin, an enzyme occurring naturally in the body, had come to be viewed as a potential option for the autistic based upon something that had happened to a woman and her autistic son, who had surgery!

As Christine relayed this story to me, sketchy as it was, she basically said "this woman" had an autistic son who was nonverbal, that he went in for surgery and "came out talking". She went on to explain that the mother, baffled by this had asked the doctors what they had done to her son – because he had "gone in" nonverbal yet "came out" talking. Christine then explained how the mother was told the son had been given an injection of secretin. And, here started the "secretin treatment option".

From what I knew of secretin, pretty well everything indicated it was a very unproven therapy. As I wondered "why" results varied so much, my thoughts suddenly went to thoughts about anesthesia. I wondered why thoughts of "anesthesia" would enter my mind at this particular time… as I wondered about "secretin". How could anesthesia and secretin be related, I wondered. I thought about that and within 15 minutes, I came to another theory in terms of this "nonverbal child becoming verbal"… **perhaps the thing that had caused the child to speak was not the secretin, but the anesthesia!**

Secretin, given that it was an enzyme occurring naturally within the body, may have helped address, not the issues of speech, but rather the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten in the autistic child… or simply helped with better digestion. This certainly

could explain why secretin had such inconclusive results in terms of autistic children. Some autistic children were cfgf while others were not! This enzyme, secretin, was secreted at a very specific time during the digestive process to neutralize stomach acid. This enzyme was very much involved in digestion – that fact was certain - but how did that translate to a role in language production? I simply did not see that the two – secretin and language production - "went together".

Zachary had been on digestive enzymes to break down foods and prevent the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten for over 6 months now. Yet, Zachary's language production had not really been impacted by enzyme supplements. I suspected that secretin, also an enzyme, could have had some impact in autistic children in neutralizing the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten, but, again, I just did not see how it could have impacted language production. Secretin, from everything I had seen, was a rather expensive option in comparison to the enzymes I used with Zachary. Parents on message discussion boards seemed to indicate that the cost of secretin varied greatly… some saying it was as low as $45.00 per injection, others saying as high as several hundred dollars. If indeed, the effect of secretin was in that it was an enzyme and that its impact was really not one impacting speech development, but rather only one of addressing the natural opiate effect of children, then parents certainly had more affordable options.

In my opinion, the fact that secretin was an aid in digestive processes, certainly made sense in terms of my theory given that digestive functions were controlled within the brain stem – the only truly functioning area during the child's procedure while under general anesthesia, and as such, secretin, a digestive enzyme, would have been allowed to "do its thing" even under anesthesia!

I wondered about whether or not the effect of secretin could have somehow been tied to a "more focused digestive process" during this child's operation as a result of the numbing of the senses and thus, the fact that perhaps the body "reacted better" to the secretin and had somehow triggered the language. But, again, this could not have explained the generation of speech in this child – certainly not for any length of time. From what I knew of enzymes and how they worked, they were produced by the body and basically "used up" in digestion. They were not something that could be "stored" or used later. They acted on the foods at the specific time they were needed within the digestive process… and that was pretty well it. So, based on the functioning of enzymes, in general, there could be no long term effects based on secretin alone. Secretin could have only helped this child in matters relating to digestion (i.e., in eliminating the natural opiate effect of casein and gluten). Victoria Beck, the mother of this autistic child who had undergone an endoscopy, herself admitted that the changes in her child as a result of "secretin therapy" were over a two-year period. Although Zachary had not undergone secretin therapy, in the last two years, he too had made significant strides – strides I greatly attributed to his cfgf diet. Victoria Beck seemed to indicate that the initial secretin infusion for her son had been done by intravenous (IV). Secretin was known to stimulate the secretion of bile, the release of insulin, etc. But, again, these were digestive processes and, as such, yes simply in helping with digestive issues, the autistic child could do much better. But, I simply did not understand or see how secretin could be tied to language production – a function within the frontal lobe – where there clearly existed no functions tied to digestion.

Zachary had been on TMG for close to two years. This was a supplement made by Kirkman Labs, a company that specialized in supplements for the autistic. Although I suspected this product had initially helped produce speech in Zachary, in our experience, once we **removed** the TMG, conversation in Zachary began to flourish. This had always puzzled me. Had this simply been a fluke? A coincidence? I had no way of knowing! I knew B12 and folate were both the in TMG. Science had shown that low levels of B12 or folate could actually increase one's risk of losing hearing when older. Low B12 was also believed to lead to speech delays and permanent nerve damage if the B12 deficiencies were not corrected. Yet, enzymes, such as secretin, were not something you could "accumulate in the body". Enzymes worked on the foods as they went through the digestive track. A person undergoing an endoscopy would most likely have very little food in the digestive system since substances to "clean out" the digestive track would most likely have been given prior to the procedure. Thus, again, I simply did not see how secretin and possibly "additional B12" could have been "the answer" as to what caused increased speech in this child.

As I thought about this situation, I realized that anyone undergoing an endoscopy would likely have had some kind of anesthesia or sedation procedure to alleviate pain. Although I had no way of knowing the type of sedation given to this child, I truly wondered if the anesthesia or sedation could have somehow played a role. In my totally non-medical opinion, anesthesia gases or the smell of sedatives could be a likely explanation for the actual production of speech.

Gases or sedation liquids had a smell to them – some rather strong - and the olfactory cortex was in the frontal lobe… the area responsible for speech production… and it was a known fact that the autistic were more difficult to sedate than "normal" children. I wondered if stronger sedatives were used with the autistic… or sedatives that somehow impacted the brain differently than most sedatives/anesthetics.

If you looked at the brain's structure and function, it almost seemed to make no sense in certain cases. Why were specific functions not "grouped" into one area… and why was it that things like the sense of smell were grouped with motor functions and the production of speech, but visual and auditory processing were not? This was all very puzzling to me.

The structure and functions within the various lobes had to be somehow related… in other words, those things that went together, had to be there for a reason – even though, to me, initially, they appeared to make little sense in terms of "how things were scattered" in terms of structure and function. Thus, the olfactory cortex, I thought, simply had to be somehow "grouped with" speech production in the frontal lobe for a reason. If "things" within a specific area were together, and indeed, somehow related, then, if viewed that way, a lot of things did make sense!

The olfactory cortex, for example, was grouped in the frontal lobe, along with motor functions and language production. Anesthetic gas and other sedatives had a smell to them. If I ever tried to introduce new foods to Zachary, as soon as he smelled them, he ran off, literally! He did not simply, shy away or say, "no", he literally **RAN** off – a motor response! Smell, I now believed, actually triggered motor activity to a large extent!

I knew that if I breathed in helium that somehow impacted my voice (i.e., talking funny)… the production of language – also in the frontal lobe! Helium, I believed, impacted the vibration – or motion - of the vocal cords. Interesting indeed!

Taking all these factors together, the sense of smell, motor activity, and language production, I wondered if the sense of smell actually did belong with motor activity and speech production in that it literally - triggered it!

If that was the case, could I assume that the location of the senses actually triggered the activity within each respective lobe? I now believed this to could indeed be the case!

If, indeed, this child who had undergone a medical procedure had come out talking, perhaps it had been due not to the secretin, but to the gas(es) or the smell of liquids used in anesthesia or prior to anesthesia. Pre-medication of patients (oral, nasal or rectal) was often done prior to actual intravenous conscious sedation or anesthesia. Given this child was autistic, I can only suspect the procedure had been done under general anesthesia, but I had absolutely no way of verifying that. A local anesthetic only may have been used. Usually, however, conscious sedation was done in order to allow the patient to respond to basic commands or instructions. I did not believe that an autistic child, especially an autistic child who was very limited verbally, would have necessarily benefited the doctors by remaining somewhat awake during the procedure. **My guess** was that this child had most likely undergone general anesthesia… although this was only a guess on my part. From what I could find on this matter on the Internet, the interview of Victoria Beck by Dateline NBC did show that she asked about everything that had been done to her son… including the dose of anesthesia, but that she felt perhaps the secretin had caused the change in her son – a little boy who had barely spoken in two years was now reading flashcards and using words he had not really used before.

If as I suspected this child had undergone anesthesia – as appeared to be the case given the mother's comments – I truly believed that anesthesia, not secretin, could have been a much more likely and probably explanation for the production of speech in this child. As I thought of this particular boy, I then began to think of other autistic children whom I knew to have also undergone anesthesia.

My nephew, Andrew, had been born with a heart condition and as such, he had undergone heart surgery at a very, very young age. As such, Andrew, also had undergone anesthesia – and Andrew, at age 11, now spoke "incessantly".

Persistent talking was an indication of damage to the right part of the temporal lobe!

As with everything in autism, it was always a matters of "degrees" – of "how much" one did something, at least in my eyes.

As I thought a little further about anesthesia and its possible role in autism, I could not help but remember another child, now a young man, approximately 30 years old, who, although not diagnosed as autistic when he was a child now also very much fit into this picture. This young man, although never diagnosed as autistic, had indeed exhibited, throughout his life, the uncanny ability to remember countless facts, had difficulty with social interaction and so on. Since this young man was very, very ill, in order to maintain his privacy, I would simply refer to him as Patrick, although this was not his name. I had always believed Patrick could certainly have been an undiagnosed case of autism – but there was much more about Patrick that now made me wonder about a lot of things – especially in relation to this issue of temporal lobe damage, incessant talking and the possible role of anesthesia!

Patrick had been born with serious kidney problems. He had been ill all of his life and had undergone several operations – including two failed kidney transplants! At approximately 30 years of age, Patrick could now no longer "take in" more than a cup or less of fluid per day. He was constantly exhausted and it took very little, physically, to drain him totally. He only had a very small part of one kidney working. Needless to say, he was a very, very ill young man and he was constantly undergoing dialysis. Indeed, the life of his parents had completely revolved around their son and his dialysis.

As I thought about these three children – my son Zachary, my nephew Andrew and this other child, Patrick - and their common characteristics, the possible role of anesthesia in their lives, troubled me!

Zachary, my own son, had undergone general anesthesia for a broken arm at the age of four. He had fallen off a table and had broken both bones in his left arm. Zachary had only been under the influence of general anesthesia for 15 minutes or so. Although I had wanted to go with local anesthesia only, the surgeon had insisted that for Zachary, he should be put "completely under" – that for young children like this, it "was best to put them under". He felt this was moreso true given Zachary's autism. I had always wondered about whether or not this was "accepted practice", but, at the time, I had been so concerned about the fact that Zachary had broken his arm and the pain it had caused him (he cried incessantly), I just wanted it fixed with the least amount of stress and pain possible – but I certainly had raised my concerns and desire to have him only get a local anesthetic. In the end, however, I went with the "experts" and agreed to the general anesthesia. Since we had no health insurance, that simple broken arm ended up costing us over $5,500.00 – unbelievable! Zachary had only in the last two months started to show more conversation (the anesthesia had happened over a year ago).

Andrew, due to his heart operation, at approximately age 5, had also undergone general anesthesia – for a much longer period than had Zachary. Andrew spoke incessantly (a sign of right temporal lobe damage). He also had greater difficulty in remembering certain things than Zachary did. Andrew was now 11 years of age and other than being autistic, physically, he could now run, play, and live the life of a very active child. His mother could not recall exactly when speech "took off", but she did state that she did not feel it was right away after the operation. She had been told that **better cardiac capacity could result in improved speech**.

Patrick had undergone the most anesthesia as a result of his two failed kidney transplant operations. He also exhibited **the most** "incessant talking".

As I considered these three boys, their autistic characteristics, and their exposure to anesthesia, a few things became very troubling.

My sister-in-law had been told that "more talking" was the result of the heart working better. But, was it? I suspected, in my "non-medical" opinion, that it had less to do with heart functioning and more to do with temporal lobe damage.

Patrick had undergone several operations. He was a fighter and I truly admired his determination and will to live. Over the years, however, Patrick had become weaker and weaker. An extended conversation was now enough to make him very tired. He was very, very pale (with almost transparent like skin) - to me, indicating a poor circulation - and as such, a badly functioning heart. **Although dialysis was also tied to "the blood", the simple fact was that <u>dialysis did not change the color of the blood</u>… the blood was red when it left the body and it was still red when it reentered the body. So dialysis alone, could not change Patrick's overall skin color!** Patrick's "skin color", in my "non-medical" opinion, was due more to his poor circulation than his kidney impairment. Given the fact that it now took very little to completely exhaust him, I could only suspect that his lungs were very, very weak also. Any physical activity totally exhausted him. Yet, Patrick, the boy who had undergone so much anesthesia and who had the weakest heart of all, did the most "incessant talking" of all three boys – again, a sign of right temporal lobe damage.

Zachary's skin color, by far, was the best of all three boys! He had the **best working heart, but still spoke the least of the three boys** ! Granted, there were age differences, but, again, this was truly a matter of "degrees"… and the simple fact was that **the boy who appeared to have the weakest heart and lungs spoke the most – to me, indicating that "more speech" was not necessarily a function of better lung or heart capacity!**

As I started to consider the possible role of anesthesia in the lives of these three boys, I really wondered just how it could be that "anesthesia" could cause "better speech development" from a better functioning heart, as parents had often been told, "was a side effect" of surgical procedures. In relation to the experiences of the three boys above, this could **not** be the case.

So, why was there "more conversation" in Andrew than in Zachary, and in Patrick than in Andrew? Even when in his early teen years, Patrick had also been much more talkative than had been Andrew. The boy with the best lungs and heart spoke the least and the boy I believed to have the weakest lungs and heart spoke the most! In my "non-medical" opinion, I truly suspected this had more to do with temporal lobe damage as a result of undergoing anesthesia!

Given my theory of the brain and how it worked, this too, in my "non-medical" opinion, would make sense.

If you thought about it, general anesthesia had the effect of making one "insensitive" in that "when under" your senses basically did not work – you could not hear, smell, see, touch – and I suspect, not taste either. At least, so I thought. Thus, sensory input to all lobes was impacted as it simply "was not experienced"! Or was it? Hence, the age-old question… if a tree fell in the forest and no one was there to hear it fall…what impact did that have from a sensory perspective? Likewise, if a sound, or say, a smell was there during surgery, but the senses were somehow numbed, did those sounds and smells have an impact on the brain anyway? I now suspected that the sense of smell may actually still be active even while under general anesthesia. As I researched this the topic of brain structure and function, I soon discovered that the thalamus, the part of the brain that acted as a gateway between the central nervous system and the peripheral nervous system, was involved in sensory relays for all senses, **<u>except the sense of smell</u>**. This was very interesting indeed, especially given the fact that I was convinced the thalamus was somehow involved in autism… as did I believe was the corpus collosum. As stated earlier, the corpus collosum was the area of the brain often "cut" to help alleviate epileptic seizures. Yet, for patients with epilepsy, the onset of an epileptic seizure was usually accompanied by a warning – an "aura" – a smell that indicated a seizure was coming. All this was truly very interesting! I could not help but wonder what happened with the sense of smell when one was under anesthesia. Was the sense of smell "still working" even though all other senses were "numbed" under anesthesia? I now believed that this, indeed, was a strong possibility!

Both auditory and olfactory processing occurred in the temporal lobe – the very lobe associated with "incessant talking". The olfactory cortex was located in the frontal lobe… the very lobe associated with the production of speech! What happened to the senses while under anesthesia now became an intriguing question to say the least!

What happened in terms of the sense of touch, as surgeons worked? Although, clearly, one had no sensory input "felt" from touch while under anesthesia, did that mean the brain had not somehow "captured" that input anyway? These were all very interesting questions. Touch perception existed in the parietal lobe – the lobe responsible for sensory integration and somatosensory processing. It was a well known fact that anesthesia could result in issues with somatosensory processing. Many women who had been given local anesthetics during childbirth often loss control over bowel movement.

In this artificially induced sleep, only your brain stem activity, those things vital to life, continued, apparently, to work – so we thought! But, did the brain continue to "capture" the sensory information as well? I had absolutely - no idea! If it did however, what would happen to that information once a person "came out" of anesthesia-induced sleep?

In normal sleep, all sensory input was still very much working and still very much being integrated. The simple fact that I could heard a fire alarm or smelled smoke, and awoke as a result of sensory input, clearly showed that sensory input, integration and processing (relaying of information) as it related to vital functions and motor functions (making me open my eyes, get out of bed and out of the house), still worked while I slept. Yet, if a fire alarm went off or I smelled smoke while under anesthesia, I highly doubt I could awaken and leave the building on my own given sensory input, integration, processing and relaying were being blocked in terms of reaching my brain stem, so necessary to life functions and sight/sound reflexes. Interestingly, olfactory processing was in the temporal lobe (the lobe also associated with incessant speech) and in the frontal lobe (the lobe associated with speech production) – and the thalamus, the gateway for sensory information between the central and peripheral nervous systems, from what I could find, was not involved in the relay of olfactory information. Yet, sensory information as it related to the sense of smell also had to play some role in the parietal lobe (where sensory information was integrated), in the thalamus, and corpus collosum (the body's two gateways) and possibly in the **pons as well – that part of the brain that linked the medulla and the thalamus.**

From what I could see, there were therefore, three gateways, the corpus collosum, the thalamus… and the pons – the pons being the critical gateway involved in sensory and motor functions to the brain stem – where all life functions resided! Interestingly, the thalamus was involved in all sensory processing EXCEPT for olfactory (smell) processing. The olfactory cortex was located in the frontal lobe and olfactory processing was believed to occur in the temporal lobe!

As such, anesthesia, by actually numbing sensory "perception" was a very different "sleep" in regards to "sensory input" than was normal sleep! But, did that mean that sensory input was not somehow "captured" anyway by the brain even while under anesthesia? I was beginning to think that olfactory input was indeed at play here and still somewhat active even under anesthesia.

Although this was simply my "non-medical" opinion, I had to believe that somehow, the corpus collosum , the thalamus, the pons and the temporal and parietal lobes – again – had to be "at play". The corpus collosum, thalamus and pons seemed to all act as "gateways" in terms of sensory information, and the parietal lobe where integrated sensory information resided, but where also, somatosensory and touch processing seemed to reside and finally the temporal lobe, where auditory and olfactory processing resided – all had to play a role.

Visual processing – although not an issue with anesthesia, was located in the occipital lobe.

The "anesthesia-induced sleep" did impact overall functions as they related to life functions much in the same way they would be impacted in normal sleep, reducing the rate of vital functions to life. Its real impact, however was much more as it related to the flow of sensory information – either eliminating it completely (in the sense that input to the senses was not even "perceived" by the brain or numbing it completely (in the sense that even if captured by the brain, it was not being integrated and relayed)! Thus, it appeared the impact of anesthesia was only mild in terms of the brainstem life functions, but clearly impacted the functioning of the corpus collosum, thalamus and pons much more seriously.

I now also wondered, how longer exposure to anesthesia impacted both the parietal and temporal lobes in terms of sensory processing, integration and relaying of information.

Given what I knew to be true in these three boys, and the known structure and functioning of the brain, I now believed in my totally "non-medical" opinion, that, "incessant speech" possibly resulted from damage to the temporal lobe as a result of anesthesia gases inhaled – or smelled - during surgery. The case for incessant speech, indeed seemed stronger when viewed from a "sensory perspective" in terms of what was going on with the senses during anesthesia than it did from a purely life function enhancement perspective.

The fact was that with sensory input that had entered the four lobes via the central nervous system or with incoming sensory input from the peripheral nervous system, by the time either form of sensory input (from central nervous system or peripheral nervous system) had reached the pons, **it had already been integrated by the corpus collosum or transferred to the thalamus to then be relayed to the pons in relation to life functions**. Thus, this sensory information was no longer simply "raw sensory data"… it had already undergone extensive integration, processing and relaying functions. If "raw data" was not entering the brainstem via the pons, how could "raw data" leave the brainstem to flow "backwards". I did not believe that occurred at all. There was no "raw data" from a sensory input perspective in the brainstem. As such, I wondered, how increased heart functioning, possibly caused greater speech? In my "non-medical opinion" all that was happening in such things as heart surgery, was "something" **related to life functions themselves**… heart beat, breathing, digestion, swallowing, reflexes, regulation in body temperature, blood pressure, alertness, sleep and balance. I just could not see how any information could flow backwards to lead to "better speech" given these functions were isolated within the brain stem and the fact that no raw sensory input necessary to speech was present in the brain stem. Yes, you needed to breathe to speak… but there were plenty of speechless people who breathed too! As such, again, I simply did not believe that "life functions" were related to "speech functions" any more than they were related to **any** non-vital functions to life.

If the theory that increased speech was due to better functioning of say the heart and lungs were true, than, **many more functions** should also be better… but, clearly, that was not the case. A deaf person undergoing heart surgery remained deaf even after surgery. A blind person, undergoing heart surgery remained blind even after heart surgery. A paralyzed person undergoing heart surgery remained paralyzed even after heart surgery. A mute person undergoing heart surgery, it was believed, remained mute even after undergoing heart surgery. So, how had a nonverbal autistic boy gone into surgery without the ability to speak, yet two weeks later was very verbal? How long did anesthesia really impact the brain? To "come out" or awaken from anesthesia, the blood had to process the gas to make it leave the body via the lungs, but did all anesthetic gas molecules leave the brain? I truly wondered!

Given I now believed the sense of smell could possibly actually trigger motor function as it related to speech production, this could certainly explain why the autistic child who entered surgery mute, later became verbal. I suspected **gases** used in anesthesia or some other olfactory input in the form of a pre-medicating nasal or oral prep for sedation - an olfactory input to the frontal lobe - had been responsible for the production of language and played more of a role in this child's recovery of speech than did the secretin injection – especially given the fact that I knew helium, also a gas, affected the vocal cords! I now suspected that although a patient did not "perceive" sensory input via the four lobes while under general anesthesia, that sensory input, somehow still was captured by the four lobes and triggered some sensory response – in this case, the sense of smell, could if my theory were true, surely have triggered the production of language given both the olfactory cortex and the production of language were located in the frontal lobe and the thalamus was not involved in the processing of sensory information as it related to the sense of smell!

The brain stem involved functions vital to life only – heart rate, breathing, digestion, swallowing, reflexes, regulation of body temperature via sweating, blood pressure, alertness level, sleep and balance (vestibular issues). Better life functions, in and of themselves did not result in better sensory processing… the blind remained blind… and the deaf remained deaf… those paralyzed as a result of spinal cord injury remained paralyzed…only the sense of smell could possibly have played a role in the recovery of this autistic child's language!

In my opinion, the effect of sensory input was virtually non-existent in the brain stem with the exception of sight/sound reflexes! As such, damage to the senses, truly, as expected, would have very little impact on one's life functions! One could be blind, deaf, paralyzed as a result of nerve damage or a spinal cord injury, etc., and still be quite alive!

I could only conclude, in my very "non-medical opinion" that "improved life functions" did not play a role in the **generation** of speech, although they certainly could play a role in the capacity of speech (i.e., better breathing leading to better enunciation). However, **generation and capacity were two very separate issues**!

In view of my theory, I looked at it in terms of how it related to these three boys and possible temporal lobe impact as a result of anesthesia! I use the word "impact" here, because, I do not necessarily know that all impacts could be "bad" or "negative". In my view, some of these impacts were definitely bad, others, perhaps enhanced certain functioning. The temporal lobe was responsible for auditory and olfactory processing, memory acquisition, emotion, understanding language, categorization of objects, and some visual perception. Current research indicated that if the temporal lobe was damaged, one could experience selective attention in terms of sight and sound, difficulty understanding spoken words, issues with interest in sexual behavior, short term memory loss and interference with long-term memory loss, emotional issues (i.e., increased aggression), difficulty in face recognition, categorization issues and the persistent talking! Once again – how interesting!

In comparing Zachary and Andrew, my son and that of my sister-in-law, Zachary definitely did grasp math concepts much, much more easily than Andrew had. At age 11, Andrew could barely add numbers higher than the sum of 10 and he was very dependent on visual and motor input in doing math. For Andrew, there appeared to be less ability to process an auditory input – a math question verbally asked. Yet, Zachary could often give me the answer to basic addition based on a question alone. Andrew was much, more aggressive than Zachary. Overall, Zachary was a very mild child. Although there could be simply age related factors there associated with the fact that Andrew had experienced so many more frustrations than had Zachary simply based on age alone, I could not help but wonder! Zachary had also been cfgf for over two years now. Andrew had never been placed on a cfgf diet. Zachary had been on digestive enzymes for just over 6 months now. Andrew only started to take digestive enzymes in September of 2002.

Andrew's emotions, generally, I found were more difficult to control than Zachary's… and there definitely was the fact that Andrew had the persistent talking, whereas Zachary was, overall, a much more quiet child – talking and answering some questions, but certainly not showing any signs, at least not yet, of incessant speech!

Patrick, as long as I had known him, and that was well over 10 years, had always been a very mild, non-aggressive person. He was very calm and easy going in spite of his overwhelming medical condition. Undoubtedly, the need for dialysis, from early on in life had taught him patience. All three boys had a fantastic ability to remember facts. From an auditory perspective, Patrick understood the most in terms of answering questions, then, I would say Zachary, followed by Andrew if those questions had to do with math. In terms of questions related to other activities, I believed Patrick would again be first, then Andrew, then Zachary… in terms of overall language comprehension. Given the great variance in age – 30, 11 and 5 - that alone, however, I felt could be the reason for this variation among the boys. This was as much information as I could really provide in comparing these three boys at this time in terms of functions within the temporal lobe.

My limited observations of these three boys, in relation to one another, certainly opened entirely new areas of interest. Yet, as limited as these observations had been, they certainly were completely in line with this theory that language in the autistic child who had entered surgery mute and become verbal could have been solely triggered by an olfactory sensory input, based on brain structure - this certainly seemed plausible.

Could the "smell" of anesthesia actually *awaken* us to new possibilities in terms of brain research and possible options while still keeping in mind the effects of temporal lobe damage? - effects that were very serious indeed! Yet, there were other issues too that now had to be considered! How many women who had autistic children had undergone anesthesia (C-section) when that child was born? What about epidurals? The simple fact that 10,000 people per year died from anesthesia alone should have awakened us to the fact that this was "no simple procedure without risk". Perhaps many had lived through anesthesia only for us to discover later that they had possibly suffered temporal lobe damage. Again, the implications of this, for society, I knew

were huge! All this was but a theory, but, from a "common sense" perspective, it certainly appeared that this could be quite probable – that anesthesia could play a role in temporal lobe damage and result in incessant speech.

Could anesthesia explain the 10% of cases known as "infantile autism", those cases where autism was present from birth? I knew in my heart that Zachary had issues from very early on. I, myself, had never undergone anesthesia. I did, however, have a mouthful of silver fillings – mercury – and I suspected some of those could have "leaked" into my system and caused the damage – as could have the booster shot I received well before getting pregnant. From what I had read in the US Autism Ambassador's book, Autism and Vaccines The Story A Closer Look, there seemed to be research indicating that vaccinations could trigger illnesses several years away. **I had also discovered that many nursery lamps also contained mercury. Surely, as these lamps heated, there could be the possibility of mercury fumes being emitted above infants in maternity wards**.

There were now so many issues potentially involved in autism – vaccinations, mercury fillings and now, possibly – anesthesia and nursery lamps! Given some of the research I had read, vaccinations and mercury fillings were definite possibilities. There were so many issues that seemed to play into "autism" – and some of those issues, I also thought, might be oxygen deprivation and/or anesthesia. My sister-in-law had undergone anesthesia. Andrew had been a very difficult birth, and after 30 hours of labor, the decision was made to go with a C-section. All these things now went through my mind!

If anesthesia could be somehow involved all children were now at risk – and anyone undergoing surgery, potentially, could be risking temporal lobe damage resulting in possible memory loss, emotional issues, etc. Would the medical community be allowed to simply "sweep my suspicions under the carpet"? The pharmaceuticals, were, after all, those who provided products used in anesthesia. How could parents, and indeed, society, trust an industry that appeared to have so failed the public in the past in matters of trust in its refusal to allow for the proper investigation of a possible autism-vaccination link. How could we allow these issues not to be addressed given what we knew of brain structures and functions? Although I knew the medical community would be quick to criticize my thinking, let us not forget that my theory was based on brain structure and function and it certainly did seem to "fit together". Surely there were those in the medical field, those in neurology, who could see that. It was after all, neurology that had provided for us the "mapping of the brain" as it related to brain structure and function. Would neurologists now deny the validity of their own discipline in these matters? In my opinion, these issues simply had to be investigated.

Although an autistic child had been made to speak, if that speech had indeed resulted from anesthesia, as I now suspected it had, the implications could result in both excitement and apprehension – excitement in what this could mean in terms of brain research, apprehension in terms of what this could mean in view of potential brain damage.

The effects of temporal lobe damage included: selective attention in terms of sight and sound, difficulty understanding the spoken word, issues with interest in sexual behavior (increased or decreased), short term memory loss and interference with long term memory, emotional issues (i.e, increased aggression), difficulty in face recognition, categorization issues, and persistent talking). So many of these things were so common in the autistic.

Yet, if indeed the senses within a particular lobe could "trigger" function within that lobe, as I suspected smell had triggered language production in the frontal lobe, then, I wondered, what about other areas and other senses?

The sense of touch was located in the parietal lobe. Also found in this lobe, were somatosensory processing, spatial processing, visual attention, manipulation of objects and goal directed movement. Again, a sensory trigger, here, for the sense of touch , certainly looked like an option! Many parents had reported that visual stims such as spinning and the moving of a pencil in front of one's face, very quickly, were activities they often saw constantly in their children.

If you thought about this in terms of the potential **"trigger" of an activity by a sense**, it was plausible, again, that this was true. For example, the very act of holding a pencil, involved the sense of touch. As the autistic child "touched" this pencil, was visual attention actually triggered – could this indeed explain the quick motion some autistic children engaged in with pencils?

Could this be why the sense of touch also resulted in constant object manipulation? In Zachary, the most obvious example of this, was something he did that absolutely drove me insane. For as long as I could remember, when Zachary went to sleep, he always wanted to hold on to my hair and twirl it – to the point that it drove me so insane, I cut my hair length so that it was no longer at the center of my back, but very, very short – so that Zachary could no longer grasp and twirl it. If touch triggered object manipulation, this too, now made sense, because, the more the autistic child "touched" an object, the more he would manipulate it. This also helped explain why spinning could be so intense in Zachary. There were times when it was slow, but, I had always suspected that there was more to spinning than a visual stim – and indeed, that "something more" may have to do with the sense of touch also (in addition to the other interesting things spinning provided – like the completion of the whole – the doing away of the parts to the whole – as explained in my section on Spinning). So, if touch triggered object manipulation, it made perfect sense that the more Zachary spinned, the more he would want to spin! Yet, if I took away the object, often, Zachary was completely fine with that and made no fuss. Sure, some times he did fuss, but, usually, I could take things away and he was fine with it. The sense of touch, once broken, obviously no longer triggered object manipulation.

