<u>BBB Autism Support Network</u> and Autism Society of Ontario (York Region Chapter)

NEWSLETTER

DEALING WITH STRESS

Volume 2, Issue 3 ~ October 24, 2001

About this issue: Parents...are the most important link in the chain of their child's life. Parents of children with ASD are on the firing line day and night with school, home and community. Being a parent of a child with ASD is a full-time job in itself, without the added stress of being an Advocate, Teacher, Spouse, mother to other kids and having a career. We feel their stumbling blocks and our hearts ache as we watch them struggle and sometimes, give up...

However, the most important thing that parents must be encouraged to remember is that they are doing and putting allof their bve into what is best for their child. What more could a child ask?

Recently at the BBB Autism Support Network, there have been a series of messages regarding stress. It is no wonder it comes up frequently this time of year. We are dealing with settling in schools, IPRCs, IEPs, ISA funding, 504s, amendments, attachments, not to mention trying to come up with ideas for lunch every day! We worry about expulsions and suspensions...our hearts break in two at the thought of someone bullying or teasing our sweet ones...Yes, we ARE stressed.

We are trying not to think about Halloween and (God forbid) Christmas and Hanukah (right around the corner according to the commercials). Since this generally isn't a time we can take a vacation (if at all), we thought we'd present an issue dedicated to helping us all feel better. Many of the strategies you will read about are not specific to Autism Spectrum Disorder, they are little ways to try to relax and take a breather.

Ihope you enjoy this issue!



How We Reduce Stress

By BBB Autism Members Khris, Tina, Bernie, Juli, Liz, Debbie (NJ), Brian

- I cut back: evaluate which things absolutely have to be done now, and let all the rest go for now. I also make sure to take time to do something I enjoy.
- Aromatherapy! If I get time to myself, a nice warm bath and a fantastic book. My favorite scents are Lavender and Bergamot, I burn a candle, pour the essential oil into the tub....ah *Heaven!* When I was really good, a big hard workout, including weights did more than anything else I've ever tried!
- On Days where my youngest is home I try to use relief to get the day to myself...if not I get lots of fun things for her to do on her own and we go to park when its nice...no rushing home so no stress from leaving before she's ready.
- Mostly I have gotten a lot of reading done...After supper when its the kids free TV time I escape upstairs to my room and read until their bedtime. About an hour or so.
- During the day I take walks and even started to do things for me. Losing weight is my current goal.
- When kids are home and they start fighting and carrying on I avoid stress by nipping the battle as soon as it appears to be brewing. You know the signs: loud thump; tell-tale annoyed noise from older siblings. Sending kids to separate areas works. Girls go play Barbies and Ryan give him paper and he's quiet and oblivious to everyone.
- I have also found that leaving the housework go a bit lowers my stress. Dishes don't have to be cleaned ASAP. They can wait un til later.
- A nice cup of tea right after last kid leaves for school is a great way to unwind from the hectic morning. A light breakfast gives you some energy to go for a walk and enjoy the beautiful fall weather.
- Well, this is a tough one for me. Dear hubby and I have enrolled in a stress study because I think this is an area that I need help in. I work full-time and it's difficult to devote time just to myself. Before I know it the day is already gone. I have enrolled in a Yoga class that the college is offering in January. Hopefully the breathing and relaxing will help.
- But when I have the time I try to take long hot showers and try to go in for a massage every now and then. Sometimes I have to just put things aside and instead hit the bed earlier than usual. But this is hard for me because I'm so rigid in my ways. I tell you, I have a lot to work on!

- Got more organized. It seemed like more work at first and it was but now things are more in order toys, files, revamped a few rooms with new shelves etc. At least things don't LOOK like I'm stressed out!
- ** Started taking time everyday while the kids are here to myself and "train" them that it's my time. Lately it's at 4:00 and I grab a magazine and check out who's on Rosie. Some days it's only a ten-minute break but it works and they are learning the world doesn't revolve around them.
- I'm asking for help and I'm delegating! This was **so** hard for me but I almost lost it at the end of the summer and needed help so now I have my mom babysit one night a week so we can get out for a few hours. My sister has sat two nights in the last month as well and I've applied for more respite hours.
- # I hang out with Diana and now sometimes Liz and watch Food Network and drink! I could go on but I'll save that for the book!
- I get away from the stress of the kids by doing the school thing and also working out which I have neglected for a few days due to sinus infections and tests AARRRGHHH and I LOVE the whirlpool thing too!
- I sat down at the keyboard ready to write my list of ways to beat stress and realized that right now I am too stressed to think of any. So I think I'll just sit back and reflect on the suggestions I've read so far, try to break down this mountain of stress into some more manageable piles, and get a fresh start on eliminating it. I read once that we don't need to learn how to cope with stress better--we need to learn how to eliminate it from our lives. Otherwise we just keep taking more stress in.

