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Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

A PRILES NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH



Please celebrate with the Autism Society of America on April 1st as we kick-off National Autism Awareness Month! The Autism Society is excited to join with over 100 state and local affiliates and communities across the country in celebrating all of the wonderful contributions from people living with autism spectrum disorder.

Nearly a quarter century ago, the Autism Society launched a nationwide effort to promote autism awareness, inclusion and self-determination for all, and to assure that each person with ASD is provided the opportunity to achieve the highest possible quality of life. This year we want to go beyond simply promoting autism awareness to encouraging everyone to become partners in the movement of creating a world where all people, regardless of diagnosis, are treated with respect and dignity and are appreciated for who they are. Awareness is only one step in our journey. We see clear progression from awareness to action to inclusion and acceptance resulting in appreciation of the value of our differences and the unique gifts we all have to offer--so this year we celebrate April by celebrating *Uniquely You*.

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AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH CONTINUED...

That's why this month, we're launching #AutismUniquelyYou - a month-long social media campaign celebrating self-identity and acceptance and appreciation for how each of us does our part to make the world a better place for autism. #AutismUniquelyYou invites people to share their individuality and reflect on differences in us all. The campaign invites *people of all ages** to get creative, paint their hands, make a video or take a picture of the final product, tag it and share it on social media and encourage others to do the same! Visit the Facebook page of the Autism Society of America or your favorite local affiliate and "like us" and consider a donation to support this great campaign. It's fun and it's simple - all you need is a camera, paint and your favorite surface to get started. It's a self-affirming message that people of all ages can get behind. We want everyone to take action and embrace appreciation during National Autism Awareness Month!

How will you celebrate National Autism Awareness Month? Join in the fun and get involved in the following ways:

• Be Unique. Be You. Create your #AutismUniquelyYou hand-print image, tag it and share it with your social media followers. Invite at least 5 others to join the fun and show their unique style

Post the <u>#NAAM15 badge</u> to all of your social media and encourage your family, friends and coworkers to do the same

Purchase a totally awesome limited-edition autism awareness shirt from our online <u>store</u> and show your autism pride (there are several styles available but quantities are limited so don't delay)

Attend an autism awareness event in your community - remember to support your local Autism Society affiliate

• Create a project utilizing the ribbon image, theme or other autism imagery for your audiences and tag us/share with us!

Recognize someone who is affected by autism and post your nomination on social media and tag #AutismUniquelyYou so we can share your story.

- Follow #NAAM15 and #AutismUniquelyYou to join the conversation throughout the month of April
- Connect with your neighborhood. Many Autism Society <u>local affiliates</u> hold special events in their communities throughout the month of April. But if you can't find an event that suits you just right, <u>create your own!</u>
- Watch a movie. Did you know that something that seems as simple as going to the movies is not an option for many families affected by autism? The Autism Society is working with <u>AMC Theatres</u> to bring special-needs families <u>Sensory Friendly Films</u> every month.
- Put on the Puzzle! The Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon is the most recognized symbol of the autism community in the world. Autism prevalence is now one in every 68 children in America. Show your support for people with autism by wearing the Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon as a pin on your shirt, a magnet on your car, a badge on your blog, or even your Facebook profile picture and educate folks on the potential of people with autism! To learn more about the Autism Awareness Ribbon, click here. To purchase the Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon for your shirt, car, locker or refrigerator, click here.

*NOTE: 10 out of 10 children surveyed say that playing with paint is "the best". 9 out of 10 adults surveyed wish they had more reasons to act like a kid. Hand painting for a cause might just be that reason. Go ahead, be Uniquely You!

Be sure to visit www.autism-society.org/naam for the latest National Autism Awareness Month news and information and other ways to get involved.

Let's celebrate the uniqueness in us all and make this National Autism Awareness Month one to remember!

THOUGHTS FROM A PARENT

When I Realized 'Delay' May Actually Mean 'Never' for Us

By Chrissy Kelly

I can't remember the instant I first heard the phrase developmental delays.

But I can remember the feeling. Relief. Compared to all the wicked things that appeared during my anxiety-driven, late-night

Google binges, this was one I could accept with grace. *Developmental delay* I could tackle. And full throttle was the only speed at which I would accomplish this.