Also, this certainly could explain why I always walked with my head down when seriously thinking about something… if visual attention was related to the sense of touch, the only "touch" my body could perceive as a walked was that of my "feet on the pavement". Walking, looking up, just did not appear to be something we did inherently – at least not for me. :o) Certainly, you could train yourself to "look up", but, it would be interesting to observe where young children looked, what the focus of their visual attention was when they walked!

This also would make sense in terms of sexual behavior. The sense of touch was certainly involved in visual attention and object manipulation in sexuality also. It also would explain why touch worked so well for goal directed movement – why techniques such as "hand – over-hand" worked so well with these children. With Zachary, I just had to make him "touch something" and he would complete the task or goal! Again, it made perfect sense in view of what we saw in the autistic child.

It would thus seem that to stop some of these behaviors, you should simply prevent "touching" from happening in the first place. Well, given my recent finds in terms of "potty training", that too made sense – when I had removed the diaper, and Zachary could no longer "touch it", he had peed 5 times into the potty with no prompting on my part whatsoever. I also suspected that removing the diaper would be key to potty training in terms of stools too!

Issues with touch also explained toe walking. When a child walked on his toes, there existed a heightened sense of touch through the feet. Given the touch and somatosensory processing both resided in the parietal lobe, toe walking could also be explained by the sense of touch and the fact that it triggered certain somatosensory function perceptions.

If you looked at the senses in the temporal lobe, again, it seemed to make sense that the senses within that lobe could actually **trigger** the activities within that lobe. For example, auditory and olfactory processing were both in the temporal lobe… along with memory acquisition and emotion. Indeed, when one "smelled" something bad, be that an object, or even a person, an immediate emotion was produced… the same was true with sounds and explained why music could have a calming effect, yet a loud, obnoxious sound could produce a very negative effect. Sound could certainly explain the magnified emotion people seemed to have at concerts for example… the intense rush so often associated with "being there" as opposed to just watching on tv. The sounds, overall, in social situations, provided much greater variety.

If you looked at the occipital lobe, only the sense of vision was there. If damaged, it had often been observed that blind persons tended to develop better functioning in other sense. Again, this too made sense. Just as the autistic brain attempted to adjust to its world, so too would that of a blind person!

This was all very interesting indeed – especially if considered in terms of how the brain stem fit into all of this also. For example, undergoing general anesthesia seemed to basically "numb" incoming sensory input. This procedure somehow put a person to sleep and made it such that the sensory input was completely blocked – except perhaps olfactory input – unlike "normal sleep" where sensory input could still get through.

This was all very interesting indeed – especially if anesthesia, not secretin, may have played a role in helping a nonverbal autistic child to talk. Although, it appeared speech production in this autistic child could have resulted from anesthesia given the fact that incessant speech was associated with temporal lobe damage to the right part of the lobe, I also knew that close to 10,000 people died each year from general anesthesia and that it was a serious procedure to undergo. Yet, I somehow felt that anesthesia may hold some critical keys.

The fact that it somehow blocked sensory input during an operation, yet allowed for it to return upon "waking up" from that anesthesia, made me wonder how anesthesia provided the apparent "rebooting" for certain brain functions as a person "came out of anesthesia-induced sleep". If a "reboot" was indeed going on, could that concept be used to "reboot" autistic children as well in several key areas, such as language production, without the secondary effect of temporal lobe damage? Damage to the temporal lobe could certainly result in more than just incessant speech – as clearly indicated above.

The brain stem controlled all key "life functions", including "swallowing – another key area of difficulty for autistic children. There appeared to be no real "sensory input" in the brain stem (other than sight/sound reflex). Balance and vestibular functions were located there, however, as was the function of sleep. This certainly explained why family members were often told to "talk" to coma patients since it was believed that although they could not respond, they could hear. Although many coma patients had undoubtedly suffered serious physical, structural brain damage as a result of actual injury to the brain, perhaps, in some, if olfactory processing was tied to motor function, there may be a way to "wake them up" too, via anesthesia – a procedure that definitely impacts both sleep and sensory perception. Could anesthesia, in some of cases, "reboot" their systems too? I truly wondered.

Anesthesia definitely had an impact on the senses… everyone knew that… but, in addition to stopping sensory input, could it also be used to "start" sensory input functioning, too! Although I had absolutely no medical training, I wondered how anesthesia impacted the corpus collosum, the thalamus, the pons, and the parietal lobe…all areas I felt could very much be involved in the impairment of all sensory processing and information relay.

As mentioned earlier, the corpus collosum, the bundle of fibers between the right and left hemispheres of the brain allowed communication between the two hemispheres. Likewise, the thalamus acted as a gateway for information between the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord) and the peripheral nervous system (involved in somatosensory functioning, etc.)… and somatosensory functioning was after all – in the parietal lobe!

It was also in the parietal lobe that sensory information was integrated in order to understand a single concept – where the parts to the whole – were put together!

Autistic children could now break the code to so much. Many of them were diabetic, had epilepsy, Down's Syndrome and a host of other disorders that could now much more easily be studied as well. It was certainly easy to get carried away thinking of the possibilities.

Yet, the reality of any implications of anesthesia necessitated that adverse consequences also be kept in mind and as such, surely, a great deal of research would be necessary.

The issue of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) was another issue that came to mind as I researched vaccination issues. These were deaths where an autopsy failed to show the cause of death in infants. Most statistics I could find as they related to SIDS really only went back to approximately 1970. That in itself was interesting. Did we not have an issue with SIDS prior to 1970 – especially given families were much larger back then? Did that - in itself - not seem "odd"?

A website founded by persons concerned with the safety of childhood vaccinations provided invaluable information on this topic: **http://www.909shot.com/Articles/gnssids.htm. According to information on this site, most SIDS victims died between 2 and 4 months of age, with more boys being affected than girls (just as was the case with "autism") and although the government was quick to say SIDS was not caused by diphtheria, pertusis, tetanus (DPT) or other immunizations, according to articles posted on this website (http://www.909shot.com/Articles/gnssids.htm), National Vaccine Injury Compensation (a federal program to compensate families of the vaccine injured) provided to families in the 1990s, 86% of claims compensated included an assertion that DTP was the cause of death, with 43% of deaths having been specifically files as "SIDS". Also according to this site, http://www.909shot.com/Articles/gnssids.htm, was mention of a second database, this one maintained by the FDA over the 1990s, in regards to infant deaths where children had died within 3 days of receiving the DPT shot – in this database, 58% of the deaths had been listed by physicians as "SIDS". One truly has to wonder why these deaths had not been more clearly associated with the DPT vaccination by physicians but were instead listed as SIDS – an "unknown" cause of death! In my opinion, one could not help but wonder: Was the cause really "unknown" – or, did the government simply not want it "known"?**

The government was quick to say that no link to vaccinations was shown to cause SIDS. Yet, I kept coming back to the fact that our largest families existed prior to 1970… why were there basically no SIDS cases prior to the 1970s, when we had the greatest numbers of children? In 1970, there were 20 deaths per 1000 infants, according to the CDC. In 1992, that number had dropped to about half. By 1999, the number was said to be 7 in 1000 infants. The large drop in 1992, according to the government, could be attributed to the "Back To Sleep" campaign, a public health awareness campaign whereby parents were encouraged to make their children sleep on their backs. Yet, again, children slept in various positions prior to that, surely we should have "captured" more SIDS statistics prior to 1970s if "sleep position" was really the issue. I suspected the drop in SIDS death was probably more likely due to the fact that a specific vaccination was no longer being produced by that time.

In my opinion, the "back to sleep" program could simply not have, alone, caused this decrease in SIDS deaths and I suspected that perhaps the decrease had more to do with the fact that certain vaccinations may have been discontinued. It would certainly be easy enough based on the VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) database to determine which vaccines seemed to be the most often associated with vaccine injury reporting and to quietly remove these vaccines from the public. Of course, given the VAERS database was not available to the public for research, I had absolutely no way of confirming my "suspicions" on this subject. Given there appeared to be virtually no long term studies as they related to vaccinations, most studies lasting apparently only a few days to a few weeks one could not help but question how it was that the government could be so sure no such link existed. Likewise to say that SIDS happened more with young mothers was also misleading. Young mothers would themselves have been exposed to more mercury via their immunizations and dental amalgams.

My theory that there existed improper communication among the various parts of the brain and the body would certainly also help explain SIDS. The brain stem, specifically, the medulla, controlled vital "life functions" such as heart rate, breathing, swallowing, sleep, etc. **If this part of the brain was not properly communicating with those parts of the body it regulated, such as the heart and lungs, then, yes, I could certainly see that there could be a lack of a heartbeat or lack of breathing, or inability to swallow properly**. Perhaps placing a child on his back while he slept helped alleviate some issues with breathing and swallowing, but there had to be more to SIDS than simply "sleep position".

The autistic child, once a forgotten child, now held the keys to so much!

In closing this section, there was another area I felt the need to touch on – the area of truth and spirituality – undoubtedly a "touchy" subject for so many in science, yet a topic, I felt was also very much in need of discussion, because, there were, after all, scientists also involved in that area of functioning as it related to the brain, too! For those involved in studies of spirituality as it related to the brain, the only information I could provide was in telling you that as my relationship with Christ grew stronger and stronger, I came to understand much, much more. It was always soon after I had prayed or taken a walk to talk to God, by myself, that I had had another huge insight. Indeed, when I was close to 300 pages in the writing of this book, I thought I was very close to being done. Yet, as I wrote, more and more information surfaced within me… to the point that now, I ended up adding an additional 160 pages to this work… all those pages relating to insights on the complete failure to integrate sensory information and the relaying of that information, and the information in this section in terms of senses actually, possibly triggering functions within each part of the brain – all that, I had come to understand, as I had progressed through the writing of this book – all that, within a matter of about 10 days. The more I searched, the more I asked God for answers, the more I felt He provided them to me. Each night, I prayed that God guide my hands as I wrote, and He did. I suspect I was far from having hit everything "dead on" when it came to issues surrounding autism, yet, I felt there were truly many that had to at least be "in the ball park".

So many times, insights, literally happened in the very section where they belonged and at times, exactly where they needed to be provided for the reader! As difficult as the task of writing this document had been from an emotional and physical perspective – to complete this book in a matter 2 months - from a spiritual perspective, it had been a rewarding journey. At each turn, there was often emotional devastation as I came to better understand the overwhelming impact autism had had on my son, yet, at each turn, with that emotional devastation, often came new insights providing new hope. The bible states that Christ is the way, the truth and the light… and I honestly believed that as He revealed more and more of the truth to me as I grew spiritually! Did the key to finding "the truth" lie in spiritual growth? In my opinion, it did!

Spirituality was indeed one of those very "touchy" subjects for science, yet, I believed, that **"spirituality" may in fact be the only "thing" that helped keep man "in check" when all else failed**. Having a sense of right and wrong still went a long way. Man had not been able to identify the true "location" of the spirit within the body. This area of "spirituality" was indeed quite lacking from my basic "brain overview" as provided in this document. Yet, the fact that a person could experience an intensely spiritual experience from any of the senses, made me believe that perhaps, "the spirit" was, truly, everywhere within man and that to indeed "tap into" the spirit, to seek God, truly was the way to the truth and the light, the truth to the whole! In my personal experience, when all else had so failed around me, the spirit within me, and my relationship with God, indeed, was so often what kept me going! Those of you in research in terms of issue of spirituality, would also find the information in my final section, Putting It All Together, most interesting!

Surely, there would be many who would laugh at my views on spirituality. Yet, I suspected I had provided enough in this document, even for those laughing at issues of spirituality, to give my "theory" some rather serious thought! Those in science could easily discount issues of "spirituality", as I had experienced them – discounting this theory, however, and all that it explained in the autistic, would prove a little more challenging! :o)

The autistic child – once a forgotten child – now the key to so much!

Autistic children worldwide - once so forgotten and thought to be so "un-teachable" in so many ways - could now, teach the entire world so much, about man himself!

Parents of the autistic - whose voices and observations had for so long been ignored - now held within them observations and the keys to understanding so much! Observations once considered worthless, by many, were now among the most valuable of all! This, indeed was, truly, an ironic twist of fate!

OOPS!!! How Could Something So Simple Have Been Missed For So Long?

Although "missing link" had perhaps now been finally uncovered – the fact that there was "no link" to anything in the autistic brain – parents, surely, had many, many questions. Given the fact that the autistic child was so completely impacted by his disorder, in all areas of life, indeed, it was truly difficult to understand how something like this, truly a simple puzzle to resolve, could have been so difficult to see. The signs were all there…all pointing to the fact that the various sections of the brain were all acting independent of one another…

How could we have missed this - for decades!

Well, the first, obvious reaction that I had was to think that given the fact I could "put this together", and I was far from being a neurologist or scientist involved in the study of autism, my first reaction was that someone else simply had to have seen this – but chose to "no make this public". It was hard to believe that with all the neurologists currently working on autism, attention deficit and so many other issues, and the fact that these neurologists had a much clearer understanding than I did of the workings of the human brain, that "everyone" simply "missed this".

The simple fact of life was that although mercury had been used in vaccinations as a preservative since the 1930s, it was only as a result of a congressional mandate in 1999 that the mercury content in vaccinations had to be disclosed. Although mercury was the second most toxic substance known to man – second only to uranium – it appeared that given mercury had been used for close to 70 years in vaccinations, everyone simply "assumed" it was safe to continue doing so. For decades we had seen diseases eradicated. With the enthusiasm that surely resulted from the eradication and/or control of so many potentially deadly illnesses, it was easy to see why vaccination schedules were further compressed – to further "protect" children. With the compression of these vaccination schedules, however, more and more mercury was being pumped into our children – in a manner totally unregulated by the government, so much so, that children were now receiving up to 50 times the safe acceptable level of mercury as determined by government standards.

Children were now receiving up to 21 immunizations by the age of 2. We "immunized" for everything. Childhood diseases such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, etc. were no longer allowed or tolerated in society. It used to be that children were allowed to have this illnesses and that their bodies were allowed to develop their own immunities to them. That, however, was no longer the case. We now chose to immunize for everything and in doing so, we continued to raise the mercury levels that could make their ways into the brains of our children. Based on what we now knew of mercury and its impact on neuron development and likely neuron degeneration, as the facts started to be known and made public, the pharmaceuticals and the government agencies involved in vaccination programs rushed about in vain attempts to quiet the rising storms. It was truly a testimony to their lack of integrity that in spite of the facts relating to mercury poisoning being presented by scientists and the outcries of parents - worldwide - who were convinced their children had been injured by vaccinations, that these executives in the pharmaceutical industry and government agencies involved in vaccination policies continued to state, and even testified under oath, that there was no link between vaccinations and autism. I suppose one could say they were telling the truth in “some sense” when they stated there were no long-term studies showing any link between autism and vaccinations. Indeed, based on what I had read on the Internet on this subject and on evidence presented at Congressional Hearings led by Dan Burton, that could indeed be true – because, **apparently – there existed basically no long-term studies on vaccinations!**

Most vaccination studies, it appeared, lasted only a few days to a few weeks. There were basically none lasting a few months or years! Had we all simply assumed those in science had performed long-term studies when it came to vaccines?

And now, the government wanted to possibly make “mandatory” the smallpox vaccine on the American population. Given the apparent lack of long-term research on past vaccines I doubted the smallpox vaccine, new or old, had research that would be satisfactory to many. The government itself had admitted many would surely suffer adverse reactions to this vaccine. It was a known fact that one of those “adverse reactions” could be - death. Those with already weak or dysfunctional immune systems, such as children and adults with autism, would in all likelihood, be the most at risk of suffering such an adverse reaction. This certainly would explain why the CDC and the pharmaceuticals were so adamant about not “making public” their research – to do so, would, perhaps, show the **lack of research** on the issue of vaccination safety. Parents, doctors and scientists around the world were now sounding alarms and asking: “How could we have missed this for so long?”… and, in the face of possible mandatory vaccines and immunity for the pharmaceuticals, more persons in research, science, and vaccination safety advocacy groups were also now sounding very loud alarm bells when it came to issues of vaccination safety! Indeed the FDA itself, as it pushed for “more time” for study did not seem “as comfortable” with the issue of smallpox vaccination as were others in government. Why was that? Obviously, there had to be a reason for concern by the FDA itself!

The delivery of this message had been a very difficult issue for me personally. I fully realized its impact to society and to those in criminal institutions. But, I also realized the impact to the children of the world – and as such, I could not keep silent on this issue. The issue was no longer one of safety only for the autistic, it had become one of safety for all men, women and children – worldwide! Again, how could I keep silent on this issue knowing that so many children were potentially being damaged irreparably by vaccinations and that, for some, a future life of crime could sentence them to death for having committed crimes I now honestly believed they may have no control over?

The explosive emotional issues – on so many fronts – now brought to the forefront by autism had the capability of dividing a nation intensely! Would a nation that had become so united as a result of acts of terrorism on our shores that had resulted in the deaths of over 3,000 people now divide itself on issues relating to the safety and well being of its children?

Over 2,000,000 children in the US alone had already been diagnosed with autism.

How would America respond? Would we divide ourselves over these emotional issues? Or, would we unite behind our children? How America responded to these issues, truly, would show the character of this nation – a nation by the people for the people – and a nation where its littlest people - were the most precious of all!

Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future!!!
John F. Kennedy

The words of a President – a father – now rang more loudly than ever in my ears. Would America hear these words and do what would be necessary for its children? Explosive emotions could divide, but they could unite, too, and America needed unity now – more than ever, because now, it would be our children we were fighting for – as well as for children around the world!

We had a ton of children on all kinds of drugs – that in my opinion – did nothing to address the underlying issues, and indeed, could perhaps make them worse with long-term use of such medications. Given the possible lack of "long term studies" in vaccination issues, I wondered about the "long term studies" in other issues as well as they related to the pharmaceutical industry. Rebuilding the trust of the American public and indeed – of the world – if this were true, would be a difficult task, indeed.

Making these issues public had been a heart-wrenching experience for me!

I understood the intense emotional issues this information would raise and I understood the huge financial issues for society, government and the pharmaceuticals, as well. Indeed, although I wanted to understand the autistic brain, all these "other issues" autism now seemed linked to, I had been totally unprepared for. Coming to the realization that my son's brain simply did not work was devastating enough… to come to understand all the "other implications" of autism, made it so that I could, literally, physically, barely breathe – my pain so terribly deep, as I was sure, it would be for all parents of the autistic worldwide and many others in society.

The anger on so many fronts, I knew, could easily divide this nation. Yet, I also knew that in order to move forward and begin to heal, to begin to "fix this situation", everyone had to take a very deep breath and a huge step back to put things into perspective. Deadly illnesses still had to be controlled, but they had to be controlled with safe vaccines – vaccines that were free of mercury. That was the first step! As such, I called on all members of society to contact their legislators immediately and request the immediate recall of all vaccinations containing mercury – both within America and abroad! This, truly, was long overdue. There were other preservatives that could be used by the pharmaceuticals in their vaccinations and that had to be mandated via federal legislation and enforced. Vaccinations simply could no longer be produced with mercury.

Legislators and scientists now had the heavy burden of how to best address worldwide vaccination issues. In my opinion, given the total breakdown of past “checks and balances”, private organizations, not affiliated with government agencies or the pharmaceutical industry, now had to be put in place to act as a “watch group” over vaccination issues in order to help rebuild public trust. Vaccines were necessary to disease control – there was no denying that – but, the public had to be assured that vaccinations were safe and in my opinion, that necessitated not only a review of the vaccinations themselves to remove toxic substances such as mercury and aluminum, but a review of current vaccination schedules in order to ensure that a child’s immune system was functioning prior to the administration of vaccinations in order to help ensure the appropriate immune system response within our children. To inject children with vaccinations prior to six months of age, the time needed for the liver to begin producing bile was simply – insane. The liver was the body’s main detoxifying organ and as such, it had to be at least somewhat able to “detoxify” prior to the introduction of foreign substances like those found in vaccinations. Of course, I was not a doctor, but, common sense, and my heart, told me that these were truly necessary “first steps” in order to start rebuilding public trust in the area of vaccinations. The emotional and financial burdens on society, as a result of this document, I knew could be huge. But, I knew not what else I could do – but bring these issues to the forefront. There was simply too much at stake not to start acting on these concerns. I feared that now, all of society would feel the emotional pain and burden that had so long been felt by families of the autistic.

For parents of the autistic, from the moment of diagnosis, the emotional burdens of autism were further magnified by financial burdens that were very real, too – financial burdens carried primarily by families themselves with very little help from the government. Current behavior therapy methods for one autistic child alone could cost anywhere from $35,000 - $50,000 **after tax** for a family - for an intensive private program. Many families had spent tens of thousands trying to recover their children. Some were indeed in debt over $100,000.00 as they attempted to recover their children. These programs were few and often had 12 – 18 month waiting lists. For too many, such programs had been out of reach. Given what I now believed to understand of the workings of the autistic brain, I now saw just how critical intervention programs were for these children and for society overall.

Parents of the autistic, surely, would not allow their children to be stolen – again – as they grew older and perhaps leaned toward sexual crime. Given the magnification of all emotions in the autistic and the fact that, if I were correct and their brain really, truly had no “connections” among its various parts, then the potential harm to women and children around the world - by anyone suffering from possible brain lesions as a result of mercury-induced damage, anyone suffering from increased aggression due to a lack of control over one’s emotions, anyone suffering from personality disorders or self image disorders - was a very real situation that simply had to be addressed! Families and school systems would be ill equipped to help recover these individuals without help! There was indeed much work to be done and although it was natural to be angry at this situation, the reality was that anger would do nothing to correct these issues. Anger had to be let go of… and emotions put to productive endeavors that would move all toward resolving these huge issues. The battle would be difficult, but man had an amazing survival instinct – and in this too, we could survive and come out victorious. Would it be easy? No. Was it possible? Absolutely!

The only good news in all of this was that in understanding the issues, we could now begin to address them. There was simply no more time for the "denial games" of congressional hearings. It had become very obvious that the government and the pharmaceuticals would continue to deny any link between vaccinations and autism. It was now up to society to decide. This truly would be our greatest test as a nation – a government for the people, by the people. How long would we allow the denial games to go on? There comes a point in time when someone finally has to say: "Enough is enough!" - a point in time when true leaders need to take charge and plant a stake in the ground and move forward to at least stop any further damage as "other issues" of "who knew what and when" were being addressed. Given the intense controversy over the vaccination issue and the possible link to autism, indeed, it was surprising to me that "something" had not already been done in this regard. The government knew it had a problem as did the pharmaceuticals. If there was "no link" between vaccinations and autism, why had the government finally decided to gradually remove thimerosal (mercury preservative) from vaccinations? This was as good as an admission of guilt. It was time to move on – to recall all thimerosal-containing vaccines – worldwide – and to finally move forward. Although the pharmaceuticals and government agencies involved in vaccination programs surely would continue their delay tactics it was time society took a very firm stand on this issue and sent Washington a very strong message that delay tactics such as those seen in "congressional hearings" would no longer be tolerated – especially given that while these very hearings were taking place, Congress was trying to pass the Frist Bill – a bill that would prevent anyone from suing any pharmaceutical over vaccine related injuries. One truly had to ask whether or not the government was really trying to get to the bottom of this issue or simply engaging in delay tactics while it attempted to protect its pharmaceutical business partners!

How could "toilet paper legislation©" like the Frist Bill be allowed to pass before the facts were even known? Even toilet paper had two sides…and both sides should at least be heard before such legislation was passed and the issue was flushed! In my view, it was because, perhaps the facts **<u>were</u>** known – and now, the rush was on to do "damage control". As such, should the Frist Bill, being put forth in Congress at the time of the writing of this book, pass the American public had no choice but to demand an immediate reversal of that bill. Perhaps it was now time to invoke "jury nullification" and allow the American public to determine for itself whether or not such laws were "just", because, obviously, the judgment of many in Washington had been fogged by political and financial affiliations with the pharmaceutical industry. Truly, autism issues would now help America see exactly what kind of leaders we had in Washington! Those voting "yes" to the Frist Bill in Washington, in doing so, would speak volumes with a simple three-letter word – a word, in this vote, truly indicative of one's integrity! To allow the pharmaceuticals to simply walk away from all this, from the potential damage they had caused not only to the autistic, but to society overall simply could not be allowed! As potential perpetrators to this injustice, it was only fair that they be made to pay. The financial burdens before society were now huge and the pharmaceuticals given their role in increasing mercury levels in children, had to be made to help the government and families themselves carry this financial burden.

These children could recover with therapy. But, that therapy had to start as soon as possible. The "old system" we had for dealing with these children had failed too many, too often. If I were correct in my views as to what was going on in the autistic brain, I knew we could now provide therapy for several children at once in many areas in order to allow for communication as early as possible. The simple fact was that there were still – a lot of politics – and money - involved in overcoming the hurdles before us. Perhaps the biggest hurdle was that of the impact of the pharmaceuticals in Washington. Too many parents believed vaccinations had caused their child's autism for us to continue to ignore this issue. The government "by the people for the people" had to be retuned "to the people" and taken back from big industry!

Families of the autistic had been failed by "the system" in the past! Now that autism touched so many facets of society, would the government still fail to act? Would society fail to act or would it take a stand and send Washington a firm message that politicians not committed to rectifying this matter would be thrown out of office at the first opportunity so that we did not find ourselves, even one year from now, saying: "OOPS!!! How could we have missed this for so long?"

Although the government like the pharmaceuticals, had to carry its share of the guilt in this situation, so too did many others in society – including doctors and those who called parents of the autistic "crazy" for even thinking there could be a link between autism and vaccinations.

Although the "concept" itself was simple enough, the fact that given the overwhelming devastation to all systems in these children, that "something" had to tie it all together and that "something" had to do with the "integration" of all systems – although that concept was simple enough – the acceptance of this concept and the fact that these children could be "so completely impacted" was something that was simply perhaps too difficult to accept in terms of human nature. We had all come to see vaccinations only for the "good" they could do in controlling deadly diseases. It had been almost unthinkable to imagine that these same vaccinations could be so damaging our children internally in terms of brain structure and function. No one "wants", inherently, to accept that something could be "so wrong"! Man's inherent coping mechanism had once again set in throughout society – denial!

It was almost "as if" we "could not conceive" and as a result, accept, that something was so wrong, and as such, we chose to deny it rather than see it for what it truly was!

When I first came to the realization that many of the issues we were seeing in autistic children could be traced back to one thing - the inability to see the whole without first understanding all the parts that made up that whole – the sensory information - and the "simplicity of it all" in the sense that such a simple answer explained so much, my first reaction was one of disbelief. I could not believe just how simple this was nor could I believe that something so simple had been overlooked - completely missed - for so long! How could it be that no one had seen this - for decades? It was only later that I then realized that mercury content in vaccinations had only been forced to be disclosed in 1999 by a congressional mandate. And then, the pieces of that puzzle then fell into place too!

Yes, money could have played a role, and I was sure that for some, it had. Yet, for the great majority, however, I believed the answer to the question of "how could we have missed this for so long?" was a multi-faceted answer and as such, many factors had to be considered. The above disclosure issue surely had played a role, but so had many other things too!

Autism was such a complicated disorder, involving so many areas of study, that, quite frankly, for too long, this disorder had been studied in its "bits and pieces" instead of being studied or viewed as a whole. Within each area of study - be that diet, supplements, the immune system, sensory issues, behavioral issues, social issues, etc. - there were so many pieces missing in this puzzle that to try to look at it as "a whole " was overwhelming indeed. How could anyone possibly know all the facets to this disorder? To understand all of autism, it was almost as though you had to be a chemist, a biochemist, an immunologist, a doctor who specialized in vision, in hearing, in speech development, in sensory issues as they relate to touch and taste, a neurologist who could understand the functioning of the brain, a psychologist or a behavior therapist, a member of the CDC and FDA or other regulatory agency, and perhaps countless "other things" all rolled into one! Each area in and of itself constituted a huge area of study. But, as we looked at each part individually, and attempted to make sense of it, like the autistic child we were attempting to understand, we too, had failed to see how the parts fit into the whole!

Only by "stepping back" and looking at the "entire puzzle" could one even begin to think in terms of "overall processes" and how impairments in "overall processing" could explain so much of this.

Many persons were indeed working very hard in an attempt to understand the autistic mind. But, as with everything in life, "clutter" tended to cloud the issues. This "clutter" took many forms – one's reputation, money, political affiliations, world health issues, etc. There were many reasons that simply made it easier to be "in denial".

Given the numerous areas of study involved in autism and the simply overwhelming differences in behavior among these children as they attempted to decode the world about them, I understood how difficult it had been to find the allusive "missing link" in the autism puzzle... something that helped to put it all together – especially given the unexpected twist that in this particular case, "the missing link" was defined by the fact that there "was no link – in sensory processing".

Very little seemed "consistent" among these children. Some could speak, others could not, some could point, others could not, some could be touched, others could not, some were happy, others were extremely sad, some were completely withdrawn, others had managed to achieve a many social milestones, some had changed overnight after vaccinations, yet for others, the change had been more gradual - and on and on and on!

Indeed, herein was the first trap so many fell into - as I did myself, initially - the trap that "**all these children were different**"!

"All these children were different" - that, indeed, had become a statement one could almost hide behind as he continued to search for answers. But, herein was the first real trap! Focusing on "their differences" made it so that we failed to give proper focus to their similarities. Truly, similarities were often well hidden, but **the fact remained that these children were still "*similar enough*" to have the same label!** It was when I came to that realization, that the answer, surely, had to be in their "similarities", that I truly began to see autism for what it was, a disorder impacting **all** areas of functioning within a child including the digestive process, the immune system, the neurological system, motor functioning, sensory input and processing, behavioral, social, emotional and ultimately, psychological levels as well for one could live in constant frustration - completely misunderstood by those all around - without being impacted psychologically as well.

Although, undoubtedly, there was concern to see "each child" as an individual... as a specific patient, perhaps that concern made it such that, as answers could not be provided to parents, it was easier for doctors, too, to say: "Every child is different". The inability to provide many basic answers resulted in the fact that too many preferred to simply say "every child is different" than to look at the similarities among these children... the few similarities that were the key to so much. Countless, parents and professionals, alike had fallen into this trap!

But, there were "other things" that also greatly contributed to our lack of understanding when it came to autism. These included labels we so often associated with autistic children... labels such as "nonsense language".

Labels had had a very devastating effect on how we perceived the autistic child. By labeling the autistic child's language as "nonsense", we came to view the autistic mind as "broken" and as such making "no sense", when in reality, this could not have been further from the truth! As such, for decades, the majority of autistic children were believed to be mentally retarted.

These children were delayed in key areas - there had been no denying that, but, by having associated them with a "broken mind", by definition, meant that “they were crazy”. Yes, in my view, autistic children were “broken” in many respects, in the fact that the physical structures of their brain were not communicating properly. But, that did not mean that their overall “mental processing” was “broken too” – clearly it was not. These children suffered from a physical breakdown in their nervous system, but in terms of whether or not things “made sense”, they made perfect sense given the structure and function of the brain.

