

The Conscious Parent's Guide to Autism

By Marci Lebowitz , OT

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The author's message is that if we are more aware/mindful of our own feelings and thoughts we can respond better to our children's behaviors and needs, and do so without verbal communication. Marci Lebowitz is an occupational therapist who has worked with children with autism, , parents and professionals to develop non-verbal communications systems, behavior and sensory calming strategies, and alternatives to physical restraints. By using such things as a smile, eye contact, or loving touch, this path is much more healthy and positive -- making everyone's life more calm, clear and acceptable. However, she adds, we still need to set firm boundaries for children which will help them and those around them.

The author writes that "being a conscious ,engaged and aware parent is all about building strong, sustainable bonds with our children through mindful living and awareness." She describes mindfulness as paying attention to our every moment -- especially to what is occurring, how we are feeling about it and how we are reacting. This is important because negative reactions in all of these areas affects our child's behavior and our own. As we become more aware of our thoughts and feelings as they are being communicated non-verbally, we can avoid possible negative reactions on our part and those of our children. By being an engaged listener (smiling, touching, communicating lovingly, and not being angry), we demonstrate our unity with our child (or anyone else). Of course these things are hard to do at times, but they should be our goals. She makes it very clear that if we don't model love and respect, we cannot expect our children to have these skills.

In a beginning chapter the author describes "The World of Autism". She writes about some of the issues such as feeling guilty for creating a child who is autistic, denying that the diagnosis exists, anger outbursts, and other autistic challenges to the whole family. She assures readers that we and our families can accept these challenges because they will contain and some "beautiful gifts". She goes on to write about various conditions that co-exist with autism such as gastrointestinal and bowel disorders, sensory issues, hearing loss , ADHD, OCD, visual processing and motor disorders, sleep, and seizure disorders, depression, and how these co-existing conditions affect the child's behaviors. Obviously, it is very important that they be medically addressed. She clearly describes these disorders and adds that the child could have three to five of these conditions, and when they are properly addressed we can see much improvement in their lives and those of their parents.

Some of the other chapters the author includes are **Autism and Your Extended Family, Dealing With Society, Vacation, Routines and The Transition From Child to Teenager**. She emphasizes that parents need to respond to their children clearly, with mindfulness and patience, so we and they can better respond to behaviors and needs and do so without verbal communication. By using such things as a smile, eye contact, frown, or loving touch, the author believes **relaxed, intuitive, non-verbal communications** are the key to interacting with your child (autistic or not) and productive parenting.

This path is much more healthy, positive and productive. It makes everyone's life more calm, clear and acceptable.

I found **The Conscious Parent's Guide to Autism** to be a very good book filled with important and caring information and guidelines. I would recommend it not just to the parents with children on the Autism Spectrum, but medical, educational and family members as well. The author's message is that if we are more aware/mindful of our own feelings and thoughts, we are better able to respond to our child's behaviors and needs and do so without verbal communication. However, she adds, we still need to set firm boundaries. This, too, will help them and those around them.