My precious firstborn son, Greyson, was 22 months old. Each day I could see in his eyes that he was drifting further and further away from me. I was doing everything I could to reach my arms out as far as possible to catch him — but my fingers could only stretch so far.

I would sing to him as I rocked him to sleep.

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine. You make me happy. Your name is Grey. You'll never know, how much I love you. **Please don't take my sunshine away.**

That last sentence almost always brought tears so fast they leapt from my eyes. You see, they weren't simply song lyrics; they were a desperate plea. Born from fear and pain and anger and confusion. That's what it felt like — someone was stealing my Greyson's sunshine, and I was the worst mother in the world because I had no idea how to stop it.

Delay: noun 1. A period of time in which something is delayed or postponed.

A delay can be fixed. A delay implies, we may be late, but we will eventually get there. So we dove right in, eager to catch up. Twice weekly Early Intervention preschool, twice weekly speech therapy, 30 hours of at home Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and play dates with typical kids.

We found a doctor who prescribed daily B-12 injections, probiotics, fish oil, digestive enzymes, hormone creams and a long list of herbs and enzymes, vitamins and pills I couldn't even pronounce. I felt like a chemist, and I hoped I was pouring the perfect concoction that would have the power to bring Greyson's sunshine back.

Months went by, and the gap between what Greyson was doing in comparison to his peers grew exponentially bigger, as did the sick feeling in my gut. I could barely stand to watch kids his own age play at the park because it reminded me what he *wasn't* doing. It reminded me that I was failing him. I needed to do more; I just had no idea what more even looked like.

For a year, we chased that delay, Monday through Friday. Sometimes from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. We chased it through times I wished we were actually at the park. Times when kids his own age were napping. But no matter how fast we ran, that delay — it always ran faster. And one day, soon after Greyson turned 3 and was diagnosed with autism, it hit me. Our delay may never go away.

When it comes to developmental delay, "delay" can also mean *never*. My son may *never* speak. He may *never* call me "Mom" or be able to tie his own shoes. He may *never* give me a hug all on his own. He may *never* attend a regular school, and I may *never* ever



be a regular mom. The kind of mom I thought I had signed up to be. And the pain of all of that hurt so bad that sometimes I wanted to die. The sadness burrowed deep in my bones and consumed me. My sunshine was gone

And it took time. And a patience I was forced to adopt. I stopped setting the finish line so far out of reach and instead set it for the end of each and every day. We stopped relentlessly racing and instead took our time and enjoyed the adventure. The whole of life isn't a sprint; it's a life-long cross country glide. And when I actually slowed down, I realized the scenery was profoundly beautiful. I realized Greyson is exactly the boy he is supposed to be, and I am exactly the mom I was meant to be. I realized how lucky I was to be living this sometimes painful story.

THOUGHTS FROM A PARENT CONTINUED...

My son showed me how beautiful our imperfect life really is.

We started to take things a day or two at a time because the future felt too scary and unclear. I decided we would no longer wait to be happy. We wouldn't wait until Greyson started talking or was mainstreamed at school or got a job — he was only 3 years old, and the future can still hold absolutely *everything*.

Greyson is now 5. He still doesn't really talk, and he won't be mainstreaming in a typical classroom anytime soon. And as far as I know, he doesn't have any job interviews lined up. And you know what? I don't really care. He and his brother bring me a joy I never knew was possible.

I look back at our beginning with respect, sadness and joy. I wish someone had told me that "delay" could also mean "never" but that we would still be OK. But who knows, maybe I wouldn't have listened. Some things are best when we live them and figure them out all on our own. And now I realize —



Greyson's sunshine was never gone. I just had to be willing to look beyond some clouds.

LOCAL AUTISM AWARENESS EVENT

Autism Society of Oregon's

13th Annual Autism Walk!

Sunday, April 19, 2015

Oaks Amusement Park in SE Portland
Fun starts 9am ~ Walk begins 10:45am ~ Rides open 11:30am

Walk is 1/2 mile paved loop (fully accessible)

Location

Oaks Park

7805 SE Oaks Park Way

Portland, Oregon

Face Painters * Magicians * Crafts * 501st Legion of Stormtroopers in authentic Star Wars costumes * and more!