These children were not "crazy" nor were they "mentally retarded". The actual processing these children were capable of, indeed often far surpassed anything a "normal brain" could do, since as a result of the physical breakdown in overall sensory integration, the brain seemed to adapt by magnifying communication within a specific area – so that functions in one area were now able to more completely talk to one another, in ways no one before could have ever imagined. So, yes, the physical breakdown had occurred, but it was a physical breakdown in sensory processing, not a breakdown in terms of the "mind" of these individuals – it all made perfect sense and as such, there was no such thing as "nonsense language" when understood for what it truly was!

Instead of seeing their language for what it truly was, because we failed to understand it for so long, we preferred to accept that they were "broken" rather than see that the failure to understand - lay within ourselves. It had been easier to label these children as "broken mentally" via labels of "nonsense language" than to admit we had failed to understand them on so many fronts, and perhaps more devastating was the realization that we had – failed to protect them in the first place!

Labels for things could be "good" or "bad". They could be productive or nonproductive. They could be positive, or they could be negative. Yet, given the workings of a human mind, once a "label" was given, the function within us to "categorize" based on "associations" made it such that many simply "categorized these children as broken" because of terms like "nonsense language", "attention deficit", "pervasive developmental disorder", "oppositional defiant"… and so many "other labels".

That inherent "categorization" that occurred within man had played a huge role indeed in our "missing this" for so long! It was as a result of this, that I wanted to show, in a very poignant way, what could happen – as a result of a negative label – and that "inherent categorization" we do in the temporal lobe – the lobe also associated with "memory". **In other words once categorized and committed to memory by researchers, doctors, government officials, therapists, and yes - even parents - the danger of a negative label, in my view, only became, potentially, more devastating, because "once committed to memory" it was "as if" you could see or even allow "no other answer ! The same was true not only of the "result" (damaged children), but of the cause as well (in my opinion - mercury).**

It was because of this inherent need to categorize and the fact that, within the human brain, the functions of categorization and memory were located in the same lobe, that "negative labels", or inaccurate beliefs, I would argue did more harm than good and that their impact, as such, was magnified, once those labels or beliefs were committed to memory! Of the labels provided above, I will use "nonsense language" to make my point – but again, **any** "negative label" or inaccurate belief could have been used here!

"Nonsense Language"... two words... but when combined, categorized and committed to memory, they provided a very powerful image... an image that "something was wrong" and "needed to be fixed". This "label", once associated with the type of "language" autistic children displayed, had negative impacts in more ways than one.

First, and foremost, "nonsense language", as stated above, implied the child's mind was somehow "broken" because the language "communicated made no sense" - but, the key here was that it made "no sense - to us" - to the adults who were trying to understand it!!! But, as was shown in the section on Language, when viewed from the autistic child’s perspective, and in view of the brain’s structures and functions, this language made perfect sense!

Labels (or false beliefs) could indeed be quite damaging if the label "tagged" to someone, and especially a child, was a negative one. The fact that what I now understood to be "ordering language" had once been labeled as "nonsense language" led me - at first - to believe this language "should be stopped" or "prevented somehow" because it was "nonsense".

As such, I tried to "break it"... and in doing so, I literally introduced "more parts" to the equation... more things, my child had to deal with in processing language... and, specifically, "more parts" that made no sense whatsoever in terms of relating the "part to the whole"... and "parts" that had to do with "imagination and pretend play"... and "pretend or imaginary play" had many potentially dangerous results for autistic children. The examples I had provided in my section on Language clearly showed that I had introduced “confusing parts and imaginary play” into my child’s world when I did my little experiment to “break nonsense language”. For more on that topic specifically, see my sections on Language and The Danger of Pretend Play In The Autistic Child!

A label (or a false belief)... especially a negative label... could result in persons doing things, unknowingly, that could cause more harm than good! Memory, as explained in these materials, had both a conscious and a subconscious factor involved and as such, although many may have had “good intentions”, that “categorization, commitment to memory and all that that involved”, now made for potentially devastating consequences, especially given the fact that “emotions” were also located in this very same lobe – leading to very specific “stereotyping”, and “associations” in relation to that “label” (or false belief).

I had taken a “label”, categorized it, memorized it and now had very specific “feelings” associated with it (much as had done those who believed mercury was not to blame, in spite of evidence clearly showing mercury contributed to neural degeneration and brain lesions)!

As a result of that categorization, memorization, association, and feeling, I assumed that something "was broken" and needed to be fixed (much in the way a false belief could be assumed to be true and correct). It had taken me a long time to truly see that "nonsense" language was not "nonsense" at all, but actually made perfect sense when viewed as "ordering language" and its role in "breaking the code" and coping with the world. "Nonsense language" was anything but "nonsense". It was the autistic child's perfect way of making sense of communication provided by others, in the form of labels, conversation, etc., of trying to "order what he heard from others" and also, of trying to "deal with life" when things just got too difficult to understand and cope with.

That negative label (like a false belief) - "nonsense language" - had led to a very false assumption on my part... and with that false assumption came my very "wrong" way of dealing with nonsense language. By trying to "break nonsense language", I was actually introducing new "parts" for Zachary to deal with... often nonsense parts that involved squirrels driving trucks, etc. Luckily for me, I also made use of a lot of colors... what I believed to be another coping mechanism used by autistic children in understanding their world. For more on that, see my section on Color and why I believed that for the autistic child, it may truly be the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow!

Indeed, I had misunderstood the role of "ordering language" because of a negative label called "nonsense language" - categorized, committed to memory, and associated with specific “facts” (or believed to be – “facts”) and emotions. That led me to believe something "was wrong and had to be fixed" (likewise, a false belief would lead to false assumptions, categorization, emotions tied to that belief, and a commitment to memory based on those emotions).

Most damaging of all, however, was that as a result of this “processing” associated with this particular label (or false belief), I had attempted to destroy or extinguish a behavior I later came to see as an absolutely critical coping mechanism in the autistic child – a coping mechanism by which the child tried to understand his world and make sense of “communication” and visual inputs (i.e., walk verses don’t walk signs).

The only comfort I had in this was knowing that I had been able to see ordering language or “reference language©” for what it truly was, before I had actually damaged my son’s critical coping mechanism, before I silenced not only his ordering or reference language©, but perhaps all future language as well.

In the past, I had recalled hearing parents tell their autistic children that, “if they couldn’t make sense, they should simply say nothing”. I had a very strong message for parents and/or professionals who told autistic children to “stop talking if they couldn’t make sense” – the message you were sending that child could stop all attempts at communicating verbally! Another potentially devastating effect – of a negative label (or false belief)!

These children understood much more than we gave them credit for – no doubt due in part to the “developmentally delayed or retarded” labels we also tagged to them! But, their language did make sense and it was absolutely critical it be encouraged and viewed as an opportunity to further help the child “decode” language and his world – overall – an opportunity to further enhance or complete “reference language©” given the autistic child’s often incomplete “reference living©”! Ordering language – once so harmfully referred to as “nonsense language” – was in my view, one of the autistic child’s most critical decoding mechanisms and indeed, a testimony to their ingenuity and determination at understanding their world – and that was more than I could say of the adults who had so negatively impacted our understanding of these children by using such labels as “nonsense language”- or any other “negative” label as it related to disorders we simply did not understand!

I knew I was not alone in not having understood "ordering language"... that many others out there, indeed many “experts” in autism had also completely missed the boat! I only feared that many “experts” and parents alike continued to do so in the future and tried to extinguish this critical coping skill, refusing to see things for what they truly were – continuing to be – in denial!

A negative label (or false belief) had not only put me on the wrong "track" in terms of figuring out the puzzle of autism, and understanding my son, I suspected it had also put many others out there on the wrong track as well... for decades! You see, a label such as "nonsense language" (or false belief) resulted in very different research than would a label of "ordering language" (or more accurate belief).

Was my label of "ordering language©" correct? At this time, for our family, I believed it was. Was it negative? I did not suspect it was nearly as negative in its implications as "nonsense language"... but, like all labels (or beliefs), it certainly had that tendency to "lock people into thinking this, too, was the answer” – because once something was committed to memory, and associations made for that memory, it was often a difficult thing to overcome what had now been – literally – burned into the brain! **As such, the ability to “think outside the box” and “look elsewhere for the answer”, based on the workings of the brain, and the fact that “creativity” resided not in the temporal lobe (where the label had been categorize, committed to memory and associated with emotions) but in the frontal lobe, - involved in memory as it related to “habits”, the control of emotional response and the meaning of words - in my opinion, only magnified the negative effects of the label (or false belief)! Thus, the structure and function of the brain itself, the brain of those investigating these issues, made it such that once things were categorized and committed to memory along with an emotion for that issue, it was, literally, very difficult to look elsewhere for an answer.**

Perhaps brain structure and function now also explained why it was so difficult, for so many, to look to vaccinations as a possible answer, too! Once burned into one’s memory, to “go against” what “was believed to be true”, literally meant that one had to “go against” what was burned into the brain – a difficult task indeed!

Because of these very specific workings within the brain, science, researchers, therapists, etc., had a way of getting "locked" into the "accepted view" rather than looking at things for what they truly were. Add to that the fact that funding and grant issues largely determine "what was studied" and for "how long", and the overall “money factors”, and the motivation or desire to “look elsewhere” became practically nonexistent! Throw in there the "politics" of research and government in terms of “accountability” and it all made for one nasty mess - in my opinion!

Due to funding issues, politics, and yes, even egos, there was an inherent defense mechanism in man to dismiss what he did not understand or what went "against his theory" or "accepted theory" as "ridiculous"... in everything from science to religion... and herein was the danger! The functions of categorization, memory, association, and emotions, indeed, when combined, could make for a very detrimental situation in spite of what may have been "good motives" or "good intentions". The way that the brain was structured and worked, indeed, made it such – and this inherent danger, could only be overcome – if understood!

Indeed, this too, opened entirely new areas of research and the need to "review and eliminate" all negative labels! The costs to society, in terms of misdirected research, emotional impact, etc. were simply too huge not to do so! How much had we spent investigating autism over the last 30 years? Sure, there had been some advances, especially in areas relating to cell structure, diet, the immune system, etc. But, there had been some very negative results too in terms of accepted behavior therapy (i.e., pretend play and the concept of self). Looking at so many issues, so many illnesses and disorders based on the categorizations, memories, associations, and emotions we had come to accept for so, so many "negative labels" would be a huge task indeed.

As such, I encouraged all persons, parents, researchers, therapists - everyone - to always truly "look" at what was before them – to step back - rather than assuming someone else had "the answer"...and assuming that any "label" was correct, because the magnified effects of that label, once imprinted in the human brain, could be overwhelming indeed!

In so much in life, there could be many reasons for which we saw "something"... and the challenge was in continuing the quest to fully understand "that something" rather than in "going with what we knew – or thought we knew" and basically dismissing the rest, through "negative labels" because, right now, we simply did not understand what was before us!

Indeed, inaccurate thought (or beliefs) in term of understanding the autistic mind, and a simple thing such as a "negative label" caused many to look for a "problem to fix" rather than to seek the answer as to "what was behind what we saw". In looking to "fix something" was the underlying assumption that something was "wrong" in the first place... and that, clearly was not the case when it came to "nonsense language"... this language, when viewed from the child's perspective, and the structure and function of the human brain, made perfect sense, because as the child tried to understand language, he was also categorizing it – functions, both found in the temporal lobe!

I was thankful that by the grace of God, I had chosen to make my "experiment at breaking nonsense language" the least stressful possible for Zachary. I had been determined not to use anything "negative" at all with him. Patience and understanding... patience and understanding... patience and understanding... those would be my keys to understanding my son - I was convinced of that - and indeed, they were! Those same keys would now be needed for society in general in order to overcome this issues.

I could not express in words how I would have felt if "punishment" had indeed been used - if I had in any way whatsoever increased Zachary's stress level by using currently accepted behavior therapy methods because I could have, potentially, been punishing him for making use of a coping mechanism he so desperately needed to make sense of his world... a coping mechanism that made such perfect sense, when examined from his perspective. It was very upsetting to me to think of what was going on in the world in terms of behavior therapy by persons who truly did not understand the autistic child... persons who continued to think that "something was wrong and must be fixed", when so clearly, at least in my opinion, this was clearly not the case for ordering language! It was as a result of that need to help others understand the autistic child that I set out to write this document. Little did I realize, however, the many turns my journey in the writing of this text, would involve.

This example I provided dealt with labels we "tagged" on children or others with "mental illnesses", that were perhaps, more accurately, simply responses to the actual structures and working of the human brain - in general. I was sure the same was happening in terms of "how we investigated things" in the area of "attention deficit" or "pervasive developmental disorder"... in all these, a negative label (or belief) undoubtedly resulted in man's desire to "fix something that was broken" rather than look at what we were truly dealing with in terms of form and function in the human brain.

Indeed, I was certain that if "attention deficit" were actually labeled "focused attention" for example, that the research into this area would be quite different since the “categorization, memory, association and emotions” resulting from such a label, would be quite different. Pervasive developmental disorder implied "disorder everywhere"... but, again, that was not the case. There were delays in these children in social area, but other areas were quite strong... the same was true of the label “oppositional defiant” - another "bad label" in my opinion in terms of the type of research it generated and the stigmas associated with such a label. The need to “put the blame on children” via negative labels when we simply did not understand them had to stop!

I had touched on autism spectrum disorder labels only... but, surely, given the workings of the human brain, the same was true of all "negative labels" as they related to stigmas, research, and overall understanding.

My frustration over this issue of negative labels applied to all negative labels – this particular one of “nonsense language” just made for a very poignant example of what could happen as a result of such negative labels we put on children and “disabled” adults – I suspect, in many cases, due only to our lack of understanding in terms of how the human brain actually worked! I could have easily made the same argument with the “deaf child” label. These children clearly were not “deaf” as had been shown from all the normal hearing test results given to parents. The fact that we knew these children were not “deaf” should have led us to immediately drop that label and to look more into why they had such selective hearing… yet, the “deaf child” label, too, yet, another negative label, had serious implications in terms of how the autistic child was understood – or misunderstood! The “deaf child” was as such, viewed as a child who simply wanted to stay “in his own world”, but, given what we actually saw in these children, in terms of their constant need to "break the code" - again, nothing could have been further from the truth! **These children were fighting desperately – to get out of their frustrating world and into a world they could understand! They were not "anti-social" or "introverts" – everything in their behavior, in their constant desire to "break the code" clearly indicated the very opposite was true! And, given that, herein lay the key to recovering these children, too!**

My intent here was not to lay blame with any particular person who may have come up with a specific label – my intent was simply to show how detrimental "labels" could be. Indeed, I knew that many persons who were associated with a "specific label" in the sense that they had "coined the phrase" were indeed quite knowledgeable in various fields and had contributed a great deal to our understanding of many disorders, however, labels had a tendency to "stick" because of the way in which the human brain worked in terms of categorization, memory, associations and emotions, and as such, I wanted to provide a very clear example of what could happen when one was "***defined***" by a negative and often, inaccurate label (or false belief)!

Hence, a negative label (or false belief), as so many we "tagged"- so easily - to so many children, had led many of us down the wrong path in terms of research and overall understanding of the autistic children... and, as the decades went by, with still no real understanding of so much of what we saw in these them, undoubtedly, many who had studied and lived with autism became hopeless and/or helpless in their fight to continue to seek the answers. This battle with autism had been such a long one, for parents and professionals that it was easy to become overwhelmed and fall into helplessness.

Yet, many did persevere... and with each passing day, more was learned... and more was observed!

There was "another label" that had hindered our progress. It was that of "expert". Given the many fields there were to understand, persons could become knowledgeable in one or two areas, but it was truly impossible to be knowledgeable in all areas related to autism, or any other field for that matter – and that included those in government offices and the pharmaceutical industry too! To call anyone an "expert" in anything placed a huge burden on that person, again, because of all that was implied in "a label" once categorized, memorized, and associated with emotions.

We had "experts in this", and "experts in that" and among all these experts, were the helpless parents, desperately seeking answers for their children... answers that were too often too allusive. If the "experts", together, had been unable to piece together so much of autism, surely, many parents felt they could not either – because, they, after all, were not the "experts". There was indeed an inherent danger in labeling some as "experts" while dismissing the observations of others. And, as such, **a label, by being "placed on one" yet "omitted" from another, also had potentially devastating consequences in terms of "what was investigated", what was "believed to be true", "what was believed to be**

fact" and "what was believed to be fiction", "what was believed to be over-reaction in parents" and "what was believed to be the value of one's opinion or observations in various matters" – because just as "with a label", the "omission" of a label in a specific individual, also had very real consequences!

Our over-reliance on those with the label of "experts" had led us down a very dangerous path as more parents "left it all in the hands of the experts"... knowing that "they were working on it". Indeed, when I first proposed my theory to parents, one of the very first reactions I received from a parent was: "This can't be right. It's too simple. If this were it, someone would have seen this a long time ago!" The same, surely, could be true of mercury level accumulations via vaccinations and safe mercury standards as defined by the government itself! Yet, for a long time that "connection" had failed too!

Einstein's great theory of $E=MC^2$ was simple too... but it took man until 1905 to figure out this simple relationship. Although the answer to this puzzle was simple, the derivations necessary in order to arrive at that answer could take countless pages of mathematical formulations. How could something so simple have been missed for so long?

Although Einstein's equation was so beautiful in its simplicity, the proof behind this equation was complex indeed. So, too, was it was autism. The answer now seemed so simple – the fact that mercury resulted in brain lesions that then led to sensory processing, integration and relay failure - yet to put all the pieces together given the variation we saw in so many children with autism - to arrive at this simple answer - had proven difficult too!

I was certain many in neuroscience, behavior therapy, the pharmaceutical industry and government hoped my theory simply "went away"! But, given the emotions involved in the issue of autism, this issue, surely, would not go away, but rather, would simply intensify, for now, issues as presented in these materials had now been categorized, memorized, and associated with emotions by parents around the world – and as such, if anything, this issue would only further intensify, as the realities of "**how much devastation**" there had been to these children, finally set in! The realization of this devastation within their children, that twisting knife, for so many parents, would once again be felt. Perhaps now, however, that knife could finally be removed once and for all and thrown away. With the understanding of the devastation, perhaps now, the wounds could finally begin to truly be healed - for autistic children, their parents - and now, for society as well!

In spite of the fact that so many in government and the pharmaceutical industry, I was sure, now wanted to see this theory of mine, "go away", financial, and emotional issues (i.e., pride and ego) aside, again, in autism, the implications for mankind, and for these children and their families, were overwhelming, but not insurmountable. Parents of the autistic and society in general would have to take a huge breath and a huge step back in looking at all these issues – and it was only fair that those in government offices and the pharmaceutical industry do the same. We could either continue to fight each other on these issues, or we could move forward in addressing them. Denial was no longer an option!

The label of "expert" truly had a tendency to blind so many in so many fields, including autism, government and research. How I longed to see the word "expert" in any field completely disappear and be replaced simply by the words "researcher investigating". In my opinion, until all the answers were known - and proven to be fact - there were no "experts" - in anything.

Indeed, I now had a new term - a new "label" - for all those who tagged labels to children and who failed to see beyond the "accepted label", the "accepted theory"... these persons, in my view, were "label blinded©" - as defined below:

Label blinded©: The inability to look beyond a label and to see what in many cases was obvious due to the inherent structure and functioning of the human brain. A person showing co-dependence on a label. One who was unable to change his thought or emotion once a label had been affixed to a particular person, theory, or, object. One who lacked flexibility to adapt, look and move beyond “a label”.

The thing about labels was that they had a tendency “to stick” – and I think all readers now understood why that was based on brain structure and function! I hoped those, currently burdened by the label of “expert” would not further be burdened by the label of “label blinded©”. Surely, my “new label” of “label blinded©” did not sit well with many “experts” or researchers, but perhaps now, even you, could understand what it meant to be **“defined by a label”!**

Labels had blinded so many. Many parents, as I had in the beginning, had failed to trust their instincts, yet, others, like so many professionals, did persevere... and slowly, parents, too, were starting to piece together critical parts to the puzzle. And, although parents were often dismissed in many of their beliefs, lacking that all important label of “experts”, **it truly was parents who had the 24 hour/7 day a week living lab**. And, within the observations of parents, surely, there had to be answers to so much!

Now that I had provided some answers in terms of “how” this failure in sensory integration in the autistic child could possibly have been missed for so long, I now turned my attention to the very critical “next steps” in terms of what I saw needed to be done to help not only these children, but their families and society as well.

The very, very first step was for everyone to take a deep breath and a huge step back.

Society now had some major issues on its hands – including the need to control deadly diseases. Errors had been made – there was no doubt about that. But, as a nation under God, I hoped we could now turn to the bible for guidance in addressing these issues.

The bible says: “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone”. In my heart, I knew many involved in this overwhelming situation had also been innocent victims. Surely, there may have been some “who knew” and simply did not speak up – or worse – chose to hide the facts - and, as such, yes, I did believe the shackles currently on the autistic and any other mercury damaged individual should be removed and placed on these persons who truly did belong in prison. But, I knew there had been many, even in government agencies, and in research - even in the pharmaceutical industry - who had simply "missed it" – who had not seen the safe mercury standards or who had not been aware of everything in the "vaccination schedule" as it related to cumulative doses of mercury being injected in children. I was not trying to absolve anyone of blame (as would the Frist bill), I was simply trying to make people understand that – yes, mistakes do happen, and at times, these could be terrible mistakes – there was no denying that. And yes, there were surely some who had acted in a criminal manner – and those few should be put in prisons – there was no denying that either.

Yet, in taking my step back, I knew we had to focus on moving forward and rebuilding a very violated trust. To rebuild that trust necessitated the concerns of the public in terms of vaccination safety had to be addressed.

There were more than simply issues of mercury to be addressed, however. Parents were also sounding alarm bells in terms of vaccinations that did not contain any mercury – such as the MMR. Given the reservations I now had as a parent and the knowledge that long term immunization/vaccination studies appeared to be virtually nonexistent, and the fact that science was now showing the interaction of measles and mumps viruses to be problematic, how could we now ignore these warning bells? We simply could not!

As adults, we simply had to take that huge breath and that huge step back and put things in perspective.

For parents of the autistic, those who perhaps felt the greatest anger in reading these materials, this huge breath and step back was even more important. Given that autism now touched all aspects of society, surely, society would now see the need to help these children and provide financial relief and therapy for these children and their families. Research could now also be much more focused, as could be therapy methods. I did not know if neural connections once damaged could be somehow regenerated. I doubted that could be done, but special tools could certainly now be devised to help these children break the code and leave the shackles of autism behind. Along with the devastation this message had surely caused parents, and society, within it also could be found the keys and answers to so much!

The first step to progress in the area of autism had to come with a new definition of autism. As such, based on the information presented in these materials, I provided what I believed to be a much more accurate definition of this condition:

Autism: A disorder characterized by ***the inability to subconsciously integrate and relay to/from the central and peripheral nervous system all sensory information as it related to sight, sound, touch, taste and smell, resulting in the need to consciously integrate all sensory information in order to make sense of one's world****. This disorder was further characterized by a magnified and increasingly specialized communication within specific areas of the brain resulting in the use of alternative sensory information being required to accomplish specific tasks (i.e, speech production accomplished via motor or olfactory input as opposed to being produced via visual and auditory input).* ***This magnification within one area of the brain could be related to either functionality or dysfunctionality within that area. Those areas that were functional within a specific part of the brain could be very functional. Those areas that were dysfunctional within a specific part of the brain could be, potentially, extremely dysfunctional.*** *Due to the inability of the brain to integrate information throughout its various regions, this disorder impacted all aspects of life: behavioral, social, emotional, and sensory. The inability to properly integrate sensory information by these persons resulted in the characteristic withdrawal into one' s own world since with a lack of understanding of sensory information there was an inherent inability to communicate properly with others until the "code" to sensory information had been broken. As such, the autistic person's primary focus in life, was on breaking the code to seemingly incomprehensible sensory data, resulting in a wide repertoire of coping mechanisms being used in order to deal with daily life. This disorder was also characterized by numerous digestive and immune system failures as well. Given the inability to integrate sensory information, there was in all likelihood, possibly damage, also, to the systems/structures involved in capturing sensory, integrating and relaying sensory information as well and as such, it was suspected this disorder impacted perhaps most specifically, the corpus collosum, the thalamus, the pons, and the parietal lobe although all areas of the brain and their functioning were clearly impacted!*

I had surely given parents, researchers, behaviorists, neurologists, and those in government and the pharmaceutical industry a great deal to think about. I knew many would have preferred I not raise any of these issues, yet, my concern, truly, was for the safety and well being of not only autistic children, but for all children – and that, I hoped, even those in government and the pharmaceutical industry could understand. Having presented these materials, I now turned my attention to what I saw as the "next steps" for parents and society overall!

Parents - Meeting The Challenges Ahead…

Autistic children, their parents, researchers, therapists, societies and their governments, around the world, indeed, had many challenges ahead of them. Autism had no boundaries – it affected all nations, as clearly evidenced from the many newsletters provided worldwide on topics related to autism. As a parent, however, as I looked to many of these organizations for information, something very disturbing was clearly evident. Parents, as a whole, and the many organizations they had founded, appeared to be in constant conflict with one another. The politics and "bickering" within these organizations made it so that, quite frankly, I preferred to "tune out", as did many other parents. So many of these organizations seemed to be "fighting to be the best known or best read", and with this "bickering", valuable energies that could better be used in actually helping these children, were being wasted as adults – parents themselves - who should have been so united on issues of autism, preferred instead to take the focus away from these children and put it on their personal agendas. Sadly to say, this behavior spanned all levels, from the biggest to the smallest organizations involved in issues of autism. Personally, I found all the attacks on individuals and other organizations – to be nauseating!

By arguing among themselves, parents were quickly becoming divided as they aligned with various organizations and left their cause behind. The fragmentation I saw among the parent population was very, very troubling to me! Newsletters and parent discussion boards could be great places to get information (i.e., information files, etc.), but when the content of newsletters or parent discussion boards/groups became nothing better than "office politics" in print it was time to "unsubscribe". The personal attacks on the character of other parents or organizations who were also trying to help children – attacks that often appeared to go as far as libel – at times by some of the most well read publications in autism, were to me, incomprehensible. The ethics of many of these organizations, sadly to say, were in my opinion, truly lacking! Such activities – activities that divided parents – were detrimental in that if we, ourselves, could not be united, how could we possibly ask the world to unite along with us? Yet, too many parents failed to see this!

As such, I felt from the bottom of my heart, that as with so much in autism, I had to keep the best and throw out the rest. It seemed so often I found there were organizations I saw as betraying their cause. As I discussed this with my husband time and time again, I came to find myself saying over and over again: "When an organization becomes more important than its cause, it is time to shut the doors"!

Unfortunately, this was something I now believed to be true for many organizations – organizations that would seemingly partner with the pharmaceuticals and the government to "study" things like "genetics", etc. and take the focus away from vaccines – what so many parents were screaming was the cause of their child's autism. As such, for the time being, I preferred not to affiliate myself with any organization. Quite frankly, I simply did not trust many, many of them.

Given that these children could potentially become no more than "rats" in many labs around the world - because within them was the key to so much more than autism - the need to prevent any abuse of these children, by ensuring that research proposals were clearly reviewed and assessed by persons knowledgeable in issues relating to autism was a concern that weighed heavily on both our hearts.

These children had been so devastated already, and given this great concern over the possible dangers of imaginary play as it related to the autistic, now, more than ever, I believed there was a need for one strong parent-led organization, but at this time, I was not sure as to what organization that was.

With the final realization of the fact that autistic children, due to the very way in which I now believed they had been impaired, became the perfect subjects for all brain studies because, in my view, the fact that integration of the many parts of the brain simply was not there meant that a great deal of "variables" as they once existed in brain research – like this functionality itself – had simply disappeared! **The unfortunate and devastating effects on autistic children had, truly, now made them the perfect subjects to investigate the workings of the human brain and body!** With this realization, my concern for these children was magnified tremendously.

The only way, I believed, these children could truly be protected from further harm, was by putting in place research facilities under the direction of one strong parent led, independent organization. Within each state, research facilities could submit their proposal for review in terms of both physical and emotional safety as it related to these children. In my opinion, only persons truly knowledgeable in all areas of autism, including diet, supplements, immune system issues, behavioral issues, physiological and neurological issues could assess the overall impact of future studies on these children. Given my concerns over the role of pretend play, it was also a huge concern that behavior therapy for these children also be somewhat uniform in that all therapists, be they PhDs in psychology, or high school students, had to be aware of issues relating to the self and imaginary play in the autistic child.

Clearly, in my opinion, much of the current therapy as it related to behavior modification for autistic children could be very, very detrimental to them later in life. In addition, therapist, in my opinion, needed to have a much greater understanding of the workings of the autistic brain and current research as it related to mercury and neuron degeneration. The theory I had put forth simply explained too much for it not to be taken seriously! Therapies for teaching language via motor or olfactory input, I believed, should be investigated as viable options.

The simple fact that autistic children focused not on the eyes, but rather on the mouth, clearly indicated that "motor" input was more important in communication for them, in the production of speech than was visual input. There were just too many factors that seemed to point to this fact! Behavior therapy, as it related to these children in my view, was in need of a complete overhaul!

The good news, however, was that with the greater understanding of the issues, more children could perhaps be cared for at once. Training centers to train therapists, parents and society as a whole in so many of these issues were desperately needed as were new materials for these children.

There was, in our opinion, no more time for divisions among parents. It would require the work of many to come up with the tools that were now necessary for these children.

More than ever, one voice was needed for these children – one voice to address safety concerns, first and foremost, dietary, physical and immune system issues, educational issues, behavioral issues, research issues, political issues, and fundraising issues. The challenges in each of these areas – alone – were huge, and small, divided organization, in my view, could not even begin to address them. Given that autism spanned all nations, there existed a need for an international, parent-based organization. In my view, parents had to be very involved in this organization in order to help best protect our children. The opportunities for parents of the autistic were now greater than ever – both for their children and for themselves!

Parents needed to stand together in order to accomplish the objective of saving as many children as possible, as quickly as possible from the clutches of autism. If some of these children, indeed, did also come up with their "code to life", truly, what incentive did they have in breaking the code – the **real** code to life? So many issues now weighed so heavily on our hearts. We had to act and act quickly – as one united voice!

I realized there were many organizations currently involved in autism matters, and that, in many cases, parents had "made autism their life" – as I had done in the past year with the writing of two books and the creation of a website. I was, indeed, overwhelmed, and honestly, I, personally, wanted my life back! :o)

I was sure many parents felt the same way. I, personally, could continue to be involved somewhat in issues of autism as they related to the creation of materials for these children, yet, I knew, personally, that I had no interest in "a career". I had left corporate life for a reason, and in my mind, I simply could not see "going back". :o)

As a parent, my focus, once again, had to be in "saving Zachary"! I had provided the insights I could in order to help parents move forward in so many issues, but there would certainly come a point in time, in the near future, where I hoped to return completely to my family. I, personally, simply wanted my life back. I was tired of sitting in front of a computer, of missing the beauty in each and every day. Yet, I knew many parents, parents who spanned many fields, had the energy, the drive, and the determination to continue on, very strongly, in this battle.

