



Laughter and Tears: A Family's Journey to Understanding the Autism Spectrum

By Ann Hewetson

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'Had we had just one wish to be granted in the past in coping with Mark's autism, what would we have asked for? We would have asked for the gift of wisdom. The wisdom that comes with knowledge.'

- Ann Hewetson, Chapter 19

Laughter and Tears is a first-hand account of parenting Mark, a young man with autism, and also of a mother's struggle to understand and appreciate her son's condition. Ann Hewetson's moving and thoughtful account describes Mark's communication problems, sensory integration and food allergies, shared by many people with autism, but also tells of Mark's associated problems like rheumatoid arthritis and bipolar mood swings.

The author recounts how she dedicated her life to finding out more about autism. Aided by her background in research and biology, she delves into the available literature and interweaves the narrative of Mark's life with illuminating pointers drawn from the work of Leo Kanner, Hans Asperger and Carl Delacato among others. Cutting-edge developments in the field, for instance co-existing psychiatric disorders, cognitive behaviour therapy and brain research, are also explained in a way that will be easily understood by any parent. Ann's journey from initial incomprehension and a desire to find a 'solution' to her son's autism concludes with a resolution for both Mark and Ann as they arrive at a deeper understanding of autism and an appreciation of its strengths.

This book will be indispensable to both parents and professionals in offering a unique, reflective account of Mark's exceptional life and also a wide-ranging exploration of useful and innovative approaches to autism.

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Editorial Review

Review

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Review

This book describes the life of the author's son, Mark, a young man with autism, from under one year of age to adulthood... the text is richly referenced for such an account. However, this does not make it less readable, as [the author] has the gift of explaining complex information simply and without jargon, with an emphasis on practical application.

There are many publications written by the parents of children with autism, each telling a very individual story. This one is recommended for its readable style, and educational psychologists, teachers and parents are all likely to learn not only a little more about the emotional impact of parenting a child with autism, but also through the practical problem-solving efforts of the author when faced with difficult situations and the wide range of research described. A group for whom this book might be particularly helpful could be the parents of children with autism who are feeling isolated and unique in their experiences.

(Journal of Educational Psychology in Practice)

Ann Hewetson (a sometime research scientist and teacher as well as dedicated mother) combines long experience, acute observation and academic study in this profound and moving account of her son Mark's transition from "early infantile autism" to a form of Asperger's syndrome in adulthood...Hewetson writes with wisdom gained from experience on the danger for parents of "chasing rainbows down endless cul-de-sacs". She warns against implausible theories (such as the alleged MMR vaccine-autism link) and questionable treatments, noting how these "slow down progress, divert time and resources from solid, scientifically structured, research" as well as imposing "unnecessary burdens on both families and clinicians".

Her concluding appreciation of Mark's distinctively autistic qualities of honesty, simplicity and integrity will strike a chord with parents and professionals alike.

(Community Care)

About the Author

Ann Hewetson is the parent of a young man in his thirties who has autism. She is the author of *The Stolen Child: Aspects of Autism and Asperger Syndrome*.

Users Review

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