MCs: JanellyBean and DJ OG ONE

Oaks Park DELUXE Ride Bracelets available for \$13 each -

(A \$3 savings over the Oaks Park price!)

Purchase now or at the event!

Early Registration (until March 21): Adults \$12; Children \$9 (ages 3-12)

After March 21, Registration is Adults \$14; Children \$11

Children ages 2 and younger are FREE (Sorry, no t-shirt)

Every Registrant gets a free 2015 Autism Walk T-shirt!

Contact

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I AM AWARE!

15 Things I'm Aware of as the Mother of a Son With Autism

By Allie Smith Become a fan

Writer, Blogger at The Latchkey Mom

April is Autism Awareness Month. I'm the parent of a child with autism, and I'm aware that autism, like most permanent medical conditions, is life-changing. So far, hearing the words "your son has autism" was the single worst moment of my life (and there have been some bad ones). When we received our diagnosis, I didn't know where to turn, what to do or what to think. My only reference point was *Rain Man*. It was a very hopeless time in my life.

Let me acknowledge -- I know there's some really bad stuff that goes along with having a child with autism. There's much grief, sadness, exhaustion, anger, hopelessness, anxiety and fear that go hand and hand with the condition. It sucks. But I'm also aware that there's an abundance of gratitude, support, grace, hope, happiness, acceptance and love in our life thanks, in part, to autism.

I'm aware that my family has been fortunate. We've had resources. We've had support. We've had the ability to move some mountains (and ourselves) when needed. We've gotten results.

I'm aware that although it's often really hard to do "typical" things with children on the spectrum, it's worth the effort. The early years were brutal. People don't understand why your kid is freaking out. There were times when I felt like, "There is no way this is my life!" I was certain that I was being *Punk'd*, or I was having some crazy dream. Oh, for the love of God... my child just pulled down his pants and is about to pee in the display toilet at Home Depot. My child just sat at someone else's table, in a restaurant, and ate French fries... from a stranger's plate. My child just took off all his clothes, in the hallway, at school. My child just threw his body onto the floor, while pitching the mother of all crying fits, because it was time to leave the bookstore. See? *Punk'd*. These are just a few of our experiences -- I could fill a book. All were mortifying when they happened, but in hindsight, I can see the humor in them, because...

I'm aware that laughter can get us through anything. If I couldn't laugh at our crazy uniqueness, I'd probably cry. For as little as he says, our Bear is one of the funniest people I've ever met. Life with him has given us a reservoir of material for stories at parties. He also has the sweetest, most contagious laugh in the world. The humor that he finds in us is just as precious.

I'm aware that I'm a better person because of autism. I've learned humbling lessons on our journey. It doesn't matter who you are, your race, what you do, where you live, where (or if) you go to church, whether you're rich or poor -- autism does not care. I admit that I sometimes judged people in my former life, especially people with out-of-control children. Oh, you better believe I sized them up immediately. Shame, shame on me. Karma, baby! I'm raising my children to be aware and to never let someone who's different get picked on. They know to stand up for those who need it, because they'd want the same for their brother. My mantra is that we live in the biggest glass house on the block, so don't ever throw stones.

I'm aware that I've grown thicker skin. I don't let other people's opinions affect me, like I once did. I have more patience. I have more tolerance, and not just for the special needs community -- for people of every class, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Kumbaya, my friends.

I'm aware that slow and steady wins the race. Even with baby steps, we've come a long way. Barrett's a work in progress, but that's OK -- we're still making progress. We have good days and bad days, but the good far outweigh the bad.

Continued on page 6.

I'M AWARE CONTINUED....

I'm aware that time heals all wounds. Ten years ago, I was frozen. I was overcome with fear. I felt like our lives were over. There were no little voices in the house. There was no laughter. There were no adventures. There was no hope -- whatsoever! Present day, we've got a loud, rambunctious, chaotic house that's full of voices, laughter, joy and hope, and I wouldn't want it any other way.