Our struggles as parents had been great, but, perhaps now, some of the burdens could finally be lifted – if we joined together. To move fast would require the best in many field – neurosciences, immunology, blood/urine/hair analysis, nutrition issues, behavior therapy, education, speech therapy, programming, video production, and so many other areas – and yes, attorneys would be needed too, to help in the protection of these children.

Surely, there were already many parents who had devoted themselves to autistic children who could fill these roles. The best in talent, of course, included those parents most devoted to working with these children. Focus groups would be necessary in order to find common threads in so many areas, and by definition, research had to now involve not only children, but their parents as well. In reality, the pharmaceuticals now actually, could learn a great deal about the human brain simply by coming up with specific questions for parents of the autistic. The savings in terms of research alone as far as finding the answers to so much by first narrowing the "field of study", again could be very substantial. Parents, because of their countless hours of observations in terms of their children's behavior, in addition to autistic children themselves, now held the keys to a great deal of information too and that, surely, had to be worth something to science! The tides of autism had turned indeed!

If the pharmaceuticals and indeed society wanted this information given how our children had so been failed in the past, they could now pay for it! Standard fees could now be set with proceeds going directly into programs to help these children. This was indeed, quite a twist of fate!

Only a "for profit" organization, self-sustaining in providing research assistance to other organizations, teaching materials to education systems to help integrate all children, etc., could possibly even begin to accomplish what would be needed for these children. Behavior therapy could now become actual research, and as such, therapy could benefit not only autistic children, but society itself as through the eyes of these children, man could now come to understand a great deal more in terms of the workings of each part of the human brain!

The opportunities for parents were truly exciting in what could now be accomplished to help save all autistic children. They could now, if they so chose, to actually make work for themselves - with pay - by becoming part of an organization devoted totally to the recovery of these children and to the furthering of man's understanding of the autistic and human brain. Waiting for the government to come up with answers for our children had resulted in very little movement forward in the area of autism. Parents had to take on a much greater role in providing what was needed for their children.

Parents working within these organizations could undoubtedly also bring their autistic children to the training facilities where they worked also… to have them participate in both research and actual training/behavior therapy. Surely, "training", in a specified number of hours per week, could be offered as a "perk" in order to attract the best, most devoted parents out there! This, in and of itself, could be a powerful incentive to many parents as being part of this organization would put parents on the cutting edge of new tools, therapies and treatment options!

Many of the materials that were needed, indeed, could then be sold to schools to help further integration of these children within the school systems! Since autistic children needed to be taught in a very "ordered" manner – a building blocks approach, in actuality, many of the materials needed for autistic children would also be ideal for any child.

A vision for a "for profit" parent led organization, was truly a good idea given what could be learned from observing these children and the fact that such an organization could, truly, become self-sustaining and I certainly hoped all parents could now see that! Never before had man been able to study the human brain, its specific regions in functions, the way it could now do through the eyes of autistic children whose brain regions acted as independent processing units. Given that so much in the autistic child could now be understood based on this theory alone, surely, sensory input integration and relay failure had to be at play. **In my opinion, with simple behavior therapy alone, man could now see – through the eyes of the autistic child - the workings of the human brain as never before. But, herein was also a great danger – the potential abuse of these children by turning them into nothing more than "lab rats". That simply could not be allowed. All autistic children, at home or in institutions, now more than ever, needed to be protected from such abuses!**

As such, once again, I encouraged parents to put organizational politics behind them and to stand united as opposed to divided. Talents in newsletter writing could now be used to inform the world as to the latest finding on brain functioning. The opportunities were there for several writers, editors, etc. for completely new, in depth publications. Business talent, research talent, medical talent, education talent, programming talent – and simple parent observations - all of these were now desperately needed! Not only did the children of the autistic hold valuable insights into the workings of the human brain – the parents of these children did too! The countless observations of parents that had once been cast aside and thought to be worthless chatter were now among the most precious of all observations – the keys to helping man understand himself in so many areas – the keys to perhaps so many illnesses and disorders!

The talents of parents that had once been so divided could now be put to better use by uniting all parents and helping to recover all these children! The road to do so was still long, but at least now, parents held some very critical keys to breaking more than just the code to autism! **Autistic children, once almost thrown away by society, had, in an odd twist of fate become one of its most valuable assets!**

I encouraged parents who had children in institutions to make sure these children were not used in any way in any research study, be that through pharmaceutical or behavior therapists without first ensuring that research was safe and in the interest of the child or autistic adult.

These children also had to be cared for because institutions, in my opinion, were definitely not in their interest. Perhaps given the fact that they exhibited the most extreme cases of certain brain functions now made it so that they held even more keys within them… and that finally, they too, could get the help they needed as science continued to investigate the functioning of the human brain!

As a last reminder to parents – even though I knew there were indeed many good organizations out there, truly, we needed one powerful parent led organization in order to accomplish what needed to be done to help protect these children and allow them to leave the shackles of autism behind. As such, as much as parents were emotionally tied to the organizations they had helped build, emotional ties should first and foremost be to the children affected by autism, not to an organization. **When organizations become more important than the cause, then it was time to shut the doors!**

There was plenty of work to be done by everyone and that work would best move forward with strong, determined and united parents!

The work ahead for parents was indeed overwhelming, but, if parents could finally create one strong parent led for-profit organization, the best in many fields could be attracted to help with this work on many fronts.

Indeed, there was a great deal of work to be done – and I, for one, hoped parents were strong enough, as well as, determined and committed enough, to meet this challenge.

There was a final challenge I wanted to put before all parents and indeed, all of society, it was a challenge as it related to vaccinations.

In my opinion, given the wealth of information these children could now provide to society, there was a real fear in my heart as it related to the safety of currently autistic children, and all children, around the world – when viewed from the perspective that "more autistic children" would be great from a "research perspective". In my opinion, the very fact that the pharmaceutical industry had so failed parents – and, indeed, society – in getting to the bottom of the possible autism-vaccination link – made it such, that, quite honestly, I could no longer trust this industry as a parent, and as a person and member of society until I had once again been provided with a reason to trust this industry and those in government so closely affiliated with this industry. As such, I encouraged all parents of the autistic to stand firmly together in the resolution that:

No autistic child would be involved in any government or pharmaceutical sponsored research unless the government and pharmaceutical industry did the first critical steps necessary to rebuilding this trust. These first steps, outlined in a section to follow, entitled Society – Worldwide – Meeting the Challenges Ahead - in my opinion, were necessary to rebuilding a trust so blatantly violated and necessary in ensuring that currently non-autistic children were protected too.

As devastated as our families had been by autism, our future potential devastation could be greater yet if our children were used as "rats" by the pharmaceutical industry to further their own interests. Many parents already suspected the pharmaceutical industry had played a significant role in the devastation of these children. Yet, the government had chosen to side with the pharmaceutical instead of with parents in addressing these major issues for society. And now, if a possible link did exist with anesthesia, as I suspected it very well could, and the government failed to look into this, how could we trust either the pharmaceuticals or the government to do what was right for our children?

Society had no reason to trust that the pharmaceuticals or the government would act ethically in the future given their current refusal to make public or manipulation of documents related to the possible autism-vaccine link.

Autistic children now had the potential within them to move science forward at lightning speed and save literally billions in research and rehabilitation costs in many fields. It was estimated that alcohol alone cost the US over 166 billion annually in lost wages, rehabilitation programs, etc. – and that was only one area of study and rehabilitation! The natural opiate effect of casein and gluten on these children surely could be used to study the effects of opiates and other "drugs" on the human body as well.

Autistic children, and their parents, in this ironic twist of fate, had now, indeed, become a rather valuable commodity to the very industry and government agencies that had possibly contributed to this autism epidemic.

It was time parents of the autistic stopped giving away their observations. Within these observations, were now the keys to not only providing society with invaluable insights to so many other illnesses (bipolar, schizophrenia, depression, any disorder related to lack of control of one's emotions, diabetes, epilepsy, personality disorders, etc.), but also the keys to getting the help for these children – the help they so rightly deserved and had for so long been denied! If society wanted parent observations and these children in research, as far as I was concerned, parents and their autistic children had to be fairly compensated for providing these invaluable insights into so many areas of study and centers had to be opened specifically for the care and therapy of the autistic!

As such, I encouraged all parents to unite into a "for profit" organization in order to use funds from "parent observations" and research involving autistic children to provide services for all autistic children in the areas of necessary lab tests/panels for diet/supplements needs analysis, analysis and treatment for heavy metal contamination, behavior therapy and so much more. Parents could accomplish these goals and provide a great deal for their autistic children, but they would now have to stand – **completely united** in this issue! If these children and their parents could advance science and move it forward like never before in so many areas, saving the government, the pharmaceuticals, and insurance companies potentially, over time, hundreds of billions of dollars in research, education, therapy and rehabilitation costs, then, it was only fair that in advancing the rest of the world, these children were also helped to take their critical steps forward to leave the shackles of autism behind!

I hoped this realization would be enough to finally unite all parents of the autistic into converting all autism-related organizations into one organization standing firm and united in resolving to get to the bottom of the possible autism-vaccination link, as well

as in providing the care these children so desperately deserved. Parents finally had within them the keys to help their children and help themselves recover financially from the burden of autism. Although there had been organizational differences in the past, the opportunities that lay ahead for parents of the autistic and their children, were now brighter than ever. The silent voices and pleas of autistic children and their parents could finally be heard around the world! Surely, for all autistic children, we could finally put our differences aside and stand united – ONE VOICE!

Putting Things In Perspective…

Given the importance of autistic children to, potentially, so many areas of study, in my view, it was critical these children, first and foremost be protected. Society could learn a great deal from these children and their parents, but, the potential for abuse of these children – to make them "lab rats" – was now greater than ever. Unfortunately, given the incredible resistance, in the past, to any independent research by both the pharmaceuticals and government agencies, parents, surely would have reservations about having their children studied by those they, all too often, believed had caused this disorder in the first place – those behind the potential autism-vaccination link – a link that now spanned a much, much greater area in terms of its implications to mankind!

Autism had long - wrongly - been viewed as simply an issue for the families of the autistic. Many vaccinations given to teenagers, young adults and the elderly also contained thimerosal and other toxic substances (i.e., flu shots, tetanus shots, etc.). Autism - in actuality – had never been simply an issue for families of the autistic. It had simply been as a result of society's lack of awareness and understanding that this "wrong perception" had for so long existed. Perhaps with a greater understanding of the devastating effects of autism and the keys this disorder, indeed held for so many other issues – perhaps now – society would finally now stand behind parents of the autistic in requiring subpoenas for the CDC and the pharmaceuticals in order to finally get to the bottom of the potential link between autism and vaccinations!

The CDC had long hidden behind "issues of confidentiality" in its reluctance to make public documents related to vaccination research. Surely, names could be omitted from these documents in order to maintain "confidentiality". The statistics, after all, were really what parents were after – what society needed to know! There was no doubt in my mind that independent audits could get to the bottom of this issue. The CDC could simply no longer be allowed to hide behind what was a very lame excuse when it came to making public these records. Were issues of "confidentiality" greater than matters of national and international security and of public safety? <u>It was also a fact that the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System or VAERS database containing information as it related to vaccine injury reporting was also not available to the public for research. Why was that</u>?

Did the government honestly believe that only they could maintain a database? Nothing would prevent parents of the autistic or a "for profit" organization from starting a database of its own. Indeed such an independent database, from a purely research perspective, was long overdue!

This dilemma certainly was an interesting one! Autistic children now held within them the keys to so much, yet, their parents – parents who had so greatly suffered as a result of autism, now had to make the decision as to whether or not their children would indeed help in providing so many valuable keys to a society that, in the past, had been all too happy to cast their children aside or put them in understaffed institutions! The need for independent research for society, was now, greater than ever – and perhaps, now, society, in coming to truly understand the autistic mind and how completely devastated these children had become, would once and for all, make the decision to stand united behind them, in finally getting to he bottom of the possible autism-vaccination link, because now, the issue was not simply one of "autism" – it was one that touched absolutely all men, women and children around the world.

Research into these issues would now be needed on many fronts, on many shores. Yet, even universities that were state run had big pharmaceutical dollars behind them. Parents should not assume that because a university was a public institution it had the public's (or your child's) best interest at heart. That was simply not the case. Unfortunately, too often, it was the pharmaceuticals that were behind the research... attempting to prove "great results" for their newest drugs.

Global pharmaceutical sales had gone from 22 billion in 1980 to 260 billion by the mid 1990s. Yet health conditions around the world continued to deteriorate. There was more cancer, more diabetes, more of everything it seemed – everywhere. Sure, there had been a few diseases that we apparently had almost eradicated, but, there were now many more to replace them – and quite often – they were much more deadly

With this phenomenal growth in terms of financial and political power, the mighty and powerful hand of the pharmaceuticals was stronger than ever and all too willing to share its wealth with those in government positions who were willing to support the agenda of the pharmaceutical industry. Cries by the pharmaceuticals that lawsuits against them by parents of the autistic, for children possibly been so devastated as a result of vaccination injury – lawsuits that were estimated to total close to 30B – were a joke indeed! Even $100B could not possibly begin to compensate these families if it could indeed be proven that there did exist a vaccination-autism link – a link, in my heart, I did believe existed! **Given the incredible wealth of the pharmaceuticals and the fact that they spent close to *12 billion* per year marketing to doctors, providing what many in the trade show industry often referred to as "*trinkets and trash, and party money*", 30 billion was but *a drop* in the bucket. As with everything else, a figure without reference points, like a study without comparative measures had the potential to greatly distort the truth! Once "reference points" were provided, however, a much more accurate picture was provided indeed!**

And, if this much was spent on doctors, how much was spent lining the pockets of politicians? Although government officials may like us to believe that funds flowed only through political action committees, surely, the voting public was not that naive. If politicians could be bought and paid for in smaller towns they could just as easily be bought and paid for in the most powerful offices too!

In my opinion, cries of the of the pharmaceutical industry in terms of the "irreparable damage" any judgments in favor of families who could prove an autism-vaccination link existed, were bogus cries indeed when the facts were known! As such, I truly hoped that given the utter devastation in these children, their families would be

allowed their day in court and the unwarranted cries of the pharmaceuticals would fall on deaf ears worldwide!

There were more than the pharmaceutical cries, however, that had to be put into perspective. There were also the cries of our government itself. Did American taxpayers not find it rather odd that given both parties (Republican and Democrats) portrayed themselves as wanting to pass a national prescription plan, that this had not yet been done? When the Democrats were in office, the Republicans opposed what had been put forth. Now that the Republicans were in office, the Democrats were said to be "blocking" the move forward on this issue. Really? Given both parties truly "wanted" such legislation, I found it odd that if this was "truly" in America's interest, that such a plan had not yet been passed. But, what was really blocking this issue? Was it "opposing parties" or was it perhaps something in the background – political contributions to each party by the pharmaceuticals, ensuring such plans would never be passed! Truly, one could not help but wonder! It was time that America took a good hard look at the influence of special interests like the pharmaceuticals in Washington.

The following link (http://www.nihcom.org/spending2001.pdf) indicated prescription costs as provided by the NIH in a report dated May 2002, entitled Prescription Drug Expenditures in 2001. This report showed escalating costs in **retail** spending on prescription drugs. In 1997, retail spending on prescription drugs hit 78.9 billion – by 2001, that figure had hit 154.5 billion – nearly doubling in just 4 short years! Retail prescription costs increase approximately **18% per year**. How much longer could America afford this? And note – these figures were for **retail prescription drugs** only. This did not even begin to include all those "$20.00 per capsule over-the-counter pain killers" patients were charged for in hospitals, or the huge **over-the-counter non-prescription market**, etc. **And now, the pharmaceuticals were pushing to have vitamins and over- the-counter supplements prescription only too (already happening in EU, surely the US would be next)! It was time America awoke to the harsh realities of the influence of the pharmaceutical industry on this nation via its political "partners"**.

The "complementary and alternative medicine" industry by 2001 had grown to a $35 billion dollar industry – IN THE US ALONE - and the pharmaceuticals obviously now wanted that loophole closed arguing that "herbs" were drugs and as such, they had to be made available only via prescription. Wake up America! **These "herbs" or "drugs" had never been made prescription only in the past – the only reason for doing so now was due to the fact that this had become such a huge industry worldwide. Once vitamins and other supplements were made prescription only, surely, their costs would increase drastically too! If America thought it had healthcare cost issues now – just wait – you ain't seen nothing yet! One, truly, could not help but ask who legislators were really working for - the pharmaceuticals or the American public?**

Given the close ties of the pharmaceutical industry and its government allies in Washington, the NIH, the CDC and so many other health related organizations, it was a sad reality that what was good for the pharmaceuticals (i.e., increased spending on prescription drugs) was good for Washington and its agencies too – as much as Washington and its agencies may try to say that this was not the case. The close relationship of the pharmaceutical industry to Washington and its agencies, a relationship involving hundreds of billions of dollars, in terms of pro-pharmaceutical legislation, health related research, grants, special health programs, etc., and the ever-loud cry for "more money" and "more tax dollars" for all these areas simply indicated otherwise, in my opinion! If both political parties truly wanted to pass a **meaningful** prescription drug bill, they would have done so a long time ago, in my opinion. So, when the elderly and America continued to be frustrated at the rise of escalating health care costs, the answer to why such legislation had not yet passed, surely had to be because it truly was not in the interest of government agencies to do so because such a bill would take too much money away from their pharmaceutical "partners".

There were many "bad laws" on the books across America – and apparently many more "bad laws" on the way when it came to possibly making all vitamins and supplements available by prescription only. Another such "bad law" - still in the works – and before our legislators, was **the Frist Bill. If passed, this bill would prevent anyone from suing any pharmaceutical for any vaccine injury**. What had happened to "just laws" in this nation? Was this "just"? Was this "fair"? What had happened to common sense? The pharmaceuticals were arguing that they were in a "high risk" business. Really? I think that being a voiceless child being injected with up to 50 times the acceptable safe level of mercury was a lot riskier business than was being a pharmaceutical executive in a plush chair. Surely all parents had to understand that injecting children with viruses based on very limited time duration studies was a lot riskier than being at the other end of the vaccine issue. Was it not easier to quickly pump out these vaccines and collect money from their sale than to possibly have to actually live with a very defective brain as a result of likely vaccine injury? And what about all those serial killers and rapists on death row? What if even one was an undiagnosed case of autism or mercury related brain injury resulting in brain dysfunction? Was it not the ultimate risk to have to die as a result of a possible vaccine injury – perhaps for reasons beyond one's control? Who was truly at risk? The executives in our plush government and pharmaceutical offices enjoying the best life had to offer and perhaps making untold sums of money from these products - or our innocent children - potentially injured for life - who could perhaps end up in mental or criminal institutions? Who really faced the greater risk here? Truly?

There was a very false assumption by many in America that once a law was passed, the people of this land had no option but to "go along" with that law. Finally, one state was starting to see the light on this issue – South Dakota. The people of South Dakota were now looking to start removing some of these "bad laws" from their books by voting on something called "**jury nullification**" in their next election.

Jury nullification was a concept addressed by both Jefferson and Madison. Basically, what it boiled down to was that in deciding whether or not someone was "guilty" of breaking the law, the jury could also decide whether or not the law itself was "just"!

If the Frist Bill did pass, jury nullification certainly did have interesting implications! Certainly, given everything involved in the issue of vaccinations, I had no doubt that the government would try to make this an "irrevocable law" somehow. But, again, were we a government "by the people, for the people" or were we a government run by the elite few. Those in government had to be sent a very strong message when it came to "toilet paper legislation©" like the Frist Bill!

The concept of jury nullification, certainly, could help us return to a government "By the people - for the people" instead of what had become a government "by special interest – for special interest"!

This was truly, an interesting concept. Although many would argue against this, saying that "the average man" could not possibly make such decisions, that the average public was not "informed enough" – I would strongly argue otherwise. We were, after all, a government "by the people – for the people". I suspect "the people" still had a little more common sense than many in Washington and that "the people" could actually better determine what was "just" given there would be no "financial interests" to "fog" one's judgment!

I certainly hoped that legislators truly considered how insane the argument would be to tell the people of this nation they were not "smart enough" to judge whether a law was "just"? And before that message was sent to the American public by any legislator, they had better think long and hard about taking that position. **If the people were not "smart enough" to decide whether or not a law was "just", surely, they were not "smart enough" to decide whether or not, based on that law, someone should be sent to jail or sentenced to death! And thus, to say that the American public was not "smart enough" to decide whether or not a specific law "was just" would also be putting the entire jury process in question – and indeed, the very foundations of this nation! So, to any politician who would want to "*<u>protect the people from themselves</u>*", I encouraged you to think long and hard before making that argument in any scenario.**

The simple fact was that, this nation, had been founded by colonists – simple, everyday people had made this nation great then, and were quite capable to continue to do so!

Some politicians were of the opinion that "parents of the autistic needed to be protected from their bad judgment when it came to vaccines and their children". Really? **<u>Was it bad judgment on the part of parents not to want their children exposed to up to 50 or even 100 times the safe level of mercury as determined by government standards? Or – was it perhaps bad judgment on the part of the government to have not more closely monitored exactly how much mercury was being injected into our children? If anyone was guilty of "bad judgment" as it related to vaccinations, surely, it had to be the administrators who were apparently asleep at the switch - for decades!</u>**

Given the fact that by the age of **<u>two</u>**, children could have potentially been exposed to over 100 times safe levels of mercury based on government standards, if children needed to be protected from anyone, it was from persons who were not exactly competent when it came to protecting them in the first place – administrators in the NIH, CDC and pharmaceuticals who had failed to recognize they were injecting infants and young children with doses of mercury that far surpassed safe standard as determined by the government. **Again, who exactly did these children need to be protected from – concerned parents sounding alarm bells around the world, or administrators who had so miserably failed in their role to ensure the wellbeing of children in the first place?**

For any politician who would try to make parents seem "uninformed" or "lacking in judgment" when it came to such issues, again, I encouraged those politicians to take a very strong look at the facts before making any such claim. I must honestly say, that, I, personally took great offense in such comments – as I was sure would many others in this country and around the world. Parents, overall, loved their children enough to do what was in their best interest**.** Parents of the autistic, especially, had waged a very long battle in fighting for their children. Just whom did these government representatives think they were to make such statements that we had to be protected from ourselves? In my opinion, the answer to that question was becoming clearer every day – these politicians had become the business partners of the pharmaceuticals and had turned their backs on the American public in doing so!

It was now more than evident that special interests had taken over Washington to the detriment of American children and indeed - children worldwide. Bill Frist, the man behind the Frist Bill was in Washington to use his title of doctor only in advancing his personal business interests.

Although he himself stated he wore many hats, the suit he now wore was not that of a doctor, but of a businessman – make no mistake about it. As the son and heir of one of the founders of perhaps the nation's largest FOR-PROFIT healthcare conglomerate, Columbia/HCA, Bill Frist has a personal fortune very much tied to the well being of the pharmaceutical industry. It is not surprising that not only is he behind the Frist Bill to shield the pharmaceuticals of any liability resulting from vaccine injury, he is also very much in Washington to pass legislation capping damages against HMOs.

Bill Frist – putting FRIST FIRST in Washington. Indeed perhaps the only first aid being given by this doctor in Washington was "**Frist FIRST**" Aid.

Likewise, Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr, once a Senior VP at Eli Lilly was now on the Homeland Security and National Security Council. One could not help but wonder about Mr. Daniels' financial interests, too and how his ties to Eli Lilly impacted his judgment on matters such as vaccination safety and the well being of our children. Under the guise of homeland security, provisions for the shielding of pharmaceuticals from any vaccine injury liability were also currently being proposed… and if they failed to pass there, Executive Orders by the President himself would pass what had failed elsewhere. The question all Americans and indeed all persons worldwide should now ask themselves was this: How would shielding the pharmaceuticals from any liability for vaccinations protect us from terrorists given there was no thimerosal in either the smallpox or anthrax vaccine? This provision, as stated by Dan Burton himself, clearly did not belong in the Homeland Security bill.

To those in political offices who kept eroding the rights of America's citizens by attempting to pass **"toilet paper legislation©" such as the Frist Bill** in order to absolve all pharmaceuticals of any liability for vaccine injury whatsoever **or who would vote yes on making vitamins and over the counter supplements prescription only, further strengthening the strong arm of the pharmaceuticals in this country** – for you who had no morals or values – for you and you only, I had but a very special wish:

If I Had A Wish…

If I had a wish, oh, yes – it would be,
That God grant me this miracle for – just a few – to see,

For those who sit in their office, standing for nothing…
To defend our values – they are not willing.
The Bible, The Constitution, The Bill of Rights –
For none of these things, they are willing to fight!

And, so, here's my wish, my wish just for you –
A daily reminder – I wish, God would do!
For those destroying our values, oh, let - them only - see,
How of our foundations - they've made a mockery!

So, send them "a message", dear Lord – let it be told,
On the scrolls – in their restrooms – let it unfold!
The words of our Constitution – on a new type of paper,
So worthless, so porous – once destroyed – gone forever!

So, grant me this wish, God – that these persons may think,
Before they take to their pens – to modify the ink!
That perpetrators to this blasphemy, not further create,
Words destroying our Constitution - what made this nation - so great!

Religion and morality, yes – these are our pillars!
Those who wave the flag, yet destroy these are liars -
Not patriots! So, to our leaders, as you lay down to rest…
Consider reading George Washington's Farewell Address!

The full text of this poem is provided in the Appendix to these materials.

Indeed, there is no denying that the two pillars of this nation, spoken of by George Washington in his Farewell Address appear to be quickly crumbling in America… and without these pillars, where was this nation heading – without its key supports and its ever eroding foundations!

Society – Worldwide - Meeting The Challenges Ahead…

Society indeed had many issues to address on many fronts. **Issues as they related to the affiliations and loyalties of those in political office certainly topped that list since society could not possibly move forward on so many of these issues if the interest of all men, women and children was not at the forefront of everything in matters relating to vaccinations and mercury overall**.

When I had written my first book, I had really not looked very much into matters relating to vaccinations. As I personally, came to research more on autism and a possible vaccination link, I knew the liver, the body's main detoxifying organ was somehow involved, and the pancreas too... so critical in enzyme activity and the regulation of blood sugar. Zachary, had after all, been low on blood sugar at birth... and that had always been in the back of my mind. I knew I had a mouthful of mercury fillings, the very substance found in so many vaccinations, and these fillings could have somehow impacted him while he was still in the womb. I knew the American Dental Association denied any adverse effects of mercury fillings, but, there were too many parents saying this too, may have been a factor in terms of mercury poisoning.

I felt Zachary may have been born with a weak immune system as a result of my fillings, and that perhaps, his condition had indeed been made much worse by the mercury in vaccinations. After all, he had developed some language... and then lost it... and, too many parents were now pointing the finger to vaccinations for vaccinations to be so easily dismissed as a possible cause for autism. **I was not against vaccinations... but I was very much for safe vaccinations and each parent's right to choose whether or not to vaccinate!**

I continued to do research... and to read parent discussion boards, especially in terms of discussions relating to vaccinations.

I knew many parents were adamant vaccinations had caused their child's autism, but I, personally had not had that "overnight" change in Zachary... he had only gradually changed before my eyes. Of course, I worked very long hours at the time and, perhaps, I just did not see what I should have seen. Regardless, if you were to ask me today if vaccines played a part in my child's autism, I would have to answer that I now believed they played a role in traumatizing an immature immune system. After all, the liver, the major detoxifying organ in the body did not produce bile until the infant was 6 months – so, another parent had told me. If this were true, Zachary, and all other infants subjected to vaccinations prior to six months of age, would have been exposed to numerous toxins via vaccinations with a liver not fully functioning in terms of its ability to detoxify the body of heavy metals and any other toxins.

As I learned more about autism in general, many things began to puzzle and frustrate me greatly. For example, I could not understand why the overwhelming majority of the medical establishment, within government, hospitals, and pharmaceuticals, simply refused to accept the well-proven fact that dietary issues were very much at play in the autistic child.

I could not understand why the government and medical community did not recommend specific dietary intervention for these children... as it related to casein, gluten, phenols, supplements, etc. As I thought about this, I wondered... and wondered... why not?

Why was the dietary link so difficult to accept as "common knowledge" in recovering the autistic child when it had so readily been accepted as an issue in so many other ailments... such as diabetes, depression, etc? – especially given the fact that casein free and gluten free diets were helping to recover so many of these children – including my own son!

Then, as I read more and more on parent discussion boards, something else started to be very, very troubling to me... the fact that so many autistic children had "other issues". I kept praying and thanking God that "at least I only had autism to deal with"... that my child did not also have diabetes, epileptic seizures (known to develop in the autistic at puberty), depression, suicidal tendencies, or so many of these other ailments other parents of autistic children were reporting in their children.

As I thought about all this, a thought crossed my mind... could this be the reason the battle had been so difficult... the reason the pharmaceuticals simply could NOT allow the autism-vaccination link to be shown... because if it were shown to be a fact in a court of law, then, perhaps, parents would start noticing a lot of "other factors" their children had in common... all these "other issues".

I then thought some more and wondered... why did we have such an increase in childhood illnesses... such as juvenile diabetes, allergies, etc... we just did not see so much of "all of this" when I was a child. So, I thought some more...and then it hit me... what may very well be the true reason the pharmaceuticals **could not** allow the autism-vaccine link to be shown…

Autism provided ONE critical thing that all these "other ailments" failed to provide... an almost overnight link to vaccinations! And so, if society were to "put it together" that autism was an illness with huge dietary issues in terms of the functioning of the pancreas, the liver's ability to detoxify foreign substances, in terms of immune system issues (the immune system, by the way, is approximately 70% within the digestive track)... issues the medical community for the most part absolutely refused to recognize... (again ... why was that?)... and yet, there were plenty of "other illnesses" out there with huge links to diet... and in those cases, the medical community was "fine" with accepting a link to diet (i.e., in diabetes)... **why was it so hard for parents of the autistic to convince the medical community that, in the case of autism, diet/digestive processing was also at the heart of the matter? Although this was simply a theory on my part, nothing I could prove, my heart told me that it simply had to be because parents of the autistic, in many cases, were pointing the finger directly to vaccinations - and in many cases - overnight!!!**

Autism seemed to do what no other ailment had been able to show - an accusation by parents of the overnight connection to vaccinations! That was why the pharmaceuticals simply could not allow the autism/vaccination link to move forward - because if a link was shown between autism and vaccinations - and diet and mal-absorption, and leaky gut were huge pieces of the puzzle for autistic children, then perhaps, vaccinations, diet and other organ mal-functioning in the human body were linked to vaccinations too! (i.e., mal-function of the liver, of the pancreas, of the brain, etc. - all huge issues in and of themselves - and all issues in the autistic child as well.) In my opinion, that would certainly explain why so many parents with autistic children were also battling "various other issues" - would it not? This certainly would also help explain why everything had been so difficult in terms of parents making their issues heard... and in terms of why the autism-diet link had also been so hard for the medical community and the government to accept!

