

CSH Support Corner – Parent & Caregiver Blog September 2022



Believing in the Power of Yet...

As the summer starts to wind down, and knowing that the first day of school is just around the corner, I can't help but reflect on how much my children have grown up over these past few years. You see, both of my kids were diagnosed with autism when they were about three years old. With that diagnosis comes many worries of what they may or may not be capable of. You spend so much time doing research, therapies, filling out paperwork and worrying that you forget to stop and take a look at your beautiful child, the progress that they've made, and the things they are doing now that they may not have done before.

For example, this summer my son, who is seven years old, finally went on (and enjoyed!) rides at a carnival! This may sound silly, but when your child has autism, a carnival that is meant to be fun and exciting could be terrifying for someone with autism. It's loud, it can be over stimulating, and there's so many sights and sounds for a person with sensory processing disorder to interpret. However, as a parent of a child on the spectrum, I believe that it's important to expose as much as I can and give him the freedom to either enjoy it, or learn how to advocate for himself (where possible) and express no thank you, I want to leave.

I brought my son to a carnival, on guard and prepared to leave immediately, and his initial reaction was, this is too much for me. I asked if he wanted to sit down with his sister just for one ride and we can go home. He agreed, and when he saw that the ride was non-threatening, and quite enjoyable, his world opened up just a bit more, and his smile and enjoyment is something I'll never forget! He spent the rest of the evening doing each ride with his sister, twice!

Another example, years ago, my son couldn't ride a scooter or bicycle because of his lack of coordination, low muscle tone, etc. I remember worrying if it was something he was ever going to learn or if he was going to miss out. Now he is zipping through parks and sidewalks as fast as he can! It wasn't that it was never going to happen; it was just not yet.

We need to remember that our children are on their own timeline that works for them in every possible way. I think often times as parents we feel that there's always more we can do to help them progress, or we worry when we see a difference with their typical peers. But sometimes, their greatest progress comes when you least expect it, and with a parent, caregiver and/or therapist that stands behind them and never gives up on exposing the child to life's opportunities. Believe in the power of yet!

I'm grateful for all the therapy and help that we've received over the years that got him to this point. Children's Specialized Hospital has a whole section of their website dedicated to information and resources for families of children with autism, including patient stories, upcoming events and more. Check it out here: <https://www.rwjbh.org/childrens-specialized-hospital/kohls-autism-awareness-community/>