I'm aware of the power of miracles. We experience little miracles every day. A prolonged period of eye contact. Appropriate laughter at a joke. A hug that is truly reciprocated. An unprompted request that's verbalized. A full night's sleep. Spontaneous declarations. A non-echolalic expression of love. Directions followed -- the first time. A clean trip to the bathroom. A new food tasted. It really is the little things that mean so much. Nothing goes uncelebrated.

I'm aware that a little education and communication can change people's views. Some people are clueless, and I don't mean this in an ugly way. Some people just don't get it, and couldn't possibly without wearing the T-shirt. I try hard to give people the benefit of the doubt, which is sometimes hard when they shake their heads disapprovingly. If they don't understand, then it's an opportunity to educate them (not preach to them). Seriously, you'd be amazed by how the simple statement, "My son has autism," can defuse an awkward situation (e.g. when your child has smelled a stranger's hair). Most people are very understanding and eager to learn. If they're not, you can't take it personally. It's them, not you. I laugh when I think of how they're going to tell the story.

I'm aware that there are angels among us. I honestly don't know where we'd be today without the skills, kindness and patience of the teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists and respite providers who've worked with our family. Angels, pure and simple. There's a special place in heaven for those who work with and care for the special needs community.

I'm aware that I'm part of a special sorority. The hazing was hell, but I'm proud to be part of an extraordinarily brave group of women. We go by many labels: warrior moms, autism advocates, Special Olympics cheerleaders, members of the A team, pieces of the puzzle, wearers of the same T-shirt, latchkey moms... we are everywhere. It's funny, no matter where I go, I meet a sister. I've had chance encounters in hotel pools, parks, public restrooms, waiting rooms, elevators and restaurants. Immediately, you go deep with the sharing. There's no such thing as TMI.

I'm aware of what it means to be truly grateful, because I am. I'm so grateful for all my children, and Bear is a special piece of my puzzle. He is the yin to my yang. We balance each other. When he is happy or has reached a milestone, I feel it deep down in my soul. I know, so corny, but it's so true. He grounds me. When I'm having a tough day, I think about how tough each day is for him. There are no pity parties in our house. I also know that he's one of the lucky ones. I know it and I am humbly grateful.

I'm aware that love can conquer all. Barrett has a family who's devoted to him and we're bonded in a unique way -forever. We are Team Smithie, and we have each other's backs. Barrett will always be OK, as long as he has his family.
Sadly, there's a high divorce rate in the autism community. I thank God I chose the right partner (or he chose me?) and
our marriage is stronger because of all we've been through.

I'm aware that faith can be tenuous on this journey, but without it, I've got nothing.

I'm aware that kindness and acceptance are all around us. In the beginning, I shied away from people and gatherings. I didn't want to inflict our circumstances on others. I literally went into hiding. I really underestimated family, friends and strangers; I know this because I've been overwhelmed by the support we've received over the years. There are so many good people who have embraced our family and treated us in a manner that has made me feel like we belong -- anywhere. No awkwardness and no explanations needed. They accept our boy the way he is, and they're raising the next generation to do the same. They are changing the world.

Oh yes, I am aware.

WHAT KIDS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AUTISM

10 Things I Wish Your Kids Knew About Autism

by Joslyn Gray | Posted 2 years

April is usually known as Autism Awareness Month, but the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), an advocacy group for and by people with autism, has been looking to re-brand it Autism Acceptance Month. They're calling for April to be a "celebration of Autistic culture and community."

For me, this resonates a lot more than Autism Awareness Month. I'm already very much aware of autism. Two of my four kids have Asperger Syndrome, and I've been living and breathing autism awareness for quite some time now. So have my husband, our two kids with



ASDs, their siblings, our entire extended family, and our friends.

Awareness months are important. They remind us to take action. Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October reminds us to schedule mammograms; in February, American Heart Month reminds us to stop eating so much salt and maybe go for a run instead. But I'm not sure I need my community to take personal action, as much as I'd like people to just accept my kids they way they are.

Perhaps there isn't much difference between asking for awareness versus asking for acceptance; both are about education, really. But acceptance requires a very small shift in thought.

