THRIVE EMERGE

CHANGE

Our children are miraculous. To endure – with their neurodiverse brains – the challenges of a neurotypical world; and to rise again and again despite powerful messages that they are unheard and unseen – is nothing short of a miracle.

We who have shepherded them on this difficult journey – parents, teachers, friends, professionals -- know full well the strength of their souls, the spark that shines in the midst of loss and suffering.

And we have seen the toll that just showing up every day can take on hearts and minds and bodies. It is no wonder that many choose to retreat, to hide behind the shield of screens or drugs or even to simply avoid engaging with the real world.

We long for answers, for assurance, to know that our children – with their unique experience of the world – will be given the same chance at joy, at meaning, at love – that other children seem to come by so much more easily. To remain hopeful, we must remember the thread of growth and progress that also runs throughout their lives.

As our children ride the edge between reaching for autonomy while still needing significant support because of the challenges of neurodiversity, our dance with them must become finely tuned, sensitive to the notion that we do nothing without their permission, their buy in – nothing about them without them.

Ultimately, being effective with our kid comes down to communication – can we manage our own distress sufficiently to give them the full hearing that they deserve? Can we step back from our sense of loss about what never happened and may never happen – to let them make the calculated mistakes that are a vital part of every soul's growth?

If we caregivers are to move our kids from hiding to health, from numbing to joyful engagement in life, we must become students of change, of how we guide their hearts and minds to open to what is unknown and fearful, and to let go of what is guarded -- so that all of us – child and caregiver alike -- can embrace the next level of possibility.

To do so, we must be thoughtful about the key elements of psychological and behavioral change. Because it is only with this understanding – of how we engage in caring and compassionate conversation with our kids, engage with a curiosity for who they are on the inside and an acceptance of the long and arduous path that they still have to walk – that we will ultimately help them become the full and powerful beings that they – and we – dream they can be.