

# Autism Parent Survival Guide

## 10 Things I Wish I Knew After My Child's Diagnosis

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### Introduction

If you're here, you might be in one of those moments where everything feels like too much at once.

I remember that feeling really clearly. Trying to process everything at the same time—emotions, information, fear, responsibility—while still just trying to get through the day.

One of the first moments I really felt it was when I was trying to figure out what summer would look like. There weren't many programs, especially for special-needs kids, and I remember feeling completely overwhelmed trying to piece everything together while still working and keeping life moving.

This isn't a guide with all the answers. It's just things I've lived, learned, cried through, and slowly started to understand along the way.

Take what helps. Leave what doesn't. You don't have to carry all of this at once.

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### 1. You don't have to figure everything out right now

In the beginning, everything feels urgent. Like you need a plan for everything immediately.

Between school schedules, work, pick-up times, trying to find programs that actually fit, and just trying to keep life moving, I remember feeling like I was constantly racing the clock.

And I also didn't realize how much paperwork would become part of this. The questionnaires, the forms, the repeated questions, the evaluations—over and over again. There were so many moments where I would sit there thinking, *why is there not just a checkbox that says "no to all of this"?*

It can feel exhausting in a way you don't fully expect in the beginning.

There were days it honestly felt like my chest was tight from the pressure of trying to hold everything together at once.

What I've learned is that you don't solve this all at once. You just handle what's in front of you. One step at a time.

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## **2. Your child is still your child**

I remember thinking, "I don't know if I can do this."

But at the same time, I also realized something important—he was still him.

There are moments where I don't see anything different about my son at all. And then there are moments where I'm reminded we're walking a different kind of journey.

Both are true.

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## **3. Progress is easy to miss while you're living it**

I recently watched videos of him when he was younger putting letters together.

Now he's older, writing full words—and I didn't even realize how much had happened in between.

You don't always notice progress in real time. Sometimes you only see it when you look back.

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## **4. You can cry over good news too**

There are moments where something good happens and I still cry.

Not because it's bad—but because the journey carries weight, and sometimes even good moments release something in you.

That's okay too.

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## **5. You will stop trying to say everything perfectly**

At first, I used to feel like I had to explain everything the right way or say it in a "correct" way.

But eventually I realized—this is my child. This is my life. I know what I know because I live it every day.

And that has to be enough.

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## **6. Asking for help will feel harder than it should—but it matters**

As a single mom, I got used to doing everything myself.

For a long time, no one really took him anywhere except me. Even now, he's only stayed away from me a handful of times.

It's only recently that I've started letting people help in small ways—and learning that accepting support doesn't make me less of his mom.

And through all of it, I've had to lean on God more than I ever expected.

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## **7. You'll learn not to let other people define your story**

People will ask questions that feel really personal or heavy without realizing it.

I've had moments where I've had to pause and remind myself that not everyone understands this journey the way I live it every day.

I've learned not to carry those questions with me after they're asked.

Because they don't get to define my son's life—or our future.

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## **8. This will change you in ways you didn't plan for**

I don't know how else to explain it other than this journey has shaped me deeply.

It's stretched me in ways I didn't expect, and I believe there is purpose in it—even in the parts I still don't fully understand.

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## **9. There is still goodness in the middle of this**

Even in the hard days, there are moments where I'm just sitting there and realizing—there is still good here.

Not everything is fixed. Not everything is easy. But there is still goodness.

Both can exist at the same time.

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## **10. You are not alone in this**

What I've learned, especially through social media, is that there are so many people walking through this in different seasons.

Some just starting. Some further along. All trying to figure it out as they go.

You are not the only one learning as you live it.

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## **Closing**

You don't have to do this perfectly.

You just have to keep going.

One day at a time.

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