Why should you talk to your kids about autism? Because statistically speaking, your child knows at least one kid with autism and interacts with him or her on a daily basis. Because the more we talk to our kids about accepting and understanding differences, the less likely they are to bully other kids. Because when you talk to your kids about being accepting of the "quirky" kids in their class, you're also teaching them to be accepting of other kinds of differences: skin colors, accents, clothing brands, religious beliefs, music preferences.

Whether you talk to your kids about Autism Acceptance or Autism Awareness, I really don't care. Either way, please take that extra step and mention not just how people with autism are different from people without it: talk about how they're the same, too. To get you started, here are 10 things I wish everyone's kids knew about autism:

1. You can't tell that someone has autism by looking at them.

No one "looks" autistic. When a person is autistic, it just means their brain works differently.

2. Everybody's brain works differently.

There are probably kids in your class who are really good at reading, but have to work harder in math. There's probably a kid who is really good at art, but not so good at reading. Or a kid who is really good at every sport, but is afraid of public speaking. Everyone has things they're good at, and things they have to work harder at. One way that brains can be different is that some people have an autism spectrum disorder. Just like every other kid, most kids with autism are good at some things but have to work harder at others.

3. Why are they doing that?

While you can't tell that someone with autism has it just by looking at them, sometimes you'll notice a kid that's doing something different: spinning around for a long time, flapping their arms, jumping up and down a lot, or rocking back and forth. Those repetitive activities are called *stims*, and they're doing it because it feels good, or it's relaxing, or it's fun, or as a way to block out too much noise around them.

Continued on page 8.

WHAT KIDS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AUTISM CONTINED...

4. Everybody's "weird."

Stimming can seem weird at first if you're not used to it, but lots of people do things that are "weird." People who don't have autism or ADHD still do all kinds of little things when they're "spacing out" or thinking hard, like biting their nails, chewing their pencils, tapping their feet, or humming to themselves. It's just that we're more used to seeing those things. Other "weird" things that lots of kids and adults do are talking to themselves, being picky about foods, only liking certain kinds of shirts, picking at scabs, or only liking one particular author. What are some "weird" things that you do? It's okay that we're all different. Think how boring it would be if we all did the same things all the time!

5. Lots of people talk with their hands.

Hand-flapping is pretty common in kids with autism. (But not every kid who flaps his or her hands is autistic, and not every kid with autism flaps.) Most of the time, hand-flapping just expresses excitement. How else do people use their hands to talk? We give the "thumbs up" and make peace signs. You raise your hand to let your teacher know you want to be called on. Deaf people might use American Sign Language. How else do you use your hands to express yourself?

6. Sometimes, kids with autism have trouble with facial expressions.

Sometimes, kids with autism won't know how you're feeling just by looking at your face. Also, sometimes their facial expressions won't match how they're actually feeling. Often, if your friend with autism doesn't seem to have *any* expression on her face, it just means she's still thinking about something. If you're not sure how someone is feeling, ask them!

7. What are you a fan of?

Some people with autism, especially a kind of autism called Asperger Syndrome, are really interested in one particular thing. Really, really interested. Their favorite topic could be anything: a certain video game, LEGOs, a kind of animal, weather patterns, ancient Egypt. But there are also a lot of kids and adults who don't have autism who are really into something.

Everyone knows someone who seems "obsessed" with their favorite sports team, for example. You don't have to be autistic to be really into Harry Potter, *Star Wars*, or a favorite sports team. Sometimes kids with autism will forget to talk about other things besides their favorite topic. It's okay to say, "can we talk about something else now?"

8. Explain the rules!

Kids with autism want to play, too! Sometimes, it's harder for them to ask if they can play with you, and they might not understand which people are playing what, and how to get in the game. Besides asking your friend if he wants to play, it can be helpful if you explain what the rules of the game are.

9. Lots of adults have autism, too.

Autism isn't just a kid thing. Lots of grown-ups have autism. Often, autism "runs" in families just like hair color, eye color, or other differences like ADHD. Just like kids with autism, some adults with autism need lots of help, and some don't.

10. Individuals with autism are individuals.

Just like all the kids in your class are a little different, all people with autism are different.

If you met a kid with red hair who really likes Transformers, you wouldn't expect every person with red hair to really like Transformers. It's the same thing with autism. Not every autistic person likes the same stuff, is good at the same things, or has a hard time with the same things. They're individuals just like you're an individual.