Perhaps the words of a very brave man - a man not afraid to go against very powerful organizations, a man in search of the truth - best summarized the message from parents to the medical community, the pharmaceuticals and the government agencies involved in autism as they related to vaccinations:

"The take-home message for the medical profession is that the parents were right... In our infinite arrogance it is a difficult pill for us to swallow". Andrew Wakefield

If, indeed, Dr. Wakefield was right, as many parents now suspected he was, the concerns he raised in respect to the MMR and the possible interaction of the measles and mumps viruses, and given the fact that the "rubella" virus was made with human dna, why were these immunizations not readily available, worldwide, as single, independent immunizations? As stated earlier, the only answer to this question was purely a financial one!

To read more on vaccines and their link to so many other illnesses, I encouraged all parents to go to: http://www.909shot.com/ (scroll down - left hand column). This was but one site of many that discussed research and the possible link between vaccinations and so many other illnesses. The research on possible vaccine related illnesses, in addition to autism, was growing indeed!

Could I, personally, prove an autism/vaccination link? No! But I now suspected that this proof, perhaps, did exist - within the very strong, almost impenetrable walls of the pharmaceutical industry and our government agencies involved in vaccination programs.

IF, the walls of the pharmaceutical industry and government agencies involved in vaccination programs had indeed been built with the brick and mortar of deception, sealed and gold plated by political contributions, their lack of integrity would eventually be revealed. And, if the cracks within these walls did form as a result of a lack of integrity, as the cracks begin to spread - deeper and deeper – it, surely, would only be a matter of time before these walls collapsed totally, for walls with no integrity cannot endure the test of time and the violent storms of life... and as more parents looked to vaccinations as the cause of their children's autism, and of possibly other ailments, the hurricane that spread from sea to sea and continent to continent, was forming quickly and the waves of protest were beginning to pound upon many doors for answers!

This hurricane, with all its furry, had in the past been swirling aimlessly in the midst of confusion, but now, its eye was becoming much more focused, and this hurricane, as it increased in strength, was now on a direct path - leading to Washington!

The people of this land understood all too well issues of national and indeed international security as they related to vaccinations. We understood that vaccinations were critical in stopping many life-threatening diseases. Parents were not crying for "no vaccinations", they were crying for "safe vaccinations" - the difference was huge!

Indeed, issues of national and international security as they related to vaccinations, I would argue, spanned much further than most believed. IF a link could be proven between autism and vaccinations, then given the fact that there were already over 2 million children in the US considered to have "attention deficit", the implications for national security were indeed overwhelming also.

There could be no "security for the elderly" who depended on the income of the next generation to help pay for social programs available in retirement. As such, I encouraged all grandparents to contact their chapter of the AARP and ask that the AARP take a stand, alongside parents, on this very critical issue. Children in need of help themselves would not be there to support government programs for the elderly unless these children first received the therapy they themselves needed.

There could be no "security" in daily life as these children became engineers, truck drivers, train conductors, assembly line workers, construction workers, airline pilots, military personnel, etc., and took on so many other critical roles related to this nation's infrastructure and security. The possibility of having persons suffering from "attention deficit" or mercury induced brain lesions resulting in improper communication among the various parts of the brain, was a national security issue indeed... and, in all probability - a reality - as the workforce continued to shrink drastically !

The potential drain on the financial resources of this nation, and other nations, was troubling indeed! In special education alone, resources were already very scarce. As such, I encouraged all education professionals to contact their unions also, and ask that teachers unions take a stand on this issue as well, because there was absolutely no way that schools could even begin to be equipped to handle the ever-growing number of autistic children - these included children with labels of autism, pervasive developmental disorder and attention deficit as well... all children, whom in my opinion, had an inability to properly process the world around them as it related to specific "parts" to a whole... all children who had an inability to properly and effectively cope with all aspects of everyday life and properly focus their attention… all children who had potentially serious sensory input integration and relay issues! Did teachers honestly believe they could handle vast numbers of autism spectrum children without help in the form of therapy and special education tools for these children? These children could very much be helped and made into very productive members of society, but they needed help to do so!

The tides of autism were now turning... and parents were owed answers. If these answers were to be found within the walls of the pharmaceutical industry and the government agencies involved in vaccination programs, as I believed they may very well be, then, I had but one question for our government officials:

Why had subpoenas not yet been issued to get to the bottom of the possible autism - vaccination link and to provide for independent audits? Society – worldwide – now had to take a strong stance on this question and send politicians, worldwide, the strong message that real answers were needed – there was no longer time for dancing around the issues without the facts, and to get those facts, necessitated subpoenas and independent audits of the CDC, NIH and the pharmaceutical industry. Were we a government "By The People, For The People" – or not? Who exactly as running the show in Washington?

Sure - we currently had the "never-ending" congressional hearings - but without subpoenas and actual documents from independent audits these "hearings" could go on forever. Of course, that also, made me wonder about something else. Given the magnitude of this issue of the autism-vaccine link, in terms of financial costs to the pharmaceuticals, to the government that had been involved in so adamantly pushing forward vaccination programs, to world health policies, **I now began to truly wonder if all these "government hearings" were nothing more than simple delay tactics and smokescreens to buy more time, as legislators hurried to pass laws like the Frist Bill in an attempt to avoid the furry of the hurricane that was now building more rapidly than ever on so many shores**! If past, the Frist Bill would prevent anyone from suing a pharmaceutical for vaccine related injuries.

This document I had written had many difficult messages within it, and I realized that. However, I, like so many other Americans, was tired of all the dancing around the issues. It was time to truly address the issues rather than pretend we were working on them via countless "hearings" that were lacking in true evidence – documents from the pharmaceuticals, the CDC and the NIH as they related to vaccine research.

Again, where were the subpoenas and the independent audits necessary to get to the bottom of this issue? If the government was so sure that there was no autism- vaccination link, then subpoenas should pose no problem – should they? So, why the delay? Was the government, via its "congressional hearings" simply trying to appease the public and make parents think they were "working the issue", when truly, they had no desire whatsoever in getting at the bottom of it? **You could have all the "hearings" you wanted, but without documentation from the sources involved in this issue, these "hearings" were but a waste of taxpayer money!**

I also did not understand why, in view of the tremendous controversy on these issues, vaccinations containing thimerosal had not been recalled. <u>All childhood vaccinations were now available without thimerosal so why were we still "jabbing" 8,000 children per day with old stock? How many devastated children would it take before society finally awoke to these very real and painful issues?</u>

Autism now impacted much more than the families touched by it. Autism could provide vital keys to absolutely every type of brain research, every illness, every disorder and as such, society – worldwide- truly had to meet the challenges placed before it, in requesting that this issue of the possible autism-vaccination link, finally be addressed once and for all – in a timely, efficient and effective manner via independent third party, non-government, audits! America was a democracy for the people and by the people. This issue would truly indicate whether or not, this in fact, was true!

The requests of parents of the autistic were, after all, in the best interest of everyone – worldwide! **Parents were not against vaccinations – they were for <u>safe</u> vaccinations – there was a <u>HUGE</u> difference!**

Given all the potential implications of vaccinations, the burden on the government and on the pharmaceutical industry to rebuild public trust, was indeed overwhelming, especially given the fact that so many scientists and doctors were now showing their concerns over these issues. I had gone this far in providing my views on so many issues, for me, and so many others, there could be no "going back". As such, I now also provided what I felt were the first steps necessary to rebuilding any trust between parents of the autistic, society in general and the pharmaceutical industry and indeed, our government when it came to issues of vaccinations:

1. There had to be an **immediate** recall of all vaccinations containing thimerosal (mercury) with no further mercury containing vaccinations being produced.
2. The MMR had to be made available in **single** doses **only** given the potential measles and mumps virus interactions.
3. No childhood immunizations could begin **until a child was at least 6 months of age** – in order to allow for the proper development of the liver in terms of the production of bile given the liver's critical function in detoxifying the human body of toxins found in vaccinations!
4. Those vaccinations causing the most injuries in to children, as determined by vaccine injury statistics would also be made available in single dose vaccines.
5. A new, independent research organization needed to be set up and involved in reviewing **all** research results as they related to vaccinations prior to new vaccines being made available to the public in order to ensure ethical standards were maintained within the pharmaceutical industry as they related to issues of vaccination safety. This independent research organization would also provide input into what would be considered acceptable standards in terms of vaccination research study duration, etc. Only by having a third party organization, independent of the pharmaceutical industry and government agencies involved in vaccination

programs, could the future safety of all children be ensured. Since the CDC (Center For Disease Control), NIH (National Institutes Of Health), UN (United Nations) and WHO (World Health Organization) had previously been involved in vaccination policies worldwide**, and stood by as vaccination injuries continued to soar, refusing to thoroughly investigate these concerns by having subpoenas issued, but chose instead to simply deny any link,** these organizations, could only play secondary roles, in this watch group function given their very close ties to the pharmaceutical industry!

6. Funds currently made available to the CDC, NIH, the UN and WHO by the government of the United States, in terms matters relating to vaccination policies, research and safety should be made available to help fund this new watch group.
7. There should also be independent studies investigating the possible autism-anesthesia link and possible temporal lobe damage resulting from anesthesia!
8. Intensive intervention programs by qualified therapists knowledgeable in these issues had to be made available to all autistic children.

The government's current vaccination policies made no sense in many respects. For example, the simple fact was that hepatitis B was acquired sexually or via "drug use" and it was highly unlikely that an infant would engage in either behavior – so, why vaccinate for hepatitis B before allowing the child's immune system and detoxifying organ – the liver - to truly kick in at 6 months of age? Why inject toxins into an infant who had no way of truly getting rid of those toxins? It was a well-known fact that there were a lot of bad laws and/or guidelines across America and it was now time to review many of them and that included a review of all vaccination policies by not only those in government, but by those in private industry as well!

Surely, government officials were about ready to "fall over" at the above suggestions, however, it truly was time for all to "step back" and look at these issues objectively and do what was in the interest of all children and adults. Given the current autism-vaccination controversy raging on many shores it was nothing less than negligent to do otherwise! I had gone this far in addressing very difficult issues, placing these suggestions "on the table" was simply my way of letting the public know what I felt was needed. My views had been communicated. It was now up to societies and governments to decide the importance and prioritization of these issues and whether, based on what we now understood, these suggestions should be implemented.

Because autistic children held the keys to so much, in so many areas of study, it was absolutely critical that almost all the above measures be taken given the unfortunately "inherent" interest of the pharmaceutical industry to have MORE autistic children, from a research perspective.

This simply could **<u>not</u>** be allowed to happen and the only way to ensure safe vaccinations would be by having a third party, independent watch group ensuring the safety of all vaccinations by reviewing all vaccination research findings prior to new vaccinations being made available to the public!

Agencies that had failed in their duty to protect children in the past, by refusing to properly investigate this issue via subpoenas simply could not be depended on to do so in the future!

Governments, and citizens - worldwide - were encouraged to support these requests and also, to help fund this new watch group in order to help ensure safe vaccinations for all countries. We all knew vaccinations were necessary to prevent deadly outbreaks of disease, but surely, the control of such outbreaks could be done in a safe way – and the first critical step to that, had to be the immediate recall of all vaccinations containing mercury and legislation providing for very stiff criminal penalties for any pharmaceutical executive found producing and distributing vaccinations containing mercury in the future. In my opinion, it was also critical that society hear the numerous warning bells currently sounding on many shores in relation to the MMR vaccine. Although not a vaccine containing mercury, obviously, there existed enough concern with this vaccination also, to warrant special investigation into these matters – and by that, I meant real investigations – not smokescreens!

Only then could parents and societies, worldwide, help ensure no further damage not only to their children, but also to currently normal children and children born in the future as well.

To the many politicians who had sworn an oath of office, upon the Bible, to uphold the laws of this land and to protect its citizens, I asked that you remembered the following words each time you entered a church, each time you saw a bible:

"There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2).

The most Supreme Court of all would, in the end, be the final ruling on these matters…

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil". (Eccl. 12:14).

For:

"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him" (Prov. 26:27). ".

It was time for our government to show us that we still were still a nation "By the people, For the people" and not a nation that could be bought by the mighty hand of the pharmaceutical industry!

Just as I had here provided a few pieces to the autism puzzle, there was another mother providing another critical piece as well. This mother was the US Autism Ambassador, LD Wedewer. In her book, now available on CD, Autism and Vaccines The Story A Closer Look, supporting documents provided by LD Wedewer include actual testimony materials, information and confidential reports from companies producing vaccinations, the unpublished, original and never released CDC report on the risk of autism from vaccinations (before it was altered and released to the public), the original Eli Lilly documents on the dangers of Thimerosal, including the company's vaccination inserts that were constantly changing in terms of how the company "defined the risk of Thimerosal", and the sad statistics, in the form of affected children - statistics of victims, increasing at the very time that Thimerosal doses given to children were also increasing.

This collection of materials was a must read for all parents - be they parents of an autistic child or not – as well as for all members of society, including all government officials – worldwide!

With autism, the devastation on children and their families was so tremendous that families who did find successes, I found, were more than willing to share their insights to help save other children too! These parents were truly to be commended.

Yet, as I sought to inform myself, I found the sheer number of organizations trying to "do something" to help the autistic - to be overwhelming. One could literally drown researching autism on the Internet. In no time, I came to understand that in the case of many organizations, pharmaceuticals or the government agencies behind vaccination programs often provided financial backing and as such, I wondered how impartial these organizations could be in their message to parents. With other organization, I honestly felt "**the organization had become more important than its cause**". But, overall, I truly felt there were simply "too many organizations"… and as such, I encouraged parents to look for the best among them and to support those that were truly making a difference in terms of working with the government to protect currently autistic children as well in working to help ensure that the fewest possible new children be afflicted by this disorder – to support organizations devoted to legislative changes in terms of government policies as they related to vaccinations and therapy for the autistic.

Note, however, that "working with government", in my opinion, had to involve an honest effort on the part of the government to really get to the bottom of autism issues – and that meant the funding of independent research into vaccines, mercury, aluminum, etc. – and , again, I felt one strong parent led organization would be the best way to accomplish that. Organizations that argued they were there to help families of the autistic but failed to look into matters of vaccine injury as they "partnered" with government agencies and the pharmaceuticals were of no use to me, and quite frankly, would never be organizations I could support. Families did not need further "cover-ups" – they needed honest answers!

Our voice, as parents, had to be a loud voice to make its message heard. It needed to include parents, and grandparents too. Grandparents were a very powerful voting block in America, and indeed, around the world, and I truly felt all grandparents or retired persons needed to take a stand on this issue – politically – and stand behind the children not only of this nation but of all nations! Grandparents, the valued customers of the pharmaceutical industry if united with parents, could truly help make a difference on this issue and get to the bottom of it! Since the very beginning of time, man always looked to his elders for guidance and wisdom. Given the strong emotions involved in so many of these issues, perhaps, more than ever, we now needed to turn to our seniors for assistance in these issues too! Although retired, many senior citizens could still be very active in helping in so many ways. Surely, our healthier retired citizens could be involved in working with some of these children in recovery programs, too. For retired persons looking to pass their golden years in the most rewarding of ways, perhaps helping to save autistic children was an avenue that could be considered – a way to truly make an impact in the life of even one child!

The issue of vaccination safety, after all, was not simply an issue for children. Vaccination safety touched all members of society – from the youngest to the oldest! Their now appeared to be reason to believe that the great increase in Alzheimer's was perhaps also due somewhat to vaccinations. Many vaccinations, after all, did contain aluminum. Also, the fact that mercury damaged neurons resulted in lesions in the brain similar to those found in patients with Alzheimer's was reason for concern.

Thimerosal (mercury) was also found in flu shots and other vaccinations given to adults, too! The issue of vaccination safety affected absolutely every American, absolutely every person around the world who received vaccinations, and as such, this issue had to be thoroughly investigated, and only a global outcry– one voice - could accomplish that! The potential costs incurred by all societies, around the world, in caring for vaccine-injured children were indeed becoming overwhelming in terms of special education, insurance costs, costs in terms of lost tax dollars as more parents stayed home to be with their children, research costs, etc. as were the costs of many illnesses and disorders.

If I had been correct in the theories presented in this document, and had come to possibly understand so much about the workings of the human brain, viewing it in a whole new way, in only two short weeks - and I was but a stay-at-home mom – if I were indeed correct, the leaps to be made in science, therapy, and various treatment options by having much more knowledgeable persons than myself working these issues as they investigated the autistic brain, could, in my opinion save countless billions for all nations while ensuring the safety of all!

As difficult as this message had been for me to deliver, from the bottom of my heart, I had delivered it the best way that I could. All nations, now, needed to take a stand on these issues and I hoped that positions taken – would be the right positions to take – ethically, morally and socially!

In attempts to circumvent the storm currently forming on many shores, Washington was in the midst of passing the Frist Bill at the time of my writing these materials. The Frist Bill, if passed, would make it so that no one could ever sue the pharmaceutical industry for vaccine related injuries. Such "laws", if on the books in America would indeed be bad laws - and laws that would need to be quickly reversed! No law was ever final. This was a land of "We The People... For The People... By The People". If the government was willing to lift the burden of the pharmaceuticals to provide safe products for children around the world, then the government should perhaps be ready to accept, itself, the full financial burden lifted from these corporations if it chose to absolve them of any liability. Vaccinations had been made mandatory by the government in order for children to be educated in America's school systems or in order to attend any daycare. As such, if mandatory, that meant parents had been given "no choice" and had lost complete rights over their children's bodies. If the government felt it could mandate vaccinations, then, it should be willing to bear complete financial burden for all vaccine-injured children. And, who would care for all the children injured, internationally – the silent voices around the world – those in third world countries – perhaps the most voiceless of all?

Yet, to place the financial burden on governments, I believed, was truly not where this burden belonged – at least not in full - because in the end, once again, financial responsibility would fall upon the taxpayer rather than where it did really belong - with the manufacturers of these products.

The passing of legislation, such as the Frist Bill, prior to the facts being known and made public via the use of subpoenas, in my opinion, necessitated that there be a great outcry among all nations to have such legislation quickly and decisively reversed by placing this issue to a national vote once the facts were truly known! For if the facts did reveal a link between autism and vaccinations, then the shackles that had for so long enslaved autistic children around the world needed to be removed and placed upon the hand and feet of the perpetrators of this great injustice, for as a President of the United States once stated:

Children are the world's most valuable resource… and its best hope for the future!
John F. Kennedy

We could no longer cast aside the possible link between autism and vaccinations. Parents' concerns had be addressed so that we did not find ourselves saying much later: "Oops! How could we have missed this - for so long?"

I could already hear the "who does she think she is?" resounding across the halls of governments worldwide as more and more parents read these materials and placed pressures on their governments to act on this issue – governments comprised mainly of men. In the interest of not wasting any further time, I would answer that question – the "who does she think she is?" for all politicians. To those who were offended at my position on these matters, perhaps you would best understand my concern, my frustration, and yes, - my anger - by understanding the label I and so many others affected by autism also carry. It is a simple label, but it is one so deep in meaning that words truly cannot define this term. The label I carry is that of:

"mother"

... with all that it implies!!!

Vaccinations and autism was the new women's and indeed – the new parent issue and social issue - and surely, in this issue, all societies worldwide could stand together! The simple fact was that until society got to the bottom of the issue in terms of the potential autism – vaccination link, no child – or adult, for that matter was safe! If mothers, and indeed fathers, were not willing to fight for all children - autistic or not - who would?

I encouraged all parents and politicians – worldwide – to ensure we did not find ourselves still saying, even a year from now: **OOPS!!! How could we have missed this for so long?**

The time had come to finally get to the bottom of this issue – and that meant subpoenas! Politicians worldwide who were not willing to listen had to be given the very clear message that they would be thrown out of office at the first opportunity if they failed to take the right stand on this moral issue – an issue that would truly be an indicator – a very accurate gauge of one's integrity in making difficult decisions!

Voices For The Voiceless…

If one thing had become painfully clear to me, it was that there was a great deal of work to be done. There was no way that governments around the world could even begin to tackle all these issues on their own.

Entertainers in music, comedy, etc., were always a great source of inspiration for many and certainly there had to be a way of doing annual fundraisers for autism research.

The government could not even begin to care for all these children and all these issues - it would take the help of many to do so.

I think everyone reading these materials knew that the challenges ahead were huge, but they were not insurmountable. To allow tax relief for parents of the autistic and to help fund autism treatment centers across the US would go a long way toward helping to rebuild trust and families, and this was the very least our government could do to begin the healing. In my heart, I felt the same steps would be necessary from governments around the world.

The best in many fields – neurology, behavior therapy, education, research, programming, etc. would now be needed to provide new tools for these children. I had great hope for many of these children. I knew many could indeed become among our most brilliant members of society. Yes, these children had obstacles to overcome, but their determination to understand their world and to be part of it was truly a testimony to their undying spirit. That was the very least we owed these children – and society. Only by becoming productive members of society could these children eventually help to support that society rather than be viewed as a burden to it.

This nation spent billions on defense – it was now time to spend significant funds on <u>this</u> national security issue, too, to help recover the children we had so failed to protect in the first place and to prevent further vaccination injury to all those with a weak or dysfunctional immune system prior to the administration of any mandatory vaccine! For those adults not yet convinced that the removal of mercury was a necessary step, perhaps this analogy would convince you.

It was a well-known fact that flu shots contained mercury. It was also a well-known fact that the elderly were by far, those lining up for flu shots – shots containing both mercury and aluminum. The health hazards of aluminum – also in many childhood vaccinations - had also been scientifically tied to Alzheimer's. In my opinion, there was a lot more to this than simply "coincidence". Scientists had shown that neural degeneration in experiments with mercury had revealed brain lesions similar to those found in human Alzheimer's patients. Was it also not "odd" to society that Alzheimer's seemed to be an illness that became epidemic – almost overnight – like autism? There seemed to be so little of these illnesses in the past – yet now, the **numbers affected were epidemic! Interesting indeed! Well, even more interesting was the following:**

You Decide…	
Gradual onset	Gradual onset
Short term and long term memory loss	Short term and long term memory loss
Loss of intellectual abilities	Loss of intellectual abilities
Impact on social activities and everyday tasks	Impact on social activities and everyday tasks
Process and task completion issues	Process and task completion issues
Judgment issues	Judgment issues
Changes in behavior	Changes in behavior
Inability to recognize faces and voices	Inability to recognize faces and voices
Difficulty with language production and comprehension	Difficulty with language production and comprehension
Nonsense language	Nonsense language
Echolalia (parroting of what others say)	Echolalia (parroting of what others say)
Use “related words” (reference communication)	Use “related words” (reference communication)
Can read but not understand meaning of what is read	Can read but not understand meaning of what is read
May be mute	May be mute
“Deaf Adult” syndrome	“Deaf Child” syndrome
Issues with the concept of self	Issues with the concept of self
Personality changes - including rage and withdrawal	Personality changes – including rage and withdrawal
Symptoms vary among those affected	Symptoms vary among those affected
Wander off, easily disoriented	Wander off, easily disoriented
Decreased attention span	Decreased attention span
Loss of physical coordination	Loss of physical coordination
Changes in emotion	Changes in emotion
Difficulty understanding facial expressions	Difficulty understanding facial expressions
Confusion and inability to follow instructions	Confusion and inability to follow instructions
Repetition of words (their own)	Repetition of words (their own)
Can physically abuse caregivers	Can physically abuse caregivers
Inability to control bladder or bowels	Inability to control bladder or bowels
Subject to hallucinations	Subject to hallucinations (casein/gluten opiate effect)
Issues with imagination verses reality (pretending)	Issues with imagination verses reality (pretending)
Changes in eating patterns	Changes in eating patterns
Difficulty in swallowing	Difficulty in swallowing
Difficulty in sleeping	Difficulty in sleeping
Drugs used for epilepsy useful in treatment of this disorder	Often develop epilepsy at puberty
Brain lesions found	Brain lesions found
Epidemic levels	Epidemic levels
Mercury-laced flu shots (mercury known to cause neural degeneration)	Mercury-laced vaccinations (mercury known to cause neural degeneration)
Cause of disorder “unknown”	Cause of disorder “unknown”
Diagnosis: ALZHEIMER’S	**Diagnosis: AUTISM**
Coincidence?	

The parallels between Alzheimer’s and autism were striking indeed – the 37 listed above I found within one hour of searching on the Internet! **In my opinion, Alzheimer’s was nothing more than “<u>autism in the elderly</u>”.** Note that an epidemic, by definition, was an “outbreak” affecting many persons at once. Hence, by definition, an epidemic could not be “genetic” because a genetic reason for these increases in these disorders would have been “gradual” as opposed to “epidemic”. Sure, there were some differences. But, in one case, the brain had been allowed to mature prior to mercury exposure via flu shots… in the other, neural growth had potentially been devastated from the very start!

Would the AARP and all senior citizens now align themselves with parents of the autistic in demanding that safety issues as they related to vaccinations/ immunizations be investigated? In my opinion, senior citizens had no choice but to do so! The number of people getting Alzheimer's was said to double every five years for those past the age of 65. Persons with Alzheimer's, some studies indicated, lost up to 60% of temporal lobe neurons (see http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mcousson/BB3.html and http://splweb.bwh.harvard.edu:8000/pages/papers/killiany/temporal.html#Table). Autism, it was becoming quite clear to me, was no longer simply an issue for the young… it was also very much an issue for the elderly as well. Interesting, indeed rather alarming statistics on Alzheimer's can be found at: http://www.alz.org/AboutAD/Statistics.htm, indicating 7 in 10 patients will live at home with basically no financial assistance from the government since Medicare and most private health insurance do not cover long term needs for these patients. Sound familiar? To parents of the autistic, this was familiar indeed! Also according to this link, the US spent 100 billion a year on Alzheimer's… but this was just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what was apparently still to come!

When one kept in mind that the human brain was believed to develop into adolescence, it could now be easily understood why there were some differences between autism and Alzheimer's. For the elderly, the "chance of repair" was much more limited given the brain had greatly stopped working on new neural connections.

Autism, Alzheimer's and SIDS… all disorders basically unheard of 25 years ago… all with an "unknown cause". Really?

It was time society stopped looking at Alzheimer's simply as dementia in the elderly… stopped viewing it as simply a "part of getting old". Wake up folks! The elderly were never this bad off when I was young. It was now estimated that 50% of persons over 85 had Alzheimer's. The elderly never used to forget their entire lives – their loved ones - as do now patients with Alzheimer's. This was not simply the result of "getting older" or "living longer". There were plenty of very old people in the past too… but never the statistics we see today in terms of this disorder, never the total devastation we now see in our elderly, too! Interestingly, some persons as young as in their 30s and 40s were also developing Alzheimer's. Could this be due to the fact that some young people also received mercury-laced flu shots or to the fact that mercury was also found in many other vaccinations – like tetanus or pneumonia shots for example?

Would the fear that perhaps this could happen to "them" be enough to finally convince all adults who had been so hard to convince in matters relating to issues of vaccination safety - be enough to finally make all adults take a very strong stand on these issues – especially given the fact that with brain lesions, if "coincidences" between the autistic and those with Alzheimer's were indeed more than "coincidences", then perhaps those at risk of developing Alzheimer's later in life – all adults, in my opinion – could also have a compromised immune system – and implications of that, in the face of any disease outbreak also were overwhelming indeed! With the graying of America, how much longer could we go on without investigating issues relating to vaccination safety?

With Alzheimer's expected to double every 5 years in persons over 65, there indeed, was reason to be concerned – by all! We already had 4 million Americans with Alzheimer's. The person with Alzheimer's lived an average 8 – 10 years from onset of the disorder to death. Average cost in a nursing care facility could range from 45,000 to 70,000 per year per person.

Was it not overwhelming to society that Americans had so many mental and eating disorders now – both "signatures" in the autistic child? Alzheimer's, 4 million, attention deficit, 2 million children, autism, another 2 million children, schizophrenia (considered an illness characterized by **disordered thoughts**), 2.2 million, obsessive compulsive disorder (considered an illness of **disordered motions**), 3.3 million, bi-polar (considered an illness characterized by **disordered moods**) 2.3 million, depression, 9 million (obviously another mood disorder). Throw in eating disorders – allergies (disorder of the digestive system), 50 million, diabetes (disorder of the pancreas), 17 million, etc. - disorders so common in the autistic - and one truly can not help but wonder! Another interesting disorder was that of **epilepsy** – **known to develop in the autistic at puberty**. There were now at least 2.3 million Americans with epilepsy. According to the government, most persons impacted were the **very young and the elderly**. It will come as no surprise that, again, in most cases, the cause of these disorders was "unknown". Coincidence - again? How many of these "disorders" had a mercury link? How many were the result of mercury-related brain lesions due to vaccinations and/or dental fillings? Brain lesions were reported in bi-polar, epilepsy, schizophrenia, autism, and Alzheimer's.

For more on issues as they relate to dental amalgams and mercury, please see: http://www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/dailys/02/Apr02/042402/01n-0067-sup0001-vol1.pdf. I encouraged all persons to take the time to read this docket (and to request it if it disappeared from the Internet). This docket, dated April 22, 2002 - docket no. 01N-0067 - filed by The International Academy Of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (a group dedicated to safe oral procedures in dentistry) with the USFDA clearly indicated that the USFDA acknowledged the dangers of mercury, yet did not seem to believe that the consumer needed to be informed of that danger/risk. This was truly an interesting read to say the least! Persons wanting a copy of this docket should contact the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology, P. O. Box 608531, Orlando, FL 32860-8531 (407-298-2450).

It was becoming quite clear that many in government were preferred "not to inform the public", in matters relating to mercury exposure and the risks associated with mercury exposure. Instead, the government and indeed, the pharmaceuticals seemed to prefer to simply inform doctors and dentists of the risks and put the burden on them when it came to any lawsuits. Should the government agencies taxpayers were paying to ensure public health not be acting in the best interest of consumers by making these issues public? What exactly were we paying them for anyway? This trend in issues of vaccinations and dental amalgams and mercury exposure and of not informing the public as to the dangers of this substance was a rather disturbing one. It seemed that those in science, along with doctors and dentists were raising red flags everywhere, and yet, the government and the pharmaceuticals, in their powerful, impenetrable walls preferred to ignore those warning bells and red flags and continue to pretend that there existed "no issue here".

Doctors, dentists and scientists were aware of the issues and yet, without the public being aware too, their chances of getting anything done were rather scarce. It was time the public stood behind these doctors, dentists and scientists and demanded a change – the immediate removal of mercury from vaccines and amalgams and the immediate removal of many very unethical politicians as well! Time to wake up America!