How I deal with stress......

by BBB Autism Member Becca Lynn

- 1. A positive mental attitude is the most important tool. With that even feelings of depression can be viewed in a more objective light. Thoughts that it will be over and the sun will shine again go miles in helping to ensure I behave and respond appropriately under all stressful circumstances.
- 2. Which leads to an ability to split off from my basic emotions and not use those as a guide for determining my actions. Like Spock of Star Trek logic is the most important tool to check my responses against. Responding emotionally not only causes more stress to form but locks me into a cycle of increasingly harmful stress.
- 3. Constant Meditation. Under stress it helps significantly if I keep a quiet mind focused on the moment. This increases my sense of relaxation and makes sure that the stress does not contaminate my thoughts.
- 4. First thing that I ask myself when I get overstressed is am I overtired or am I doing something to increase my stress level (i.e., worrying too much, drinking too much caffeine). It may seem like it is the fault of something outside of me but oftentimes I find that my reaction is different under the precise same circumstance so the differences has to be me. Number one stress buster for these situations would be finding someway to sleep extra time. Sometimes I take a weekend aside to do just this.
- 5. Other good therapeutic tools to deal with stress for me are walking (the physical action of repetitive movements are also meditative), music, progressive relaxation, dance, drawing, taking a bath and writing.

Symptoms of Stress

A lack of joy, spontaneity, happiness, or enthusiasm.
An intolerance of people and irritability, especially during discussions or
disagreements.
Outbursts of anger.
Difficulty in concentrating or an inability to make minor decisions.
The beginning or increased use of alcohol or drugs (prescription or other).
Restlessness or difficulty being alone.
A loss of efficiency in work or school.

A preoccupation with certain thoughts, especially negative ones.
Frequent physical illnesses and/or delayed recovery.
Persistent nightmares and the recurrence of disturbing dreams.
A psychosomatic illness, such as an unexplainable rash.
Withdrawal from friends and social situations.

STRESS BUSTERS ANONYMOUS

by BBB Member Lynn in BC

I have learned to know when stress is becoming an issue for me as I start to hear myself snapping at people for no apparent reason so that is when I find a stress buster to help me. I think the key is to recognize when stress is a factor and deal with it in its beginnings otherwise you can become totally lost in it.

I know about the losing yourself in stress part because I was "super mom" for 2 years! I worked full time, was leader in charge of a Brownie Group, President of the Parent association, Landscaping committee chair for our townhouse complex and contact mom for BOTH kids soccer teams! My hubby started to complain about how I was never home, and how when I was home I was either exhausted or grouchy. It took me another year to figure out that I was stretched out beyond my limits and I had to cut back drastically! Now I am a leader for Guides but not in charge - just a body! I am on the PAC but not in charge just the fundraising rep and I work 4 days now! And that is it! And the kids love it and the hubby loves it and I can't figure out how I did all the rest and enjoyed myself because I just like staying home! So my advice is learn to say NO and know your limits! And listen to your family! They are telling you if you are stressed and they are stressed too!

My stress busters -

Two categories:

1: with kids in house - find a movie for children to watch and escape to computer or a book both of which are in the privacy of my room. If the kids are not interested in the movie take everyone for a walk. The fresh air helps clean the senses and the mind both for me and for the kids. (of course we can see the air here so how fresh it is not certain). Family Game night! Believe it or not this is a really family stress buster! It gives the kids time to relax and be with you in a fun atmosphere. It doesn't matter what the game is either! Alex likes soccer and in the summer we play soccer! In the winter we play board games! It's amazing what comes out during these times and sometimes we have stopped the game to deal with an issue of stress in our children's lives! 2: kids are off to school - I find a good sappy movie and watch it. Or a sappy romance novel (Harlequin is my friend) (even like their online stories!) I have been known to shop! Now I can't afford to shop for no reason so even just going to grocery shop is good... I live in a city that is surrounded by farms so I go to the country to the "farmers Market" for veggies and to what my kids have dubbed "the meat farm" for my meat products. This gives me a 20-minute drive on country roads with good music and it is very stress relieving! Smile! It's the best stress reliever! Lvnn

PREVENTING PARENT BURNOUT:

Parenting is particularly difficult and stressful when children do not "measure up" to family or **community** expectations. Parents need assistance in coping with their own feelings and frustrations;

INTERNAL STRESS:

Beliefs that Lead to Internal Stress:

- 1. Giving 100% every day is what every parent is expected to do.
- 2. The success or failure of my children depends entirely on me.
- 3. I will never be bored as a parent.
- 4. I will be seen by society as a good and honorable person because of the effort I put into being a good parent.
- 5. I refuse to let anyone else care for or influence my child.
- 6. I should always deny my own needs for rest and recreation in order to help my children.
- 7. I should spend every possible moment with my children.

