



# Understanding Autism

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It's time to listen.



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“It’s hard to think about his future because I know that he will always need help, Who will care for him when I die? How will he make a living for himself? How will my daughter’s life be affected by having to care for her brother for the rest of his life?” said Socorro high school teacher, Angelica Villalobos. Her eight-year-old son, Diego, is Autistic and she explains some of the obstacles of being a parent with an Autistic son.

Autism Speaks™ defines Autism as a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person’s lifetime. Autism impairs a person’s ability to communicate and relate to others.

“It’s also very difficult to deal with people’s lack of knowledge about Autism. People with Autism don’t have any physical characteristics to give the public a hint that they could possibly behave differently. As a result, whenever Diego and other people with Autism have a meltdown in a public place, people stare and they make rude comments,” stated Angelica. Many people are misinformed about Autism and don’t realize that they cause pain to those with Autism and to their loved ones. Children throw tantrums in stores everyday and bystanders wonder about the parents’ discipline style, but like she stated, these children don’t have any physical characteristics to show that they could act differently; therefore we are quick to judge and make comments.

People should become more aware on Autism because not only does it hurt the person but it hurts their loved ones as well. Others should comprehend that these children are not dumb; they can hear and understand what people are saying. “I guess I’ll limit myself to saying that people with Autism are not dumb. Diego can hear and understand everything that is being said around him and about him, and he has feelings,” she said.

People should put themselves in Angelica’s shoes; she is supportive of her son, she loves him to death, and to be hurt by people who can’t understand that her son is special is one of the worst ways to be hurt. Most mothers are protective of their children and to hear someone else talking about their child is heart breaking.

“There is an awesome boy in there. I’m working to find the right way to reach him,” said Angelica. She is a mother who believes that her son does not have Autism, but Autism has her son. She has tried so many methods from horse riding to swimming with dolphins, all to reach her little boy. This is a mother that wants people to be aware of Autism not only for her son but for all the other Autistic children out there.

“If he is like other kids with Autism, then the entire world needs to change their attitude towards Autism. We need to educate ourselves to learn how to help and be kind to these members of our world rather than excluding them or hurting them,” stated Ms. Villalobos.

**This article is dedicated to a very special teacher of mine, Ms. Angelica Villalobos. May God bless all the children with autism and their families.**



For more information about Autism and HOSA’s National Service Project partner, Autism Speaks™, visit <http://www.autismspeaks.org/>.