Alarm bells were sounding everywhere – across numerous disciplines. It was time those alarm bells were heard and responded to! Doctors and dentists could have their careers ruined for raising these issues, for going against the system… perhaps to the point of losing their licenses… scientists too had a great deal to lose in terms of research grants, etc. Many in science, dentistry and medicine had gone out on a limb in hopes of making a change, but, without full public backing, I feared their endeavors would be in vain. There was simply too much money and too many careers at stake. We were "a government by the people and for the people" – it was time to show it and to demand accountability on these issues!

Lawsuits were now being filed against the American Dental Association arguing that deceptive practices were being used in telling patients that dental fillings were "silver" (only 25% silver in reality) as opposed to mercury (50%). For more on this, readers could go to: http://www.khorrami.com/Amalgam%20Web/Amalgam/Amalgam.htm. One filling has enough mercury in it to pollute a small lake. To give readers an idea of just how bad mercury was, there was enough mercury in a thermometer to pollute a 20-acre lake for 10 years. The government knew "how bad" mercury was, yet, apparently, it did not seem to believe the public "needed to know". Really? Why exactly was that?

There were many sources of mercury – vaccinations, dental fillings, many household products (i.e., cleaning solutions, soaps, contact lens solutions, nasal sprays, etc.), but, by far, vaccinations and dental fillings were perhaps the most common and, these two sources, had perhaps contributed the most to the great increase in so many illnesses with "unknown causes".

All these illnesses… so many "new illnesses"… you just did not see these "disorders" and these numbers when I was a child, yet, we had smaller families now than then! Interesting indeed! Was it any wonder that the pharmaceutical industry had gone from a 20 billion dollar industry in the early 1980s to a 260 billion dollar industry in the mid 1990s? And now, this same industry was pushing for the passing of the Frist Bill to absolve them of any wrongdoing as a result of vaccination injury? Think about that folks… and think about it in view of all the issues raised in this document! The Frist Bill was before Congress at the time of the writing of this text. If passed there had to be a national outcry for its immediate reversal because without a clear understanding of any vaccination-autism link as shown via CDC and pharmaceutical documentation, documentation considered "confidential", the passing of this bill had very serious consequences for all. "Toilet paper legislation©" - in my opinion, there was no better description for the Frist Bill – a destruction of the rights of Americans and of the very foundations of this nation!

The implications of this, economically, could indeed be devastating to this nation. There would be none who would benefit from the further delay of true vaccination safety investigation – except perhaps for the very few - the few executives in the pharmaceutical industry and their bought off politicians! Not all politicians were at fault in this – and I realized that. Indeed, Ronald Reagan, considered by many one of our greatest Presidents was now himself suffering from Alzheimer's. In my opinion, no one was "immune" to these illnesses. Still not convinced that vaccination safety was a concern for all? Then, perhaps this would help convince you…

Aluminum was known to be involved in gene mutations. The simple fact that government funded studies used aluminum-rich soil, specifically, was used in genetically engineered foods was a surely an indication of that. Yet, if aluminum could genetically alter plant genetics, could it not also alter human genetics as well? One certainly would think that this would indeed be the case. Would foods now become aluminum rich? Many diseases were tied specifically to gene mutations… and perhaps the biggest "gene mutation" of all was that mutation that now affected so many around the world – cancer.

In 2001, according to government statistics, 8600 American children were diagnosed with cancer – another 1500 died from it. Also, according to the government, most cases of cancer, clearly half, were leukemia or central nervous system cancers (i.e., brain cancer). Interesting! Leukemia – cancer of the blood (where we inject vaccinations)… and the central nervous system… also clearly impacted in the autistic! Again, according to the government, causes of childhood cancers were "largely unknown". Really? Was I the only person starting to see a few more "coincidences" here? Again, when families were larger as was the case when I was young, you just never saw "so much" cancer in children – not to mention adults, too! Aluminum in vaccinations – a known gene mutant - could that be the reason for this increase in incidence of cancer among our children?

I was in no way saying that all cancers could have a vaccination/aluminum link. Surely, many cancers were attributable to smoking, environmental pollutants, etc. But, in the cases of childhood cancer, cancers appearing mainly in the blood and the central nervous system, cancers with an "unknown cause", I truly wondered.

Alum or aluminum sulfate was a substance added to vaccinations – it was argued - to boost the immune system response to vaccinations. The word "boost" – to me – implied that this substance should aid in a positive manner. I wondered if a better description of "alum" was not rather that it helped "trigger" the immune system (as opposed to "boost it") by the introduction of a toxic substance into the body. In my opinion, there was a huge difference between the words "boost" and "trigger"! Perhaps this explained why there existed so many other toxic substances in vaccinations.

A "vaccine ingredients" list taken from the Autism Awakening Newsletter dated February 4th, 2002 included the following "ingredients" in some vaccinations.

Heavy metals like mercury and aluminum, pus from sores of diseased animals, horse serum, calf serum, fecal matter, urine, macerated cancer cells, sweepings from diseased children, formaldehyde (a carcinogen) - used in embalming fluids, phenol (also a carcinogen) - may cause paralysis, convulsions, coma, and necrosis and gangrene, lactalbumin hydrolysate – emulsifier, aluminum phosphate - aluminum salt, corrosive to tissues, foreign animal tissues containing genetic material (DNA/RNA) - from growth medium… to name but a few. A more complete list of "vaccine ingredients" as listed by the CDC, could be viewed by going to: http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/pink/vaxcont.pdf .

I certainly hoped that men and women around the world now understood the very critical need to at the very least, remove ALL mercury from vaccinations - immediately – and the need to perhaps remove ALL aluminum as well.

Many things were known to boost the immune system. What was it about aluminum that made it so special that it had to be used as an immune system booster in vaccinations? Were there not less dangerous substances that could be used in vaccinations to help boost the immune system? Could substances to boost immune systems not be taken prior to immunizations also?

In my opinion, given the issues raised in this document, there needed to be very strict guidelines put in place at least banning mercury completely and the immediate recall of all mercury containing vaccinations – worldwide.

I knew this message had been a difficult one for everyone reading this text. I hoped all readers now understood why this message had to be presented in the manner it was. No government official or pharmaceutical executive would have wanted me to raise these concerns. In addition, I was rather skeptical of the fact that I had been the only one to really put so much of this together in terms of brain structure and function. With so many working on autism issues around the world, surely, someone else had to have seen this. I knew almost all research was either government or pharmaceutical backed and as such, I understood all too well why such "suspicions" had never been put forth. For me to contact government officials with my concerns would have led nowhere and perhaps only resulted in the further "hushing" of so many issues related to vaccinations and autism. Yet, all persons, in my view, were now very much impacted by autism and the need for investigation into vaccination safety and I could not let these issues be swept under the carpet. It would take all of mankind to address these issues. Given Washington's past failings in addressing issues relating to autism, I had **no choice** but to choose this route in making these concerns known – and I hoped all readers understood that. Autism and disease control were not simply American issues. These issues impacted all societies – all nations! :o(

I had simply wanted to understand my son… and in doing so, my own personal journey led me to paths I could not have imagined. I had not wanted to create a panic among parents or any other adult. In spite of the fact that there existed very real concerns in issues of vaccination safety, the fact also very much remained that

DISEASE CONTROL WAS STILL VERY MUCH AN ISSUE – FOR ALL!!!

ALL CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS WERE NOW AVAILABLE WITHOUT MERCURY – PARENTS JUST NEEDED TO KNOW TO ASK FOR THIMEROSAL OR MERCURY FREE VACCINES SINCE OLD STOCK HAD NOT YET BEEN RECALLED!!!

The pharmaceuticals could not be allowed to ship existing stocks of mercury vaccines to less developed nations! All these vaccines had to be recalled – worldwide!

THE MMR CERTAINLY STILL WAS A VALID CONCERN – EVEN THOUGH IT DID NOT CONTAIN THIMEROSAL - AND IN MY HEART, I FELT THAT THIS VACCINATION HAD TO BE GIVEN IN SINGLE DOSES. TOO MANY WARNING BELLS HAD ALREADY BEEN SOUNDED REGARDING THE MMR FOR US TO IGNORE THEM!

Prior to having been given the MMR, children had been exposed to extraordinary levels of mercury. If my theory was correct in that the various parts of the brain were basically acting independently from one another as a result of mercury exposure, then, a child’s ability to fight the measles, mumps and rubella could certainly have been seriously hampered with the brain unable to properly communicate with the immune system to generate the appropriate response to this vaccine.

THE SAFETY OF ALUMINUM ALSO HAD TO BE MUCH BETTER RESEARCHED!

The pros and cons of all issues presented in these materials would now have to be weighed by all societies. We could continue to deny these issues, and engage in what were smokescreen “congressional hearings”, or admit the problem and move forward in addressing these issues. Needless to say, I was also very much in favor of campaign finance reform. The pharmaceutical industry had shown quite well the devastating effects of allowing big business to run Washington.

I had prayed a great deal through all this and done what I knew was the right thing to do by raising these concerns. We could no longer hide from these issues. Surely many in society would have preferred “not knowing". Yet, the safety of one’s health and the health of one’s family, was a very personal matter – and as such, I felt issues of vaccination safety had to be raised for all. Understanding the issues, after all, was the first step in addressing them.

It was now time for all of society to TAKE A VERY DEEP BREATH – AND A HUGE STEP BACK – and now determine how to best proceed!

The fact was that vaccinations were not all bad – life expectancies had greatly been increased as a result of vaccinations and disease control! Sure, there were also issues in terms of quality of life – there was no denying that. But, **the fact did remain that there were many life-threatening illnesses and potential epidemics that had been kept in check by vaccinations**. Vaccinations were not all bad – I think we could all agree on that issue. But, I believed we could all agree that much more needed to be done in the area of vaccination safety as well, especially in terms of mercury, aluminum and the potential interaction of certain viruses as seemed to be the case in the MMR.

WE COULD FIGHT ONE ANOTHER…OR WE COULD WORK TOGETHER AT RESOLVING THESE ISSUES!

The troubles we now faced had not surfaced overnight. Mercury had been in vaccinations for close to 70 years and children had steadily been exposed to greater and greater amounts of this toxic substance at ever increasing rates as the number of immunizations increased, immunization schedules were more greatly compressed and the pharmaceuticals chose to use multiple dose vials – adding mercury as an agent to kill bacteria that could set in once the vial had been punctured for the first shot to be given. As this situation had not surfaced overnight, neither would these problems be resolved overnight – but, first steps could certainly be taken to make an immediate impact and those steps had to include immediate recalls of all mercury containing vaccines as well as a complete review of vaccination schedules to ensure all children at least had a functioning liver - producing bile - to help with detoxification matters prior to the administration of vaccinations. The road ahead would be a long and difficult one, but certainly not an insurmountable one!

I hoped all adults saw that working together was - truly – our only option – our only way to ensure both recovery of the autistic and – indeed – our very survival as well, in matters of disease control!

Criminal Acts Or Total Incompetence?

In my opinion, the psychological and emotional healing that lay ahead, for many, would involve very difficult times. Yet, it was time for that healing to begin… for mistakes to be admitted, and for life to go on.

With issues of vaccination safety, there were always persons who believed the government and the pharmaceuticals knew a great deal more than they made public in these matters. Given the materials presented and the fact that so many children, and indeed, adults seemed to have been so devastated by vaccinations, obviously, if officials in the government and the pharmaceutical industry knew of the harm substances like mercury could cause in humans, then part of the healing process needed to involve criminal prosecutions.

Obviously, there were persons who had to know how much mercury we were injecting into our children, both in the government and in the pharmaceutical industry. Dockets filed with the USFDA by the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology alone show that the USFDA knew of the dangers of mercury.

No one should be allowed to profit by knowingly putting these toxic substances in vaccinations and from having done this to innocent children and adults.

It was well known to science that mercury was the second most toxic substance in the world, and as such, its use should have been much more closely monitored, both in the pharmaceutical industry and by government officials. And, that brings us to the second point – total incompetence! If government officials and those in the pharmaceutical industry argued that they "did not know" (something, I, personally, found very hard to believe) – well, they should have!

You would not put a person not trained in air traffic control procedures in a control tower! To do so, I was sure, many would agree, should be prosecutable as a criminal act given such a position so greatly impacted public health and safety as well as national security. The same thing was true of those in positions that were there to monitor and ensure public health and safety within our government and pharmaceutical industry. For no one to have seen that children were being injected with anywhere from 50 to 100 times safe mercury levels by the age of two, as determined by the government itself, screamed of total incompetence within these agencies and this industry – and spoke volumes in terms of the future direction of public health.

Surely, the issues raised in these materials, would be enough to have a very negative impact on the pharmaceutical industry. The parents of the autistic, the families of those with Alzheimer's, the elderly population itself, etc., represented a huge voting block indeed from both a political standpoint and shareholder standpoint. Fortunes had been made in the pharmaceutical industry… and now, fortunes could be lost. Vaccinations, once hailed as one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century, now had the potential of becoming one of the 20th century's greatest scandals.

Had money played a role in the creation of this mess? Surely, many would argue it had. As such, perhaps one solution would be to remove financial incentives from the public health domain. Any punitive damages imposed on the pharmaceutical industry and restitution or accountability would obviously devastate this industry - but perhaps that needed to happen! A "shakeout" seemed to be very much in order in this industry that had for too long gone basically unregulated in matters so critical to public health. Perhaps in all areas of public health there needed to be strict salary caps, including the removal of stock options, to prevent the clouding of judgment in matters of right and wrong when it came to public health. Money, indeed, has a way of clouding issues and as such, its removal may be the only answer. Should the pharmaceutical industry be made into a not for profit industry? I did not know the answer to that… that may be part of the answer… but so could very stiff penalties and judgments against this industry.

By now, there was absolutely no denying that autism had reached epidemic levels around the world. As more persons learned of just "how bad" things really were I was sure we would see more in the area of what I called "smokescreens"… actions by the government that made the US public "think" the issue of autism was being diligently worked by those at the highest levels of government. Indeed, as I completed this book, another interesting autism related story… the FDA raided Kirkman Labs on October 17th, 2002, one of the only companies, worldwide, working specifically on dietary supplements for the autistic – and perhaps the best known. Kirkman Labs had labeled one of its many products as being used to "treat" autism. According to FDA labeling regulations that constituted a false claim. Surely, I would not argue the FDA on that point if the word "treat" could not be used specifically for supplements. The very interesting thing in all of this was that on the very next day, there was another major news story relating to autism. This time, it was regarding the fact that in California, there had been a three-fold increase in autism, yet, there was no explanation available for this dramatic increase. No one knew why we were seeing these surges in autism. Really?

So, what the government was telling the American public, and indeed the world, was that we did not know what caused autism… but they did not believe it was vaccinations! **If the government did not know what caused autism… how could they know what did <u>not</u> cause it?** Interesting question – indeed!

In my opinion, the raid of Kirkman Labs was but a poor attempt by the government agencies involved in the autism crisis to make it look as though they were diligently working the issue – even though in issues of mercury – the big issues - they had apparently been asleep at the switch - for decades!

Kirkman Labs now had over **100 products** that could be used by parents of the autistic to help them with the many issues they now faced with their children. Most of Kirkman Labs' products were things that required no prescription… things that were found naturally in the body but were depleted in the autistic. Because of how "messed up" these children were, much of what healthy persons took so for granted, these children had to be given as supplements in order to help their bodies function a little better. The bodily functions of these children, in all aspects, had been so devastated and obviously that of many scientists and doctors, that supplements of many kinds were now needed for these children - perhaps for life! An entire industry had now surfaced – autism - and it was very much a big bucks industry – and one the pharmaceuticals also were very much looking to control. The pharmaceuticals were already working diligently in Europe to make all supplements available by prescription only. How long would it be before that proposal was placed before the American Congress as well?

The issue with the labeling of taurine, a naturally occurring brain amino acid, a non-prescription product was but an honest and unfortunate mistake on the part of Kirkman Labs. I wondered if Kirkman Labs had been sent any letter by the FDA advising them of the labeling problem – if Kirkman Labs had been given a chance to stop distribution and re-label the product or been allowed to include an insert clarifying the labeling issue in all mailings to customers. How would the FDA have handled a similar situation within the pharmaceutical industry? I truly could not help but wonder.

There were very few companies like Kirkman Labs – working issues of autism, specifically, to help better the lives of these children by providing supplements for the autistic – things that the "normal person" did not need to supplement at all. **The simple fact that Kirkman Labs now offered over 100 products to help parents of the autistic spoke volumes in terms of just how devastated these children really were**. The expense for these products, for parents, could truly be overwhelming (with basically none of it covered by insurance)… not to mention the physical task of having to provide a child with a ton of supplements each day. **No one, but the parent of an autistic child, could truly understand this devastation and its implication for the lives of the autistic!**

I, personally, may not agree 100% with Kirkman Labs' product line for the autistic **<u>in relation to what worked best for my child</u>**. Yet, the decision of what over the counter supplement to use was a decision to be made by each parent in consultation with a person knowledgeable (i.e., doctor) with that child's medical history. I had made my decisions in terms of what I felt were the best supplements for my child. Products I found not to work for my son, obviously, worked for other children. The best product fit for any autistic child was a matter of trial and error for each parent. In spite of my personal views on a couple of specific Kirkman Labs products, there was absolutely no denying that this company had done a great deal to help autistic children lead better lives.

I encouraged all parents of the autistic, and indeed, all of society to stand firmly behind companies such as Kirkman Labs and others also providing help for the autistic. Without the dedication of such companies, and access to many supplements – without a prescription - the recovery of the autistic would be a most difficult task indeed – and the cost to society of not being able to recover these children - overwhelming! Perhaps, instead of spending its time going after those truly trying to help our children, the government could best spend its time and our taxpayer dollars by going after those who were the true criminals in the autism scandal – those persons who could be found within the strong and almost impenetrable walls of the pharmaceutical industry and the government agencies involved in vaccination regulation and administration. I think the public had had more than enough in terms of "smokescreen" efforts.

Whether or not one chose to believe of those in the pharmaceutical industry and in the government that "they knew"… or "did not know"… neither option provided for "an out" in terms of accountability to the nations of the world, and both – criminal acts or total incompetence - in my opinion, warranted criminal prosecutions at many levels - and very serious rethinking in terms of the future direction of public health.

It was very easy to let the anger you felt as a parent of an autistic child consume you as you learned more and more about all these issues. That anger could be expressed in many forms – lawsuits being but one of them. I certainly understood those parents who chose to pursue that option. The financial toll on families afflicted with autism could be devastating indeed and the desire to ensure the autistic child's future well being and care were concerns weighing very deeply on the heart of all parents of the autistic – including mine.

Yet, as society looked to get to the bottom of these issues, I personally felt the road was too long to get involved in a lawsuit that could personally drain me even more. Should the pharmaceuticals pay? If found negligent - absolutely! I, personally, just did not have it in me to fight that long legal battle – as valid as I knew it was. Autism had stolen more than just my child's life… it had made prisoners of my entire family… and we wanted that imprisonment to end! To let go of my anger and to go on with my life, as difficult as it had been, I had to forgive those who had done this to my child, in spite of my many tears and my constant battle with that anger and its desire to resurface. I would still continue to fight for what was right, but I would now put my energies in moving forward too! For me, personally, God would be the final judge in my battle with autism. I had no strength for this battle on earth – but that certainly did not mean that it had been "won" by those in either the government or the pharmaceutical industry who had contributed to this disorder in my child! I knew, even for me, ultimately, this battle would be won – in the end!

<u>I hoped now, the real healing could begin - for all -because now, autism touched all aspects of society, absolutely every person – worldwide!</u>

The autistic child – once a forgotten child – now the key to so much!!!

Moving Forward…

Undoubtedly, my theory as to the possible explanations behind what we saw in autistic children, was just that – a theory. But the simple fact that it explained so much in what we saw in autistic children certainly necessitated it be given a much, much closer look. I had presented materials within this document that could certainly cause very emotional storms - on many fronts.

Especially important was the need for long term research into vaccination safety, something, that, in the opinion of many, including myself, seemed to have been virtually non-existent in the past. With the government's desire to possibly "force" smallpox vaccinations on the American public, issues of vaccination safety, both short term and long term were now more important than ever.

Anyone with a weak or dysfunctional immune system – all 2 million plus children already diagnosed as having an autism spectrum disorder – all Alzheimer's victims, all cancer patients - all AIDS victims - and so, so many more - could now be very much at risk of experiencing a negative reaction, including death, if they were unable to properly battle yet another assault on their immune system – like the smallpox virus!

Those with autism spectrum disorders were very much at risk if given the smallpox vaccine. Many of these children, according to their parents and blood tests, had been unable to develop antibodies to past immunizations. If the brain were unable to properly communicate with those parts of the body necessary for the development of antibodies to attack foreign substances (i.e., viruses), then, yes, the immune system would only be further compromised by the introduction of yet another virus. The inability to develop antibodies in many of these children meant that to inject these children with vaccinations was basically worthless.

Should there be a smallpox outbreak, the ramifications for anyone with an already weak immune system, could be most detrimental indeed. There would be no way possible to quarantine these children and care for them. Many of these children were unable to leave their homes or familiar environments without going into intense fits of rage. In addition, the special diets required for these children would make it virtually impossible to quarantine them. In actuality, to quarantine these children and their families would almost ensure that diseases such as smallpox would be rampant within quarantine facilities since many of these children simply did not appear to be able to develop proper antibodies. In my opinion, this would perhaps be true for anyone suffering from a weak immune system. Could America quarantine all cancer patients? All AIDS patients? How many people would be required to care for such huge quarantine populations if indeed they were quarantined? The logistics of that alone were overwhelming.

Medication or sedation was also not the answer, in my opinion. The fact that these children could not fight off yeast in their intestinal track meant the majority of them suffered from persistent yeast infections – further contributing to the condition known

as "leaky gut" in so many of these children. If the autistic mal-absorbed foods and supplements, it only stood to reason that they would mal-absorb medication too!

By failing to monitor mercury levels being injected into children, it appeared the government and the pharmaceuticals could now be the biggest contributors to deadly disease outbreaks, because in failing to monitor mercury levels, children and adults were exposed to up to 100 times safe levels of mercury according to government standards. That - when combined with the known fact that mercury led to neural degeneration - made for a nasty situation indeed. In its zeal to prevent disease our own government and pharmaceutical companies had perhaps, left many – extremely defenseless against the very diseases they were trying to eradicate!

Indeed – autism – once the dismissed or forgotten illness of the masses - the illness of so many children with no voice, had now become an issue that touched absolutely all areas of life for all humans. **Those so often voiceless now provided the strongest message of all!** There were many difficult times ahead, but, there could also be very rewarding and exciting times ahead in what these children could accomplish themselves as well as what they could potentially teach the world.

We could spend a great deal of time denying these issues, or we could move forward on them quickly based on the information presented as it related to the structure and function of the brain. The challenges for all societies were numerous indeed – but, certainly not impossible to achieve.

Having come to understand my son – so completely – I, personally, was now more determined than ever in "Saving Zachary". Understanding the problem was the first step in overcoming the problem. There was no time to be wasted!

I encouraged all those in research and science to review this information carefully, and, as I had done, to "keep the good, and throw out the rest". If something made sense given brain structures and functions, or existing research, obviously, that warranted further investigation. Indeed, what I had once only understood to be issues with "order", then with "partiality processing", I now came to understand much more fully as issues with "sensory integration failure and relay failure between the central nervous system and peripheral nervous system". As such, what I had seen in the beginning of my book simply as issues with "partiality", by the end of this document, I understood in terms of issues with "categorization" and the magnified need within the autistic child to have a world that made complete sense as the autistic child attempted to "break the code". As with everything in science, theories were put forth and either accepted or refuted. I now encouraged all in science to tackle this next step. I had given this document "my best shot" in terms of providing for all of you examples of what I had seen in my own son and how those issues related to brain structure and function. As the parent of an autistic child and a member of society, I hoped those in science gave "their best shot" also in moving forward on so many issues – in everything from anesthesia, neural degeneration studies as a result of mercury damage, neural regeneration potential, to immune system and dietary implications and so on.

It was time to stop playing the denial game and to move forward on these issues because denial would only continue to make them worse. It was time for the government and the pharmaceuticals to be held accountable for their role in this, too!

There was now a push to make flu shots and other various "shots" mandatory, even in very young infants. To keep adding to the list of "mandatory shots", shots that included mercury, was putting society on a path of almost total destruction. I think the great number of "epidemics" in terms of autism, Alzheimer's, etc., clearly indicated we had some major problems on our hands. To keep increasing the number of shots our children received – shots containing mercury – in my opinion, would only make matters much, much, much worse than they already were.

In my opinion, the government and the pharmaceuticals had clearly shown their bad judgment in matters of mercury and public health. How long would society fail to use its good judgment in demanding a stop to mercury laced vaccinations and accountability on these issues? Certainly, many would argue that vaccines like the MMR had no mercury, and thus, mercury could not possibly be the only problem. Well, to that I had but one reply. By the time a child received the MMR (at anywhere from 12 months to 18 months), that child had already received numerous mercury-laced shots causing lesions in the brain… lesions that prevented the immune system functions within the brain from "talking" to other parts of the body necessary for battling foreign substances, such as viruses. It was also becoming evident in the medical community that the "combo" of viruses in the MMR, in and of itself, seemed to be a problem… that perhaps, these viruses, when put together, interacted in a very negative way.

The simple fact was that countless parents had sounded many, many warning bells when it came to vaccinations. There were a lot more parents sounding warning bells then there were government or pharmaceutical executives saying vaccinations were alright. Indeed, the scales had tipped substantially. Those sounding warning bells now greatly outnumbered those in government and the pharmaceutical industry saying mercury and the MMR were "non-issues".

It was now time the rest of society looked at the facts and took a stand. **The facts - the statistics, the neural degeneration as a result of mercury exposure video, the fact that** there were so many "coincidences" among autism and Alzheimer's (all 30+ of them listed in this document… and I was sure there were more), the fact that more and more in science and medicine were now also pointing the finger to vaccinations, the fact that mercury was also very much an issue with "warning bells" for those looking into issues of safety in the dental industry, and the fact that for the government or the pharmaceuticals to admit to these issues in vaccination safety meant that there had been either criminal acts or total incompetence and as such, the government and the pharmaceuticals were very much in a "no win" situation in admitting these issues and as such, surely would never do so. It was time those warning bells sounded so very loudly by parents and indeed, many scientists and doctors, were heard, by all of society – worldwide - including governments around the world and the pharmaceuticals!

Society had a great many issues to address in the forum of public safety. But those issues could only be addressed once we truly acknowledged the problem. If society planned on waiting for the government or the pharmaceuticals to acknowledge that problem we would be waiting a very, very long time and perhaps, would never get this admission of guilt in terms of having failed the public in such critical matters of public health. In my opinion, society had to force the issue, and had to demand a change and politicians who would fail to take the proper stand in this issue had to be sent a very loud message that society would not stop investigating these matters and that those in government who failed to properly investigate this issue should face criminal prosecutions.

There could be no "nay" in this debate of investigating vaccination safety and recalling all mercury-laced vaccinations/shots. All members of Congress had to provide a resounding "yes" in doing what was right. The names of those in government voting "no" to Congressman Dan Burton's bills for the immediate recall of mercury-laced vaccinations and the total banning of mercury (and possibly aluminum) in all vaccinations and in dental amalgams would be made public by the autism community – names listed publicly, in newspapers, as were so often the names of other criminals and at election time, this would surely be a huge issue in who was now elected! The voting block of those impacted by autism and Alzheimer's was growing rapidly, and with all the pain that brought, also came a political stronghold – make no mistake about it! Parents of the autistic, and now, also, children of those with Alzheimer's, would not rest until these issues were addressed and resolved – of that, I was certain! Society had many challenges ahead of it, but we had no choice but to meet these challenges and the first step in doing that necessitated the problem be admitted!

Although there were surely difficult times ahead, there were also very exciting times ahead because in understanding the problem came hope for the resolution of that problem. Obviously, the immediate recall of all mercury-laced shots would go a long way in protecting the new generation from neural degeneration. But, there was a great deal more that could be done. The materials presented in this document indeed seemed to indicate entirely new areas of study for science.

Personally, I found issues of science as they related to the sense of smell, for example, to be absolutely fascinating. The olfactory cortex was located in the frontal lobe along with functions relating to motor activity, motor planning and execution, activity in response to environment, memory as it related to habits and other motor activities, language production, higher functioning (imagination, concept of self, etc.), control of emotions and the meaning assigned to words (word associations). This was indeed all very interesting from a scientific perspective. The sense of smell was perhaps greatly misunderstood by those in science. We knew the sense of smell helped somewhat in the control of emotions. Indeed, entire industries had sprouted because of that. Flowers always made a woman "feel better" or "special". Sure, there was the physical beauty of a flower, but, could it actually be the smell that "lifted emotions"? I now tended to think smell had a great deal more to do with the control of emotions than had ever been thought… and that perhaps all "functions" located within one specific lobe were actually very much inter-related.

It was a well-known fact that women loved to eat when depressed… chocolate and ice cream especially... :o)… both having to do with the sense of smell. Of course, in trying to "feel better" by eating, pounds were usually gained. As those extra pounds were reflected in the mirror (visual perception and emotion were in the temporal lobe, visual processing in the occipital lobe), depression could certainly set in (emotion in the temporal lobe) but the control of that emotion could be made more difficult by the fact that emotion **control** resided in the frontal lobe… not in the temporal lobe… where emotions seemed to be "felt". The concept of self also resided in the frontal lobe… so, to see oneself as "fat" (visual perception in the temporal lobe, visual processing in the occipital lobe) may be hard to counter emotionally (i.e., the depression), since concept of self, control of emotions, and motor functions (i.e., the act of eating) were together in the frontal lobe. The battle of the bulge, when viewed in light of neural degeneration due to mercury exposure was perhaps more of a battle than anyone had ever thought possible!

Control of emotions and the sense of smell… truly an interesting topic. We had a lot of "sayings" in life that truly indicated smell played a role in the control of emotions. For example, **to express the emotion of relaxation or the need to enjoy life**, we had the saying: "Take the time to **smell** the roses". **To express disappointment**, we had the saying: "**That stinks**!"… another "smell" related saying relating to emotions. **To express love or devotion**, we had the saying: "The way to a man's heart is **through his stomach**"… another "smell" saying relating to emotions (taste and smell go together). **To express vengeance** we had the saying: "I'll give him a **taste** of his own medicine". Depending on tone used, we could also **express excitement or disgust** via the expression: "**That's just peachy**"… another "smell" or "taste" expression for emotions. **To express suspicion**, we had expressions like: "**That's fishy**" or "**I smell a rat**"… again, emotion expressed via the sense of smell! To express matters relating to one's **motivation or matters of corruption**, we spoke of the "**smell of money**". Note that motivation and corruption had to do with one's actions (motor functions and the concept of self – also in the frontal lobe).