- 8. I should feel guilty if I need a break or want some attention for myself.
- 9. I should do everything for my children and not require that they take on responsibilities that they are old enough to handle.
- 10. One role in my life can satisfy all my needs and can support all my dreams.

LINKS GALORE!!!

LD and the Grieving Process

Stresses on Families

Self-Assessment Tools Online

Managing Traumatic Stress: Tips for Recovering from Disasters and Other

Traumatic Events

The Guide to Aromatherapy

Workplace Bullying

Stress UK (includes; finding a therapist in the UK, Consulting, and What to

Expect in a Session)

Prevent Holiday Burnout

Migraine. What is it?

Stress and Headaches

Undoing Stress

Headaches: Alternative Treatments

Facts about Valerian

PARENT'S RIGHTS

- The Right to Feel Angry
- The Right to Seek Another Opinion
 - The Right to Privacy
 - The Right to Keep Trying
 - The Right to Stop Trying
 - ****** The Right to Set Limits
 - The Right to Be a Parent
 - The Right to be Unenthusiastic
 - The Right to be annoyed
 - ***** The Right to Time Off
- The Right to be the Expert in Charge
 - # The Right to Dignity

HOW DO WE COMBAT STRESS WHILE OUR KIDS ARE WITH US

By BBB Autism Members Liz, Becca Lynn, Lynn D, Khris, Chris, Juli, Tina, Brian My son requires constant supervision due to seizures and general 'getting into everything'ness. We have made the basement family room as safe as possible. We have installed a gate and have an incredibly comfortable "man couch" (big leather sectional with two lazyboys, pull out couch and drink holders). I don't have a ton of toys down there...that way I am not stressing about mess. I sit down there with them, they watch TV, I read a book and sip herbal tea (mint or licorice). It's not perfect, but it does help me. Don't sweat the small stuff. Think twice and evaluate whether it really is something worth reacting to with stress. Use supervision time to do relaxing things for yourself. I use my cuddly kids to cuddle... lowers blood pressure. Other things include Arts and Crafts drawings, knitting, latch hooking, writing letters etc. Anything that you can drop at a moment's notice. You don't always have to be giving all of your time to the kids... just because they need supervising... doesn't mean you can't do something for yourself. Music.... music really sets the tone.... can relax you and change the way your children are behaving too. Deep Breathing and Meditation. I like to focus on an object like a tree out a window. Get deeply involved with my children and what they are doing.... boredom gives me stress and resentment. I try not to get to involved with my housework or other things like computer unless my

husband is home with us. I get too stressed trying to maintain a clean house and getting involved in my own interests doesn't work because the kids want ALL of my attention. So I don't do these things (which explains a lot about the way my house looks) all it does is stress me out more. I try

and get the kids outside for fresh air, let them run in the back yard, play on the swings or trampoline with them. Aptiva also helps keeps me from getting stressed out too. I don't