Practical Solutions for Families of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder



A 6 Week Program

for parents of children with ASD, ages 2 - 10

- Practical solutions for daily challenges.
- Create a nurturing home environment for all family members.
- End the meal wars.
- Learn how to use visual supports to communicate with your child.
- Discuss strategies for working with your child's school.

Taught by Kristi Sakai, national speaker and author of "Finding Our Way".

DATE

Mondays – 6 sessions April 13th – May 18th, 2015

TIME:

6:00 - 8:00 pm

PLACE:

Family Tree Relief Nursery Fairmount Elementary 1005 Springhill Drive NW, Albany

INFO:

Free class & Free copy of instructor's book!
Free Child care
Call 541-917-4899 to register

In partnership with Cascade Regional Program & LBL-ESD



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Parenting
Success
NETWORKS

LBCC Parenting Education Dept. is the facilitator of the Parenting Success Network • www.parentingsuccessnetwork.org

IPAD APP CORNER



Discovering Emotions with Zeely - Educational Tool for Learning Emotions

By Virtual EyeSee Available at iTunes for purchase.

Description

"Discovering Emotions with Zeely's simple and easy interface will make it a breeze for kids to learn about different emotions and where they might see them."Autismpluggedin

Discovering Emotions with Zeely is an innovative new educational tool that teaches children how to identify emotions and practice recognizing facial expressions. Friendly characters motivate the child to play the game independently. Developed in association with child psychologists and speech and language pathologists, playing the game provides structured repetition and practice of basic emotion recognition skills.

Discovering Emotions with Zeely has been designed to assist parents, educators, and therapists working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Aspergers Syndrome, ADHD or other special needs (eg. Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury). Detailed data collection and reporting tools assist with tracking the child's progress and sharing the information between clinic, home and school.

All Apps are suggested and not required.





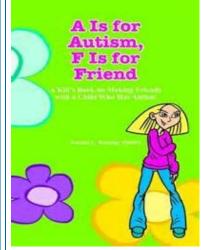
Don't forget to check out the LBLESD website. We are in the process of updating it. New links to apprecommendations coming soon!!!

Please check out Smart Apps For Kids website. Every Friday they have discounted or free apps available. Especially for the month of April and Autism Awareness they have great discounted apps. http://www.smartappsforkids.com/



iPad • iPhone • iPod Touch

BOOK SUGGESTIONS



A is for Autism, F is for Friend

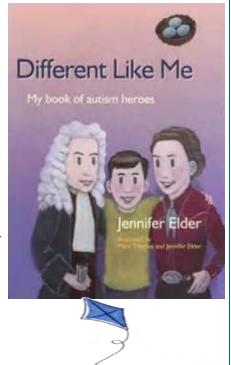
by Joanna Keating-Velasco

Get an inside look at the life of Chelsea, a young girl who has autism. In this book, Chelsea walks us through her day, including trips to the playground and park, and explains that although she sees other kids playing and wants to join them, social interaction can be tricky for her. In sharing some of her other behaviors and challenges, Chelsea compares them with issues that all kids face such as playing at recess. By demystifying her autism, she underscores the many things she and her schoolmates have in common, thus prompting a typical child to think, "Hey, I experience that, too!" A Is for Autism, F Is for Friend provides an enjoyable, discussion-oriented format for teaching youth, grades 2-6, about autism.

Different Like Me: My Book of Autism Heroes

by Jennifer Elder

Different Like Me introduces children aged 8 to 12 years to famous, inspirational figures from the world of science, art, math, literature, philosophy and comedy. Eight-year-old Quinn, a young boy with Asperger's Syndrome, tells readers about the achievements and characteristics of his autism heroes, from Albert Einstein, Dian Fossey and Isaac Newton to Lewis Carroll, Andy Kauffman and Julia Bowman Robinson, among others. Except for Temple Grandin, his heroes were never officially diagnosed with autism. However, they all excelled in different fields and often found it difficult to fit in - just like Quinn. Fully illustrated in color and written in child-friendly language, this book will be a wonderful resource for children with and without autism.







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