Truly the sense of smell and its possible role in our lives may be greatly misunderstood. Likewise, **I also believed that the "inter-relation" of functions within a specific lobe may be very misunderstood also**. Take for example the issue of alcohol. When one drank alcohol – an activity having to do with the sense of taste and smell - **all** functions located within the frontal lobe were impacted. Coincidence? Alcohol impacted motor activity, motor planning and execution, activity in response to one's environment, memory as it related to habits and other motor activities, language production, higher functioning (i.e., concept of self), control of emotions and the meaning we assigned to words. It was a well-known fact that an intoxicated person had difficulty walking, reacting to his environment (i.e., properly reacting to oncoming headlights, avoiding a person walking on the road, etc.), often could not remember what had happened while intoxicated, had difficulty with production of speech (slurred speech), had difficulty controlling emotions (more violent/aggressive), and had difficulty understanding words (as reflected in the fact that when spoken to, the intoxicated often responded with "what?…. what?…. what?", clearly indicating that words were not understood). Thus, absolutely all functions in the frontal lobe were impacted by alcohol.

But, what of other functions… functions not so closely associated with the sense of smell. If you looked at the functions not as closely associated with the sense of smell, functions residing in the parietal or occipital lobes, this was all rather interesting. The temporal lobe had functions associated with olfactory processing, and as such the sense of smell would have an impact on functions within the temporal lobe also. The parietal lobe, however, had no olfactory function… and neither did the occipital lobe. In the parietal lobe, somatosensory processing still seemed to work fine. An intoxicated person still knew when he had to go to the bathroom. Touch perception also seemed to work fine. An intoxicated person could still tell when someone was touching him. Goal directed movement also seemed to work fine… in fact, when an intoxicated person decided to do something or go somewhere, it was often quite difficult to stop them. Manipulation of objects also seemed to work fine. An intoxicated person could still try to "play" at solving a Rubik's cube, for example. Visual attention and spatial processing were perhaps more difficult to address, but, it had to be remembered that visual perception and motor functions both resided in lobes impacted by the sense of smell (the frontal and temporal lobe) and as such, I could certainly understand why there may be some impact there. As far as the occipital lobe, there was no doubt that an intoxicated person could still "see"… it was the response to that "sight" however, that was impaired… but that resided in another area of the brain… the fact remained that the intoxicated could still "see".

Therefore, **all** functions in the frontal lobe, the location of the olfactory cortex were clearly impacted… and likely, it appeared almost all functions in the temporal lobe, responsible for olfactory processing, were also impacted (auditory processing, memory, emotion, understanding of language, voice recognition, face recognition, visual perception) yet, functions in lobes not associated with the sense of smell at all, truly seemed to be much less impacted, if at all.

If smell could actually trigger or impact all other functions within the frontal lobe in a negative way, could a "smell" actually trigger or impact all other functions in a positive way. Could there be "another smell" to somewhat counter the effects of alcohol, or drugs, for example, or a smell that could help in the control of specific emotions? For me, at least, this was all very interesting.

Again, I could not help but wonder "how inter-related" all the functions within one lobe truly were! If you looked at the frontal lobe, the sense of self also resided there… along with motor activity and memory relating to motor activity. It was often said that "Actions speak louder than words"… another interesting saying. Let us take another example. The example of a person in need. If I helped that person – or failed to do so – that had an impact on my emotions (control of emotions), but that also had an impact on my concept of self. Indeed, our actions very much defined us as "the type of person we were". Again, concept of self, control of emotions (i.e., I can not help but feel somewhat guilty if I do not help a person very much in need), and motor functions/actions… all in the same lobe. Interesting! I knew some persons said they were allergic to certain smells... like perfumes. That was all very interesting too. How would their frontal and temporal lobe functions be impacted by those smells to which they were allergic? How would their parietal and occipital lobe functions be impacted?

And what of that substance that has no taste or smell – water. Pure water… the source of life itself. That one thing man can not live without. Was it not interesting that this one thing, so vital to life, had no taste or smell? Water had many interesting properties that made it a very unique substance. It was the only substance found as a liquid, gas and solid. Its solid form was less dense than its liquid form and as such, this explained why ice floats. Water was also known as the "universal solvent", able to dissolve more substances than anything else known to man. As such, it was known that drinking a lot of water was necessary to cleanse the body. Those who wanted to learn more about water could go to: http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/waterproperties.html. Did water, a substance with no taste or smell, a substance with such unusual properties, somehow fit into this puzzle, too? In my opinion, these were all very interesting topics of discussion.

Also very interesting was the fact that something else with a smell was now being investigated for its possible medical benefits – marijuana. An Internet search on "medical marijuana" easily returned over 250,000 web pages. The potential medical benefits of marijuana were now being looked into in areas of AIDS, cancer, bi-polar and perhaps countless other illnesses. Of course, the FDA was quick to argue against the medical benefits of marijuana, but, then again, the government was also quick to say that mercury in vaccines was ok, too! The Washington State Department of Health document entitled Questions And Answers, Medical Marijuana – Initiative 692 clearly indicated that marijuana had medical benefits… as did numerous other documents and indeed, a great deal of research. Was marijuana without risk? No… indeed many studies had also shown its potentially damaging effects. Yet, mercury was not without risk either, was it? How was it that the government could be so concerned with the proper regulation of marijuana, yet had failed to show the same concern for the regulation of mercury, the second most toxic substance in the world? In my opinion, if marijuana was shown to have medical benefits, in controlled amounts, as a regulated substance, why not allow its use for medical purposes? I knew this was a very controversial subject, but so was vaccination safety and the result of mercury poisoning. I was not in any way advocating "free use" of marijuana but what I was saying was that if marijuana was scientifically shown to have medical benefits, as did appear to be the case, then, perhaps this was an area worth much more investigation. Interestingly, "medical marijuana" use was now being shown to help not only with cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis, glaucoma, bipolar, etc., it was also shown to help in the treatment of epilepsy and may help with autism given autistic children were often found to have abnormal dopamine levels and marijuana was a natural source of dopamine. The American Alliance For Medical Cannabis indeed listed many disorders that could be help by medical use of cannabis. This was not a group of "druggies" trying to simply legalize cannabis to get a legal "drug trip"… this organization appeared to be one dedicated to allowing marijuana for medical use where it had been shown there was scientific evidence of the medical benefits of marijuana. Members of this organization included healthcare professionals, educators, patients, and scientists.

The website for this organization, http://www.letfreedomgrow.com/cmu/index.htm, indeed listed the following illnesses/disorders as being helped by marijuana and provided scientific references for each of these conditions: anxiety disorders, memory disorders, cancer/chemo related nausea, multiple sclerosis, depression, migraine, chronic pain, diabetes, hepatitis C, lymphoma, musculoskeletal disorders, pancreastitis, rheumatoid arthritis, sleep apnea, Tourette syndrome . Effects of long-term use would also surely need to be investigated. As hotly debated as I was sure this issue would be, it was nonetheless all very interesting indeed!

Carnosine was another topic that surfaced lately. This was a natural protein. A doctor in Illinois had just recently completed a preliminary study on the use of carnosine for the autistic. He had used it with almost 1000 children and found carnosine impacted language, eye contact, communication, behavior and social interaction. Carnosine was believed to impact the frontal lobe. Obviously, that too was a very recent development in autism and as such, more investigation would surely be needed to evaluate the merits of this potential option. Those wanting more information on the carnosine and autism were encouraged to contact Dr. Michael Chez via his website: **http://www.carn-aware.com/faq.html.**

There were indeed many recent developments that were very interesting when viewed in light of autism. For example, it was a known fact many autistic children developed epilepsy **at puberty**! It was also a very recently known fact that at about age 11 (right around puberty), the brain underwent major reorganization. This had been shown via MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) techniques and PET (positron emission tomography) showing significant changes in neural development/pathways at this stage of development in the human brain. An article on this subject had been published in USA Today on Jan 2, 2002. In this article, neuroscientist Fulton Crews of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill stated that neural growth, once believed to have stopped after childhood, was now known to occur well into the teen years. The full text of this article could be read by going to: http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/brain/lhbra080.htm. Frontline also did a segment on this topic of brain reorganization.

The segment, called Inside The Teenage Brain was available online at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/work/how.html#1.

In this segment, not only was reorganization of the brain discussed, but also the fact that just prior to puberty, children lost up to 50% of their deep motor nuclei brain tissue known to be responsible for motor function. It was also stated, and I quote:

> ***"This loss moved like wildfire into the frontal lobes in late teens. We think it is a sign of rapid remodeling of brain tissue well into the teens and beyond".***

Could this be why autistic children were developing epilepsy at puberty? If the brain was undergoing major reorganization and there were lesions in the brain, as that reorganization within the brain occurred and gaps were encountered in neural transmission, could that not lead to the "short circuiting of the brain" – epilepsy! Why was it that epilepsy developed at puberty in the autistic – the very same time this "reorganization" within the brain was taking place! Coincidence? I truly wondered!

And how did gender differences fit into all of this. It was also a well-known fact that more boys than girls were impacted by autism. Indeed, there were many known differences between males and females in terms of brain function. For example, there were two areas that appeared to be most important in language. The frontal lobes and the area where the temporal and parietal lobes meet. Females were thought to use primarily the frontal lobe area in language (both left and right sides) whereas males were believed to use both areas about equally… the frontal lobe (primarily the left) and the area where the temporal and parietal lobes meet. If this were indeed true, gender differences in autism too, could perhaps be very much explained by brain structure and function.

Of course for every study that seemed to show one thing, there appeared to be another that showed something else in matters of gender differences as they relate to the human brain. Yet, the issue of gender differences certainly was an interesting one when thought of in terms of communication skills, sensitivity to smell, etc.

There were many brilliant minds that could now take this information, decipher it and use it to "move forward" as warranted. The information I had used in order to come to my understanding of the autistic brain had been information put together by many fields – behavior therapy, neurology, education, etc. – over decades. Without this base of knowledge to work from, this wealth of knowledge provided by those in so many fields, I suspect the mystery to autism, at least as I had come to understand it, would have remained a mystery much, much longer. Although I had been very skeptical of most "brain research" as it related to matters of the "at rest brain" especially, I now saw great potential in MRI and PET technologies in terms of identifying potential areas of neural degeneration, etc. If I was correct in my thinking, the implications of this in terms of the recovery of autistic children and so many other issues, for mankind, could be exciting indeed once those with so much more knowledge than I had in areas of research, neurology, therapy, education, etc., could actually examine these issues. Change in thought was always difficult to accept, but sometimes, it was necessary.

The evidence that autism resulted from mercury poisoning appeared to be strong indeed. The symptoms of autism were indeed, coincidently, very much parallel to those of mercury poisoning. Symptoms of mercury poisoning and autism (close to 80) were compared in a report entitled Autism: A Unique Type of Mercury Poisoning, by Sallie Bernard*, Albert Enayati, B.S., Ch.E., M.S.M.E.**, Teresa Binstock, Heidi Roger, Lyn Redwood, R.N., M.S.N., C.R.N.P. and Woody McGinnis, M.D. (*Contact: sbernard@nac.net, **Contact: (201) 444-7306, njcan@aol.com, ARC Research, 14 Commerce Drive, Cranford, NJ 07016). **Indeed, to have close to 80 parallels between autism and mercury poisoning was a rather "big coincidence" for even the best in science to refute**! The full text of this report, along with the 4 page table comparing autism and mercury poisoning could be viewed via links to it on many autism related websites providing this valuable information for parents of the autistic, such as the site of the Autism Research Institute, http://www.autism.com/ari/mercurylong.html.

The answer to "autism" now seemed so simple to me – the failure of sensory information integration and relay between the central and peripheral nervous systems as a result of neural degeneration and the breakdown of proper communication between various areas of the body due to neural gaps resulting in improper neural transmissions. The road ahead was still long, of that, I had no doubt, but I also had much more hope in many, many areas of life – so much hope for autistic children. Perhaps now, "autism" could tremendously push science and therapy forward and with that, help many see autism, not as a dark and mysterious unknown but as a disorder that could provide – the light to shine on so much!

"Man's mind stretched to a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions."
Oliver Wendell Holmes

As I sat down to write this book, I understood "some" of the issues behind my son's autism. But, by the time this book was completed, as I wrote, I came to understand and piece together much, much more! I had provided my thoughts on these issues and I understood their impact in presenting these materials. Yet, I felt I had no choice but to provide these thoughts in the most honest way that I could – as difficult as so many of these issues had been for me, personally and as difficult I knew they would be for society overall.

My theory had now been presented. It was now time for society to take a deep breath and a "step back" to now put all this in perspective. Surely, within my theory were "some critical answers" to autism given this theory seemed to explain so much. Did I understand autism completely? No. But, I suspected that several key factors had been put forth within this document and that with the many examples provided, those in science could now move forward in terms of deciphering what made sense – as well as what did not given the knowledge they had. I had poured my heart and soul into providing my insights based on my experiences with my own autistic son and other autistic children, and I now hoped society poured its heart and soul into these issues also as it continued to move forward in finding all the pieces to the autism puzzle – and perhaps many other puzzles as well.

My growth as I journeyed through life with autism had been a very difficult one. Surely, many would have paid me well for not sharing these materials at all. For me, however, as the parent of an autistic child, as I looked into the eyes of each and every child I saw, I could do nothing but share these materials with all parents and adults worldwide. I now hoped that the world could finally unite behind parents of the autistic in addressing so many of these issues. It would take the resources and strength of many to meet the challenges ahead, but, in all honesty I felt we had no choice but to meet these challenges!

I encouraged all men and women to call the Capitol Hill switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to speak to Congressmen working health issues in their state or to contact the Office of the Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, at 202-225-0697, or Secretary of Health Tom Thompson at 202-690-7000, to let their views on this issue be known – and to ask that subpoenas be served on the CDC and independent audits be made of matters relating to vaccination safety. Only by looking into these issues could we truly ensure the health and safety of all persons – worldwide. Yes, we needed to control deadly diseases, but that had to be done with vaccinations that did not contain mercury and with the assurance that long-term studies had indeed been made to determine overall vaccination safety for **all** immunizations – including the very controversial, yet mercury free MMR!

Although the writing of this document had helped me, personally, in coming to terms with so many of these issues, there were still times, that, yes, my anger did surface. There had been negligence on the part of the government as it failed to monitor how much mercury was being pumped into our children. In spite of the fact that I wanted answers to "how this could have happened", I suspected no answer would be sufficient. In my view, horrible mistakes had simply been made. It was time that was admitted. It was time anyone who hid those mistakes and could have prevented this horrible injustice from continuing be brought before the courts of this nation to face the consequences of those actions. Personally, I was not at this time involved in any lawsuit and certainly hoped to keep it that way. For the government or the pharmaceuticals to come after me, personally, would not stop the facts from being known. I had simply presented a theory that explained so much in my own son. The burden was now on the pharmaceuticals and on those in government and research to prove me wrong and, unfortunately, I suspected that as more was investigated, as much as I wanted to be proved wrong, I suspected my theory was correct. To be proven wrong – to be told my child's brain did have appropriate "connectivity" among its various parts would indeed be a day of great joy for me. Yet, I feared that day would not come and that my suspicions were correct.

Although my anger wanted to surface now and then, for my own sanity, I knew it was important to let go of this anger and to move on in a productive way – a way that could make a difference in the life of my son, and perhaps, in the life of other autistic children as well. I understood the issues I now faced and with that, I could work from there. I knew the road was still long, and the pain great, but, with every move forward in my son, there would be joy also. I knew Zachary could indeed become a very productive member of society with some help and I was more determined than ever to provide that help for him.

I understood all too well the anger other parents would also feel. I could only encourage you in learning to let go of that anger. Sure – investigations were necessary, but those investigations could not become the entire focus of one's life – especially not for parents of the autistic who needed to focus on the recovery of their children. There were plenty of researchers and lawyers to now fight these battles in court – as parents, we needed to focus on our children. As societies, we needed to focus on stopping the autism epidemic and on providing safe vaccinations. Deadly diseases were still a reality of life. I was certain the government would continue – as it needed to - its vaccination programs, but, I truly hoped it would be in a much safer and cautious manner.

As a parent there truly were no answers that could be given to me by either the pharmaceuticals or any government officials that could ever totally right the wrongs done to my son and to so many other children. There had to be significant financial relief for all parents of the autistic – with no loopholes for the denying of that help – and there had to be intense therapy provided to all autistic children. In my opinion, anything less than 40 hours a week, was unacceptable. These children could be helped and made to be productive members of society, but the government and society that had so failed in the safeguarding of these children in the past, now had to accept the burden of making things better for these children in the future.

As difficult as I knew this message had been for so many parents, I encouraged all parents of the autistic and all parents of children who believed their children, although perhaps not diagnosed as autistic, had suffered a vaccine-related injury, to now unite in moving forward. Anger would do nothing to change the workings of our children's brains. More than ever, our children now needed us to help them. This document had not "changed" any child – it had simply changed one's awareness of certain issues. With that awareness, now had to come positive steps to help recover as many children as possible. Denial or aggression toward another person would do nothing but add to the already great devastation. It was truly a time to step back and evaluate what now needed to be done. Together, parents could be a very powerful resource for their children. Autistic children and their parents held the keys to so much in terms of man's understanding of himself. That key, not anger, had to be the key to recovery – the key to getting the help these children so desperately needed and deserved and the key to devising for them tools made specifically for teaching the autistic!

Educating the public in these matters now had to be a very high priority for everyone. Only with education could we then begin to truly do what was needed on all fronts. How parents of the autistic responded to the message provided in this document could indeed set the tone for all of America. We could be parents to cause further division, or we could be parents determined to move forward in a positive way to meet the needs of our children and help society address these very painful issues. I, personally, had had enough pain to last me a lifetime. I was ready to move on and make a difference in a positive way.

All parents of the autistic now had to make very serious choices for their own families. For some, those decisions would undoubtedly involve legal action – and I understood that completely. I wished all parents could be compensated for the damage done to their children without going to court, but I knew that would never happen. To those who did end up in court battles, my heart went out to you. I knew, this too, would be difficult on your families. All autistic children and their families would continue to be in my prayers. Legal battles, however, did not prevent one from also working somehow to more immediately benefit all autistic children. As such, I truly did encourage all parents to work – united - to begin putting together the programs and training centers that would be necessary for these children and their families.

The journey ahead for all adults would be a long one. Yet, in my view, it was critical all adults stand united in doing the right thing for all children. How could any adult look a child in the face and yet not take steps to ensure that child's safety? How could any parent of an autistic child, despite his anger as a result of these emotionally charged issues, not determine to work with politicians, as difficult as that would be, to make things right for future generations? How could any politician continue to kiss children and have pictures of themselves taken with children, yet, when difficult decisions had to be made, these very same politicians turned their back on protecting these very same children?

These children and their families had suffered so much, emotionally, physically and financially, that a great deal had to be done to help ease their burden. In my opinion, that also meant that **<u>all uninsured autistic children and their families should be provided with health insurance – under the federal health insurance programs used by our own legislators if necessary – with no ability to cancel coverage</u>**. These children and their families had often lost health insurance due to autism – as my own son had. A simple broken arm had cost us over $5,500.00. For health insurance companies to be allowed to drop coverage of the autistic, after all this, was in my opinion, simply another slap in the face by a system that had already so failed these children! In this odd twist of fate, what could be learned from autistic children and their parents could indeed help save societies around the world billions in research. It was only fair that these children and their families be given something in return – and to me, that meant insurance coverage, paid for vitamins, supplements, tests – and most important of all, research and therapy facilities providing tools geared specifically to the autistic.

Surely, many parents of the autistic had felt intense anger in reading these materials. Yet, anger, more than ever, had to be put aside in order for us to move forward as a society. Horrible mistakes had been made – that was obvious. But now, it was time to move forward as we also attempted to right past wrongs via criminal investigations into these matters. I was not arguing that persons who knew of these serious issues and chose to hide them rather than make them public should pay no consequences. What I was saying, however, was that, as a society, we could not let the anger consume us so that it did not allow us to move forward quickly in addressing these concerns for all children and adults – starting immediately.

According to a group dedicated to informing the public in matters of vaccination (http://vaccinationnews.com/), **there were now over 200 vaccines in the "pipeline"** … some of these vaccines in the pipelines were rather "questionable" to say the least. **Vaccines were now being developed for things like cholesterol, diabetes, ulcers, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, nicotine, anti-marijuana, anti-fertility, dental caries, diarrhea, bladder infection, Alzheimer's, spinal cord injury. What obviously "caught my eye" in all this was the vaccines for Alzheimer's, for anti-marijuana, for dental caries, and spinal cord injury. <u>If science did not know what caused Alzheimer's, how could it possibly "come up" with a vaccine to "immunize" against it</u>?**

Perhaps to "reverse" the incidence of Alzheimer's and autism, starting with the removal of mercury from shots may be a good place to start! Likewise the removal of aluminum may be a good way to start reversing the "gene mutation trend". And how exactly would that "spinal cord injury" vaccine work anyway? That was a rather "scary" one… given spinal fluid provided for direct access to the brain. Given the time, it seemed the pharmaceutical industry could "come up" with an "inoculation" to just about everything – at least so they seemed to believe. But, with all these vaccinations, would the pharmaceutical industry be doing more harm than good? I could not help but wonder!

Vaccinationnews.com was an excellent site for obtaining information relating to vaccination issues and "scandals". I encouraged all readers to spend some time on this site. Truly another one of those "eye openers". In my opinion, before we allowed any "more" vaccines into our children and into the adults of this world, society had to mandate much greater research – **research that lasted for much longer than just a few days to a few weeks!**

For the government to try to protect the pharmaceuticals from any liability for vaccine injury via the passage of the Frist Bill, and to then allow for the pharmaceutical industry to "run wild" in the production of more and more vaccines was a recipe for disaster! And just how many of these vaccines would be made "mandatory"? How many of these vaccines would become almost automatic "protocol" within the medical industry? Would persons thought to be developing Alzheimer's or just "at risk" be automatically injected with the Alzheimer's vaccine? That certainly would mean the entire adult population could potentially receive this vaccine. Given the costs of such disorders to society, I could easily see the government using "costs to society" as a reason to vaccinate everyone for many of these things!

It appeared to me that if the vaccine industry was such a high risk industry, as was being put forth by the pharmaceutical industry and those attempting to past the Frist Bill (truly, the ultimate in "toilet paper legislation©", at least in my opinion), how was it that the pharmaceuticals were working on "so many vaccines". If this were not a profitable product line, the pharmaceuticals would certainly not have so many "new vaccines"… they would stick to the basics… to life threatening issues! But, clearly, that was not the case – was it? **We had to make sure deadly diseases were kept under control… no one was arguing that… but, we also had to make sure that vaccines were safe too! Mercury was used because it was a cheap preservative. Vaccines could be made without it and as such all mercury-laced vaccines had to be recalled.**

The simple fact of the matter was that we had a few hundred politicians and a few hundred in the pharmaceutical industry telling the world that there was no vaccination and autism link… yet we also had **several hundred thousand, perhaps even millions of parents** who were saying there definitely was a vaccination and autism link? I asked all readers "to picture" that in their minds… a few hundred or a few thousand on one side… and several hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions – worldwide – on the other. Who would you believe? The few who had everything to lose by admitting a link between autism and vaccinations… those who chose to hide behind bogus arguments of confidentiality in refusing to make relevant facts and documents public (society and parents were not interested in names… just data/statistics)… those who could be seen as either perpetrators of a great social injustice and perhaps even of criminal acts… or at the very least, seen as guilty of total incompetence in the regulation of the second most toxic substance in the world and its injection into our children – or the parents - parents who were now backed by numerous doctors and scientists in their beliefs, parents who had already lost so much and who were diligently looking for the answers – and finding them as they pieced together relevant pieces of the puzzle! A few hundred or several hundreds of thousands… a few thousand or a few million – **who did it make more sense to believe?** Honestly!

Likewise, undoubtedly, there would be many who would want to deny involvement of the thalamus in autism because to say that the thalamus was involved would be admitting to MAJOR neurological damage and if that could be tied back to mercury exposure… well, let us just say that it would not be a "pleasant" discovery for those in the pharmaceutical industry. Yet, in my heart I knew the thalamus had to be involved. As I wrote this book, I came to understand the thalamus was involved in integrating CNS (central nervous system = brain +spinal cord) and PNS (everything else involved in nervous system) information. I also knew that the integration of sensory information by the thalamus involved sensory input from all senses EXCEPT olfactory (sense of smell). What I did not realize until nearing the completion of my book, however, was the fact that the thalamus was also involved in functions relating to conscious verses unconscious activity... and, interestingly, this fit right in line with my theory that the autistic child needed to **consciously** integrate everything so many of us did unconsciously... that to understand the whole the autistic child must first understand the parts to the whole and then integrate them consciously. How very interesting that sensory integration functions as they relate to the CNS and PNS were located in the same area of the brain associated with conscious/unconscious activity! This also supported my belief that functions within the brain that were "co-located"- in any section of the brain - may be much more associated with one another than once believed (i.e., smell impacting control of emotions, motion and smell possibly impacting language production, etc.)! Also very interesting was the fact that the thalamus was also linked to epilepsy! Note that it is a well-documented fact that epileptics often "sense" a seizure coming... stating they "smell something"... an aura. **The ONE sense not integrated by the thalamus is the one sense that "warns" of an epileptic seizure**. Note that many epileptics **lose consciousness** (possible thalamus role) during seizures. For more on that, see http://www.healthy.net/asp/templates/news.asp?Id=5677). How very interesting indeed!

Because the thalamus was involved in sensory integration of CNS and PNS, it was also involved in the sensation of PAIN (i.e., natural opiates) and possibly "textures... other areas of "abnormality in the autistic". See http://thalamus.wustl.edu/course/body.html for more on this issue. Also interesting was the fact that damage to the thalamus can result in insomnia... another area of concern for the autistic! But, the role of the thalamus was greater still... **I quote from this site,** http://www.nbia.nf.ca/brain_injury_rating_scales.htm:

"Thalamus: The thalamus is a kind of communications relay station for all sensory information being transmitted to the cerebral cortex. Damage to the thalamus may result in altered states of arousal, memory defects, speech deficits, apathy and disorientation."

In my view, there was absolutely no denying that damage to the thalamus had to exist in autistic children and that communication among many parts of the brain appeared to be very limited. I hoped science could prove me wrong – but I doubted that!

This document had raised many issues parents would now be asking answers to – and quite honestly, they were owed these answers by society, government and science. The issues of vaccination safety, disease prevention, and recovery of the autistic – persons so failed by those entrusted to protect them - would truly be our greatest test as a nation, and society, worldwide, and how we responded to that trial would be indicative of our true moral fiber in addressing these very painful and difficult issues.

Putting It All Together...

The issues presented in my materials as they related to sensory input integration and relay failure, order, partiality, labeling, color and motion and the inability of the autistic child to understand "the whole" without first understanding "the parts" that made up the whole made for a very convincing argument as to whether or not my theory truly did explain so much in autism...and also, in matters relating to brain structure and function.

There were certainly many parents who, undoubtedly, felt completely overwhelmed, as I did, as they first began to understand just how truly impacted autistic children were by this apparent inability to properly integrate their world... to properly put together the parts to the whole. This one impairment, indeed, seemed to explain so much!

As I came to understand more and more in my own son, there were many times that, as I walked on so many of my morning walks, during my moments of quiet - I cried, deeply - from the pain of this realization. I now saw just how much Zachary had been so completely changed - in everything - as a result of autism. My concerns for his safety, especially, were truly distressing. I knew many readers would have the urge to stop reading what I had to say as I now discussed healing and matters of spirituality, however, I encouraged all, even those who did not believe in God, to keep reading because in addition to matters of healing and spirituality, there was a great deal more in this section, as it related to science and illness, specifically. So, if readers were in any way offended by my briefly discussing matters of spirituality as they related to healing, I hoped they could get past my views on this, and keep reading anyway, because, again, this section had a great deal more than “matters of spirituality” in it.

There were many in the world who believed in God... or at least said that they did. For those of you who do not believe in God, what I was about to share with you may be something you will have great difficulty understanding, but, I hoped that you will read this section, in full, because it too, has a very real story to tell... and, like the many pages I had put before you in terms of helping you to understand autism, the way I now truly understood it, I hoped the following would somehow also be of value to all persons who read these materials. Those studying issues of spirituality and brain function, would certainly find this section interesting!

Two and a half years ago, when Zachary was first diagnosed with autism, I thought I had a relationship with God. Looking back, I now knew I truly did not. I had been raised Catholic, and had gone to church pretty well every Sunday as a child. Later in life, church had become less important... and God was placed on a backburner.

My life had been what many would have considered so "perfect"... a wonderful husband, a beautiful daughter, both my husband and I had jobs most people envied. We were young up and coming executives in corporate America. Both Frederick and I had always been considered employees with great potential... then, within our perfect world - came Zachary!

Zachary, from the very start, had been a very different child to care for than had been our daughter. He just seemed to require so much more work... even in the simplest things. Frederick and I had been so busy with corporate life, that I believe we truly failed to see what was staring us in the face for a very long time... the fact that with each passing day, we were slowly losing our son!

But, the realization did come... as did the label of "autism". Our journey with autism led us through very difficult and trying paths but it also led us to a very rewarding path. Feeling unable to carry this burden of autism on our own, we turned to God and cast our burdens upon Him.

God would greatly test my faith... on a very personal level, and with much more than autism. But, the more I was tested, the more I turned to Him for answers.

I knew the word of God, the Bible, was true and I accepted it as complete truth! Doing so, was indeed a matter of faith... you either believe the word of God is truth, or you do not! I chose to believe it was.

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me (John 14:6)

Nothing shall be impossible to those who believe (Matthew 17:20)

There were many examples in the bible that those who **had true faith** had received the object of their desire (be that healing, power over peoples and nations, etc.). Having accepted the Bible as 100% truth, I also accepted the above scriptures as 100% truth... along with the scripture:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8)

These three scriptures, when combined, provided for me a powerful message... God's word is truth, nothing is impossible for the believer, and if you ask something of God, and believe in faith, you shall receive it!

As such, with all my heart I believed in the truth of scripture, and that it would be possible to get the answers I sought if I called on God to give them to me. His word was truth, and as such, He would be true to His word. I was convinced of that. The scriptures say that when you pray, you have to believe in faith that you will receive what you pray for. For me, it was simply a matter of time... I knew I was going to get my answer - the answer I so desperately needed to understand my son!

Indeed, each breakthrough I received, I received within hours of praying for something very specific. Each day, I listened to the Bible on CD as I went to sleep each night. Hearing the word of God made me believe the word of God. It was not as if all my time was spent in prayer or religious activity. Far from that. Although I tried to listen to the bible on CD each night, there were countless nights when I seemed to fall asleep within just a minute of two. It often took me several night to get through just one CD in its entirety. There were several nights when I was so exhausted just from the day that I just said a one line prayer and crawled into bed – not even having the strength it seemed to even turn on the CD player. But, each day, I did try to give a little part of my day to God and each day, I did call on Him for help. Like all those who prayed, so many times, I felt my prayers were not getting through. But, still I persisted. I knew God answered prayers even though, many times, those answers came not in the manner we expected. I certainly had no idea that in answering my pleas to understand my son, I would also come to see how autism touched absolutely all areas of life for everyone.

One night, at about 10:30 pm, my husband had just left our bedroom to go do some work on his computer. I had just spoken to him... and was fully awake. This had been one of my better nights in terms of how I felt… in spite of the fact that my husband and I had just had a small disagreement – nothing major, but, it certainly had made it so that I was fully awake, and yes - even a little bit upset. Within less than a minute of my husband having left our bedroom, something very unusual happened. For those of you who do not believe in God, what you are about to read will be very difficult for you to understand, and indeed, it may be difficult even for those who do say they believe in God.

As I lay on my bed, fully awake, I experienced a tremendous flash of light within me, specifically, within my head. This flash was as bright as the brightest lightning strike imaginable. Within that flash was an image... it was the image of a 1/6 of a pie. Within this pie shape, there was a weaved pattern. The weave was very loose and was black and navy blue. Through this weave, bright rays of white light shone in an upward fashion, in all directions and the entire weave pattern undulated as the light shone through it. Then, at the very end of this flash, the pie shape quickly started to spin to the left. At the moment the spinning started, the flash was gone. All this, I had seen within less than a second... a brilliant flash and image and one so powerful that I instantaneously captured all its detail.

Needless to say, I was completely puzzled by what I had just experienced...and thought about it for about a half hour. I had often felt that God, in the past had sent me very specific messages, such as my dream of a room of colors, and this, I felt, was simply another one of those occasions. I did not understand the meaning of this particular message, but, I knew He would provide it for me. In spite of what had just happened, I felt a tremendous inner peace and had no problem falling asleep within a half hour or so.

As my husband and I discussed this image, and as I drew it for him on a chalkboard - as I drew it - I came to understand much of what I had been given in that message.

The pie shape, in my view, represented "a part" to a whole... that was the first thing I had been able to understand. It would take me weeks to fully understand this image... I had experienced this image toward the end of July 2002 but only fully understood it by the end of August. The issue of partiality, in terms of the autistic child needing to understand the parts to understand the whole, I had already come to understand - prior to receiving this image. What I had not understood until much later, however, was that “the parts”, truly, consisted of all sensory input.

The significance of color within the image told me that color was somehow involved. I had not, however paid attention to the color in the image until an autistic adult made mention to me in early August that as a child, he perceived objects as colors.

The significance of the spinning and its ability to make "parts" disappear and become integrated within the whole as an object spun, I came to understand within a day of having received this image.

What I had missed until the end of August, was how this image related to motion. I knew the undulation represented motion, but, in having been so focused on understanding "spinning", I simply thought the importance of motion for the autistic child had to do with spinning only. It was close to a month later that I truly came to understand the potential role of motion in the autistic child.

The weave, I came to see as meaning that everything was part of a whole and that everything was inter-related.

Within this flash were all the answers I had sought... and in one instant, God had provided them all. In that one flash, He had so completely answered my prayers!

As I sat down to share all this information with other parents, there were many times that as I was writing a specific section, I would come to understand more on that specific issue as I wrote... the more I wrote, the more I came to understand so much of what I had seen in Zachary. As I worked on this project, each day I prayed God that He guide my hands – and indeed, I believed He did. Many times, I had not understood or I had missed something, yet, when I wrote the section that related to that specific issue, the understanding I needed came – often at the very time I needed it to come – at that “perfect spot” within the text for that particular section.

I encouraged all parents and indeed, societies worldwide, to see autism in a new light now and to think of how my family's journey and my understanding of my son could help in the recovery of other autistic children. More importantly, I encouraged parents and professionals to continue to look beyond what I had provided here. Surely, there may be much more I had yet to see myself in all this ... perhaps even things I misinterpreted. I certainly was no neurologist, but was confident this work had provided enough to move many fields forward in terms of how we looked at so many issues. My theories may not be completely accurate, but the fact that they explained so much, at least had to convince many that this was indeed a huge part to the puzzle.

If my theories as they related to autism and the structure and function of the brain were indeed correct, in but a flash, in but a fraction of a second, God, in His infinite power would have provided me with such invaluable information that much of what man once believed to be true – much of science – indeed, had to go back to the drawing board! I anxiously awaited what would come of this work as I had presented it to you!

Issues of spirituality were always matters science tended to shy away from. Yet, perhaps this was one of the very areas where science should be spending more time. Man has never been able to map "functions relating to spirituality" in the human brain. I, personally, believe that was because God was a part of our complete being. The Bible teaches us that all healing comes from God. Indeed, the topic of "healing" was one of the strongest messages provided in the Bible. I was not in any way trying to tell people to disregard their doctors or stop taking their medications. What I was saying, however, was that perhaps when things seemed so hopeless, man should consider once again turning to God also for help.

Issues of spirituality were truly difficult issues for many, and I understood that. Many, indeed, did not believe in God and would certainly consider me a fool for believing in Him. Yet, to these persons, I had but one reply. If I were wrong in matters relating to God and His existence, then I would simply have lived an illusion. But, if indeed I were correct and those who did not believe in God were wrong, then the consequences of that were much more serious indeed for those who rejected Christ. After life on earth they had nothing to look forward to and much to fear. On the contrary, if I were right, I had a great deal to look forward to – a glorified body free of any illness for eternity, a mansion to live in, joy and singing for all of eternity...beauty beyond anything man could ever imagine… all things promised to believers in Christ. Believing in God had brought great joy to my life… and quite frankly, if I were right, and those not believing in Christ were wrong, then eternity was a very long time to be in the wrong place, especially if that place involved fires, screaming, and the gnashing of teeth for all of eternity. Quite frankly, that was not a risk I, personally, was willing to take. Through Zachary's autism, I had heard enough screaming to last me a lifetime and could not possibly imagine hearing screams for all of eternity. God's words of love and hope, for me, were truly the only option. To those who would argue that God's existence had not been proven, I could only say that indeed, one's belief in God was truly a matter of faith… and I did have that faith and the immense joy and peace that went along with having faith in God.

Those who did believe in God, indeed did have much to look forward to. I knew my son may not be perfect or healed here on earth… but one day, he would be perfect and completely healed and he would be with me forever. In my opinion, too many turned away from God thinking He had failed to answer their prayers when it came to healing. Yet, nowhere did the Bible state that healing would be completely "of this world". In fact, most passages in the Bible tend to refer to healing of the soul and to being completely healed when in the presence of God after life on earth. Nevertheless, there certainly was hope for healing while still on earth. Many persons on earth had experienced healing miracles, healings beyond anything man or science could explain.

In view of the materials presented in this document matters of spirituality as they related to healing were interesting indeed. The Bible teaches us that while on earth, Christ performed numerous healings… of many kinds.

He made the blind see (healed sensory damage).

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" "Yes, Lord," they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you;" and their sight was restored. Matthew 9:27-29

What was very interesting in this passage was the "according to your faith" statement. That the blind men had to *believe* to be healed!

He made the lame and paralyzed walk again (motor dysfunction/spinal cord injury).

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord", he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, "Go," and he goes; and that one, "Come", and he comes. I say to my servant, "Do this," and he does it."

When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith"... Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour. Matthew 8:5-10, 13

Again, the message was that one had to *believe* and have *faith*!

He healed leprosy (immune system dysfunction).

As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them he said, "Go show yourselves to the priest." And as they went, they were cleansed. Luke 17: 12-14

Again, the message was one of having faith… "as they went"… indicates the 10 had faith that they would be healed.

He healed those having seizures (epilepsy… corpus collosum issues?).

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering from pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. Matthew 4:23-24

He raised the dead (brain stem issues).

Then, a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying….While Jesus was speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."… "She is not dead but asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But, he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!". Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up… Luke 8:41-55

Again, it was a matter of having faith!

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing <u>every</u> disease and sickness. Matthew 9:35

Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. Matthew 15:30

These passages clearly indicate that God can heal the believer. There were many, many other passages in the bible regarding healing. Although these passages refer specifically to physical healing, perhaps, more important was spiritual healing – healing of the soul and of eternal life. Surely, there were many on earth who were believers in Christ and who had spent countless hours praying for a healing miracle. Many, indeed, perhaps felt that God had abandoned them, believing he had not answered their prayers for healing. I knew I had wondered "why my son?"…

I know knew the answer to that question.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to <u>his</u> purpose. Romans 8:28

In my opinion, God did have a plan for each life… for my life, and for Zachary's life as well. But man was a "free agent". God had given man the power to decide for himself what to believe… what to put faith in. It was all too easy to turn from God when illness struck. But, God had not given Zachary autism nor did I suspect had he given man many other illnesses. Yet, by turning to God in my own moment of need, it was I who was healed and as a result of Zachary's illness, I truly believed our family had been given a great gift, a relationship with God and hope of an eternal, perfect life with Him.

The difficulties faced by families of the autistic, and indeed, by all who are afflicted by illness, as challenging as they were, still… were but for a short time. Life on earth was short… but eternity… that was forever… and forever was a very, very long time!

There was no doubt in my mind that God answered prayers, even though, often, those answers seemed to come in ways we would not have expected. Truly, not everyone who believed and prayed would be healed while on earth. But, God did promise that all those who believed would have glorified bodies and everlasting life. So, in that sense, yes, God does answer all prayers. We know not why God works the way He does, but, in my heart, I simply had to believe that it was for a purpose. Truly, it was a matter of faith!

Issues of spirituality as they related to healing were truly fascinating to me. The above examples from the Bible clearly indicated that God had the power to heal all ailments… up to and including death. I thus chose to put my faith in Him. Did that mean that I put no faith in man's ability to heal? Not at all! Indeed the Bible tells us that believers can also have the power to heal within them.

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people… As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. Acts 5:12, 15-16

Thus, God gave some men the power to heal… as He had. God also gave man the intelligence to make medications for specific ailments and, indeed, the bible alludes to the fact that all we need for curing ailments can be found in the herbs of the land.

And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed to you; to you it shall be as food." Genesis 1:29

Was it any wonder efforts were already underway in Europe by the pharmaceutical industry to make all supplements (i.e., herbs) prescription only?

The Bible also states "truth shall spring out of the earth" (Psalm 85: 11). Likewise the tree springs from the earth. Indeed, man himself if often referred to as a tree in the Bible. There were literally 358 references to the word "tree(s)" in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible… the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, the tree of righteousness, the tree that blooms, the tree that withers, etc. Trees could indeed bear good fruit or bad. Indeed, within the herbs and trees of the land, man could find health and nourishment.

The Tree Of Life - This was the title to a poem I had written. A few of its verses are provided below:

The Tree Of Life

Each man is as a tree, created by God,
Unique as it reaches to the heavens above.
For, the tree of life, it blossoms, it grows,
From its roots to the heavens, its majesty shows.

8 more verses go here…

And, if its trunk grows crooked - may it not fall,
As it searches for heaven - and tries to stand tall.
For, the tree of life, its branches span wide,
Though the tree can be hurt, by those at its side.

But, a broken branch, like a broken heart,
Can make the tree stronger, though it's ripped apart.

17 more verses end the poem…

I did not provide the entire poem here… those interested in reading the entire poem would find it on my website, http://www.autismhelpforyou.com.

The tree… each so beautiful and so unique… so plentiful, so nourishing, so healing… each bearing fruit. The greatest tree of all though truly was Christ the Son of God who became man, who himself had died on the tree that all men may be healed. Christ's body had been broken to heal all men.

Broken bodies, broken hearts, broken minds… painful reminders of what it meant to be human, but powerful tools that could also be part of the healing process.

Yet many persons failed to understand that when speaking of healing, God spoke to us not only of physical healing, but of spiritual healing as well… and spiritual healing, was perhaps the most important healing of all! How each individual responded to the materials presented in this document would undoubtedly show one's fruits in relation to others. Would that fruit be good, or bad? That truly would depend on each and every "tree"!

Spirituality and healing… an interesting topic indeed… and for many in the field of science, truly another "cause unknown"! Two topics or areas of study once thought so "unrelated" were perhaps much more closely related than man could ever imagine from both a physical and spiritual healing perspective. From a scientific perspective, spirituality was a rather interesting and intriguing area of study when it came to issues of brain structure and function and healing.

"If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me," as the Scripture said, "from his innermost being shall flow rivers of **living water**". John 7:37,38

The word of God, the Bible, had provided great hope for me. It was the one thing I knew to be 100% true. God was true to His word and within His word, there were no lies… and no deception on the part of God. Of that, I had no doubt… and with that, came great hope.

Those who believe in God truly know that His world was one of perfect order… and that it made total sense that illness was truly "disorder"… disorder of moods (bipolar), disorder of thoughts (schizophrenia, paranoia), disorder in motor functions (obsessive compulsive behavior), disorder in physical structures (paralysis, Fragile X, Huntingtons, etc.), disorder in the concept of self (personality disorders, etc.)... and, perhaps the ultimate "disorder" – autism - almost a combination of all the others… a total disorder… impacting sensory input/output, behavior, motor skills, memory, emotions/moods, the concept of self, the digestive process, the immune system, organ function and so much more!

Sure, I knew Fragile X and Huntingtons and so many other illnesses had been proven to have a chromosomal link. Yet, Fragile X, for example, was also a condition marked by behavioral problems, memory issues, sensory input/output issues, motor impairment and gene mutation. I considered the fact that some children seemed to also be more "susceptible" to autism genetically. Interesting! I also knew that aluminum (also in vaccines) was a known gene mutant and that this was why aluminum-rich soil was used to genetically alter foods. Again, if the genetic matter of plants could be impacted by aluminum, what made man think that human dna would not be? All these "disorders"… perhaps they, too, were a lot more "related" than we had ever thought in the past. So many of them involved "brain lesions" and so many of them involved gene mutations… so many of them involved atrophy of some kind. Mercury was known to cause brain lesions, aluminum was known to cause genetic mutations… both substances were found in vaccinations! Was all this simply a "coincidence"? Could illnesses of muscular atrophy somehow be the result of mercury exposure leading to the degeneration of muscle tissue… layer after layer after layer of muscle tissue? So many illnesses with an "unknown cause" and a "gradual onset". So many illnesses providing indications of brain lesions. This was all very interesting indeed and certainly would give science much to think about.

Surely those in the pharmaceutical industry and in government agencies responsible for vaccination programs would be quick to refute my thoughts on this matter… but, in looking at the many similarities, the many parallels across so many of these illnesses… **the fact that so many "disorders" had symptoms associated with other illnesses, "mirror symptoms©" as I called them, truly made me wonder if we were looking at "different illnesses" or "disorders" or simply various shades of the same thing… and that depending on where the brain lesion, the degeneration, or the gene mutation occurred as a result of mercury or aluminum exposure… various symptoms surfaced**. **I was not saying that all illnesses or disorders were caused by mercury or aluminum**

exposure, but simply that perhaps many illnesses and disorders did have more in common in this regard then was once thought.

Indeed, if mercury caused neural degeneration as devastating as had been shown by the University of Calgary team of scientists (see p. 339), what devastation could mercury do to other tissues… muscle tissue, organ tissue, specific brain tissue, specific dna strands and functions associated with specific genes, etc.! I encouraged all adults to view this short video on neural degeneration as a result of mercury exposure. It was truly an eye opener! **Perhaps many "disorders" were simply the result of differing rates of degeneration due to mercury exposure or aluminum exposure in various areas of the human body**.

Mercury and aluminum were naturally occurring elements. Thus, many "disorders" certainly all could have existed from day one. It was only recently, however, that we had so proactively used mercury and aluminum medicine… and it was only so recently that so many of these illnesses had become almost epidemic. Could it be that the "symptoms" of specific disorders were but a "hint" as to where the brain lesions or other atrophy had occurred… as to where the gene had been mutated as a result of this exposure? As MRI technology became more and more fine tuned, what it would reveal in terms of these issues would be most interesting indeed!

If this were true, then, perhaps, based on brain structure and function, we could much more easily tailor therapy programs for impacted individuals.

The autistic child… once a forgotten child… now the key to so much!

I knew there would be many who would laugh or scoff at what I had come to see as a spiritual experience – the flash within me. Science could easily choose to discount this experience – and that was fine if they so chose to do that. Having lived it however, as crazy as I was sure it sounded to so many of my readers, I, personally, could not discount it. Discounting my spiritual experience was something science could easily do – discounting everything else in this document, however, would prove a little more challenging to even the best of scientific minds given that so much could now be explained on brain structure and function and neural degeneration as a result of exposure to mercury.

I hoped that in "Saving Zachary", I would be able to help, in some way, to "save" many other children and adults as well and also help man to truly understand so much more when it came to man himself… to help many have hope.

The evidence seemed strong that many physical structures were indeed not working properly within the autistic child and that our understanding of the actual physical structures and functions within the brain may have seriously been misunderstood. And the evidence was also strong that those with autism suffered from mercury poisoning.

Yet, perhaps more strongly, the evidence also clearly indicated – that in spite of the living hell they had been forced to endure, the determination of these children with autism to break the code and understand their world was truly a testimony to the fact that - their spirit, however, had not been broken – **and in the end, it was, truly, the spirit that mattered!**

God had been the one strength for me throughout my journey with autism. It had been because of Him that had found the strength to write this document, in spite of its many implications, and that I had finally been able to let go of my anger to move forward in a positive way and I hoped many others could also learn to do so. God had not created this mess – man had! But we would now need God more than ever to pull us through this!

Through this work, may God richly bless each family and every child whose life has been so changed by – autism.

This work I provide to all of you…

For the glory of God!

Appendix

Signs So Easily Missed… Or Dismissed!

Basic Signs of Autism Manifesting Itself In Children (in my opinion)

If your child exhibits more than 10 of these signs you have reason to be concerned.

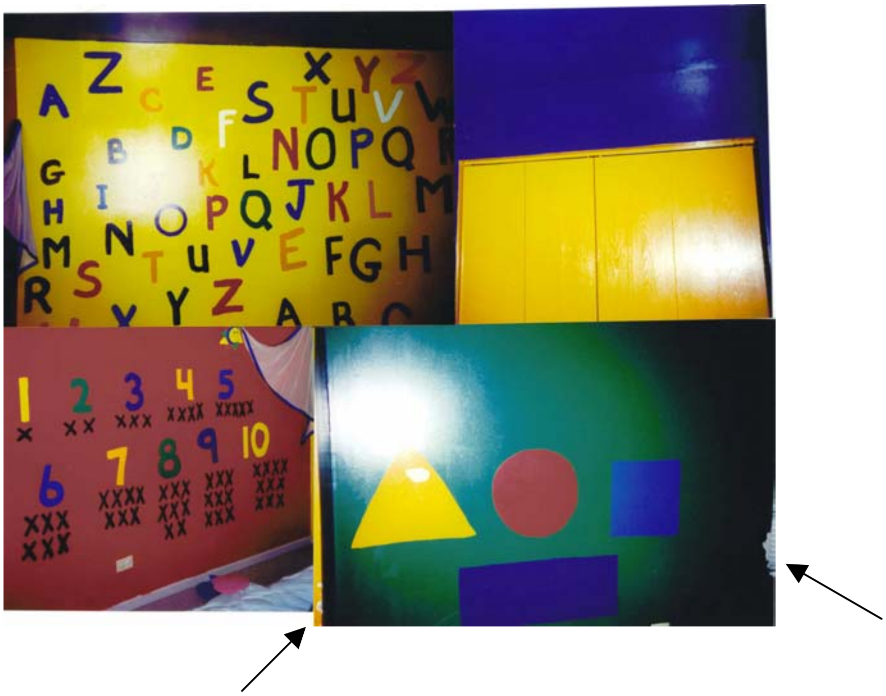
Arching of back when someone tries to pick them up.
Attachment to persons and/or "normal" childhood things is not there - i.e., stuffed animal, blanket, etc. Child is more attached to specific, favorite, often unusual, items and can play with them for hours.
Attention/Focus - this one is magnified both ways... child has amazing focus for specific things, yet none at all for others.
Biting/Gnawing - coping mechanism - more objects than other people... although many bite themselves also.
"Child In Motion" Syndrome -Constant running back and forth or jumping – Again, as with so much in the autistic, this is an issue of "degrees" in terms of "motion" to the point that the child appears hyperactive!
Chronic ear aches- many many children with autism had chronic ear infections under the age of 2, resulting in the use of antibiotics which, unfortunately, just make things worse by killing not only what caused the ear infection but also the healthy bacteria in the digestive tract... bacteria that is needed to keep yeast in check.
Constipation - sign of a problem processing foods properly (most children, however, exhibit the opposite - diarrhea!).
Dark circles under the eyes - sign of a food intolerance - seems to occur a lot with eating of phenols (in all fruits and vegetables - apples, bananas, red grapes, tomatoes and nuts are the highest phenol foods).
Diarrhea - sign of a food intolerance and an unhealthy digestive tract. Autistic children can have massive bouts of diarrhea when they eat a food they can not tolerate or properly digest (such as casein, gluten). As the child is put on a casein and gluten free diet, diarrhea usually disappears. It comes back again as yeast die off (as parents learn to kill the yeast and add back the healthy bacteria in the intestine). When yeast dies, this is manifested as diarrhea (lasting up to 10 or 12 days, but in this case, diarrhea is a GOOD thing since the yeast is dying). Yeast begins to grow back in a matter of hours when fed those things "it likes"... so, it is a constant battle to keep it in check. For autistic children, the BRAT protocol for diarrhea (bananas, rice, apples, toast) only masks the problem of autism as these are naturally "binding" foods!
Does not respond to his/her name... even if called dozens of times - yet, hearing loss has been ruled out and parents know their child can hear "other things".
Echolalia - repetition of words. I call this "ordering language"... again, read my book on my web site and you'll see why! In my opinion, this is a critical coping mechanism in the autistic child and as such, should not be stopped.

Extreme or unusual sensitivity to light and/or sound - child squints a lot or puts hands on ears a lot.
Fascination with captions/credits at the end of a movie (more so than with the movie itself).
Focus on the mouth rather than on the eyes of others.
Gets very upset when VCR is rewinding a movie and you see the images go "backwards" on the tv screen **or with any changes in direction**.
Hand flapping.
Inappropriate play/odd behaviors - flips toys over to spin wheels rather than pushing a toy car/truck, etc.
Inappropriate use of stairs... don't use "alternate foot, alternate stair" but rather go down one step at a time, with both feet.
Lack of eye contact (some kids have ok eye contact, but for most kids with autism, there is an inability to make or maintain eye contact... yet, a normal infant is able to do this quite well and is indeed fascinated by the human face). Autistic children often seem to be "looking through you" rather than at you!
Lack of flexibility in everything - difficulty with changes in direction, can't allow for the "in between" situation... for example, all lights must be on or off, not some on, some off, doors must be completely opened, then closed, no "in betweens", tasks must be completely finished before child can move on to the next thing... can't leave something "unfinished" no matter how small the task.
Lack of pointing with finger.
Lack of sensitivity to pain - child can have a busted eardrum and "not feel it"... not show any pain. Burns, falling, vaccination needles... none of these things seem to "hurt much" in the autistic child... a normal child has a much lower pain threshold and would have cried under "normal" circumstances.
Lack of social skills - totally ignores new person, no "hello", "goodbye"... nothing.
Leg banging , body shaking - to get sensory stimulation (i.e., while on a bed). For these children, it provides a "calming" effect. Could also be a sign of epilepsy – common in many autistics (especially in adolescence).
Limited food choices due to sensitivity to food textures. Only eat a few foods all the time. Usually like "crunchy" type foods or foods high in sugar (feeds the yeast and so they crave it). Foods they like are usually the ones they should not have (dairy, pastas, breads, sugars).
Loss of language, lack of language development, use of "commands" as language but lack of conversation, and/or use of "nonsense" language.
Low blood sugar and/or abnormal iron levels at birth.

No fear of danger - the autistic child has no concept of "what is dangerous" and, unfortunately, for too many parents, this has resulted in the death of their child. :o(The autistic child does not perceive vehicular traffic in the street as a danger, nor is water seen as a danger to them... the autistic child will run into traffic or go deep into water without thinking twice about it! Because they have no fear of danger, these children also **do not know how to "call for help"** when in a dangerous situation!
Order - for many autistic kids, theirs is "A World Of Order©"... things need to be in their place... placed exactly so, tasks need to be completed (not partially done), etc.!
Over-eating - sign of food intolerance and craving of foods they should not have.
Pretend play is not there. Pretend play can have serious implications for the autistic child and as such, should not be encouraged especially if that involves one's concept of "self". Autistic children should always **ONLY** be called by their name and never assume the identity of "another" – even in play!
Pushing forehead along the floor with buttock in the air. Possible sign of neurological distress.
Red cheeks - sign of a food intolerance.
Red ear/s - sign of a food intolerance. Note: Only one ear may be red, or part of an ear within minutes of eating specific foods.
Refuses to look at self in mirror.
Removes bandages or anything that "doesn't belong" on the skin normally... like a scab.
Screaming/Screeching... up to several hundred times a day.
Seizures - common especially at puberty in the autistic child.
Self Injurious Behavior (SIB) in the form of head banging, self mutilation (biting).
Sense Of Touch Is Heightened. This can take on many forms in the autistic child. For example, s/he may not like to have clothes on, or s/he may want specific clothes only. Some children can't stand being hugged/touched by another person (although some are ok with this particular "sensation"), some don't like specific textures on their hands or skin. Sensitivity to textures is also seen with foods.
Sensory stimulation seekers - i.e., always jumping, running, or looking for vertigo effect, visual stims, etc.
Sideways glances - child looks from the sides of his eyes, usually moving his/her head as he/she is doing it.
Sniffing – child may exhibit "unexplained sniffing", perhaps a first attempt at communication with the parent (being sniffed by parent may provide great comfort).

Staring at lights, ceiling fans, anything that spins or provides a visual "stimulation" - something that provides a trance-like stimulation for eye, much like vertigo does for the body.
Tantrums/Violent Outbursts that seem to come from nowhere... child is easily provoked or upset.
The "loner syndrome" - child likes to play alone... for hours on end... no interest in socializing with other children.
The "perfect baby" or "horrible baby" syndrome - again, the extremes are what to look for here.
Toilet flushing - fascination with this activity, flushing 10 - 20 times at once is another possible sign of a problem with autism.
Waking up at night - many autistic children wake up 2 or 3 times a night (some parents report children waking up to 10 times a night), often screaming and inconsolable and not wanting to be held. This is **not** normal. A child should sleep through the night without problems.
Walking on toes.
Yeast infections - these are usually dismissed as simply "diaper rash". A sure sign of a yeast infection is a red circle around the anus. Yeast infections are probably the No. 1 issue for autistic kids as yeast overtakes the intestines and kills the healthy bacteria. Usually, should have 80% healthy bacteria, 20% yeast in a healthy child... in the autistic, these figures are reversed and often lead to a condition known as "leaky gut". Leaky gut occurs when the yeast bores holes through the intestinal wall and allows undigested proteins to pass through the intestinal wall and into the bloodstream. Casein (dairy protein), gluten (grain protein) and phenols (found in all fruits and vegetables) are the worse "offenders" for the autistic child. Casein and gluten have been shown to provide a natural opiate effect (drug induced state) in the autistic child. So, for them, "normal foods" are producing a "drug-like" high!

1. This was a picture of what I believed to be a reaction to something in cod liver oil (i.e., heavy metals). This was also what Zachary reacted to so strongly. Upon seeing these pictures, and my identifying them as “That’s Zachary…”, he went completely “ballistic” (i.e., issues of self and memory as it relates to emotions). More pictures of this reaction and an account of what happened are available on my website:http://www.autismhelpforyou.com. I would also post test results once the contents of this bottle were made available via testing.
2. Zachary’s Room Of Colors – painted about 2 months after he was diagnosed with autism. This room, I firmly believed, helped trigger his language (as did the “alphabet train video” I mentioned in my section on Language). Arrows indicate bite marks.



This poem illustrates well what can happen when words get twisted in legal battles, major provisions are redefined, or the people and the government fail to properly protect the foundations of this nation.

If I Had A Wish…

If I had a wish, oh, yes – it would be,
That God grant me this miracle for – just a few – to see,

For those who sit in their office, standing for nothing…
To defend our values – they are not willing.
The Bible, The Constitution, The Bill of Rights –
For none of these things, they are willing to fight!

And, so, here's my wish, my wish just for you –
A daily reminder – I wish, God would do!
For those destroying our values, oh, let - them only - see,
How of our foundations - they've made a mockery!

So, send them "a message", dear Lord – let it be told,
On the scrolls – in their restrooms – let it unfold!
The words of our Constitution – on a new type of paper,
So worthless, so porous – once destroyed – gone forever!

So, grant me this wish, God – that these persons may think,
Before they take to their pens – to modify the ink!
That perpetrators to this blasphemy, not further create,
Words destroying our Constitution - what made this nation - so great!

Religion and morality, yes – these are our pillars!
Those who wave the flag, yet destroy these are liars -
Not patriots! So, to our leaders, as you lay down to rest…
Consider reading George Washington's Farewell Address!

A state imposed religion, our founders, they wanted not,
The basis of the First Amendment, let it not be forgot!
But, in a few matters of religion the state could come in,
To protect life, children and all, from ungodly sin!

But when, in Danbury, Connecticut, a church heard a false rumor,
To President Jefferson, it quickly wrote up a letter,
Expressing concerns over rumors of a state religion,
Jefferson replied, - impossible - for between "church" and state, a wall had been risen!

"Separation of Church and State" – in no founding documents can this be found!
And if you want to know, why we've lost so much ground –
Look not in the First Amendment, nor in the Bill of Rights,
Look in Everson vs. Board of Education (1947) – for it was in that fight!

Thomas Jefferson, yes, he coined the phrase – "separation of church and state"
For his letter to Danbury, see Reynolds vs. United States, back in 1878,
But his words were then twisted, made to mean something new,
For that, see Engel vs. Vitale, so recently - 1962!

Yes, in Engel vs. Vitale "church" was redefined,
From a "state imposed denomination" to "any religious act" – the new line!
For close to two hundred years, to our foundations, we had been true,
But with this redefinition - America - was redefined, too!

So, on important matters – to politicians unable to decide,
Feel free to say so – and then - to step aside,
And look to the founding fathers and to their first note:
To "We The People" – and put it to a national vote!

Powers have shifted – oh, yes - it's true!
From "We The People" – to a powerful few!
To special interests with financial might -
But "The People"- for their children - will continue to fight!

Determination - fueled by anger - fueled by love,
To do what's right… to stand above!
To love thy brother – to do what is right,
To follow HIS laws – to follow HIS light!

Yes, the founding fathers - they surely knew,
God blessed America – when to Him we were true!

By: Jeanne A. Brohart