recommend this route unless under a doctor's care. LOL. Seriously, though, I do need this at times to keep my head level. Just taking things one thing at a time. You have to. Otherwise you get too overwhelmed. If I need to "do something" (i.e. make lunch, make a phone call, clean something, etc) I let the kids pick a video to watch to distract them. We read lots of books together and as strange as it may sound to some people, family baths are a wonderful "de-stressor" for the aqua lovers in our house (it's kind of like a hot-tub if u wear a swimsuit, only not quite so hot) rightarrows. I have a box we keep in the kitchen and the kids will get the box out and have learned the rules of it has to stay on the table and they can be busy forever with it. There are the various cookie cutters, plastic knives, tc. and they love this. It serves as sensory therapy for N but don't tell him. LOL The only problem I ever have with this is when L tries to sneak in plastic figures (the kind from McDonald's). N has a major fear of these and will withdraw and won't even speak. He will write me a note and say L has her toys out of her room. Can you tell her to put them back? LOL : I have an awful time with this because I work at home and clients tend to drop by unannounced plus phone calls etc. I've really lowered my expectations of what I can accomplish when they are around the house. I try to do a big outing type thing - park, pool, mall - and some table and floor work so that I don't feel guilty sticking in a video when I do have to work. ... My basement is a messy place. Toy box, crafts - basically a play zone that they may trash if they wish. Clean up later before bed. Living room is where the computer is. K has taken an interest in our computer so now when I need time to read or do course things I put on her favorite game and it keeps her quiet for a while. R's room is the kids TV room...Teletoon 24/7...or my TV place if kids want a movie and I want to watch something...we use to have a vcr in there but K discovered pennies fit nicely in vent holes lol! Girl's room is Barbie's play zone. When both the girls are home they will play Barbies for hours up there...guess furnishing Barbie with entire household of furniture was a good investment. Also doubles as a mini disco lol...sometimes I swear they are gonna boogie themselves through the floor lol! : If all else fails I plan a day for myself and call the relief worker to take whoever is home. These are usually scheduled on a K home day...so at least I can have day to myself. Makes the weekend more bearable if I've had a week of days free. My backyard is a mini park...R will swing outside for hours no matter what the weather. It's raining here right now and he's out swinging... (swings under a very dense tree and hardly gets wet) ——— I also have talent of tuning out everything and only un-zoning when I hear a bad bang. i.e. kid falling things shattering etc ..dear hubby can't figure out difference. I freak N out by not only telling her what room it fell in but what the material it is made out of and if it broke or just fell lol. Sometimes I even tell her what it was exactly and where it fell from. I know my house too well lol! D. JAPANESE RICE WINE - SAKE !!! Lots of it!! NO actually, I am in a better position in some ways then the rest of you, I am not sounding preachy but I just try to do things with the boys because I know that they are with me but will have to go to her (my ex's) house in a few days, I try not to do anything overly time consuming while they are there just do things with them like, we pop popcorn or make a stir n frost cake (I KNOW I KNOW not good for the weighty issues group nor myself but beats heavy doses of sake! ;0P) As long as I'm keeping them busy, we're fine. There's a craft shop up the street and I've brought things from soap making kits to bath tub finger painting. If the kids are pre-occupied then they're fine. It's when they are not, that things get rough because then my 8 year old starts with the whining and it's all down hill from there. I try to get the two to do some collaborative activities, which seem to work. But definitely keeping them busy!

A SPOONFUL OF HUMOUR

30 WAYS TO HANDLE STRESS

- 1. Jam 39 tiny marshmallows up your nose and try to sneeze them out.
 - 2. Use your MasterCard to pay your Visa.
 - 3. Pop some popcorn without putting the lid on.
- 4. When someone says "have a nice day" tell them you have other plans.
 - 5. Find out what a frog in a blender really looks like.
 - 6. Forget the Diet Center and send yourself a candy gram.
 - 7. Make a list of things that you've already done.
 - 8. Dance naked in front of your pets.
- Put your toddler's clothes on backwards and send them off to preschool as if nothing was wrong.
 - 10. Retaliate for tax woes by filling out your tax forms with Roman numerals.
 - 11. Tattoo "out to lunch" on your forehead.
 - 12. Tape pictures of your boss on watermelons and launch them from high places.
 - 13. Leaf through National Geographic and draw underwear on the natives.
 - 14. Go shopping. Buy everything. Sweat in it. Return it the next day.
 - 15. Buy a subscription to Sleezoid Weekly and send it to your boss' wife.
 - 16. Pay your electric bill in pennies.
 - 17. Drive to work in reverse.
 - 18. Relax by mentally reflecting on your favorite episode of the "Flintstones" during that important finance meeting.
 - 19. Sit naked on a shelled hard-boiled egg.
 - 20. Refresh yourself. Put your tongue on a cold steel guardrail.
 - 21. Tell your boss to blow it out of his toupee and let him figure it out.
 - 22. Polish your car with earwax.
 - 23. Read the dictionary upside down and look for secret messages.
- 24. Start a nasty rumor and see if you recognize it when it comes back to you.
 - 25. Bill your doctor for the time spent in his waiting room.
 - 26. Braid the hairs in each nostril.
 - 27. Write a short story using alphabet soup.
 - 28. Lie on your back eating celery....using your navel as a salt dipper.

- 29. Stare at people through the lines of a fork and pretend they're in jail.
- 30. Make up a language and ask people for directions to vW/{KoY(d[WkY--

Brought to you in jest by Pendulum...

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A notice to our readers...

The founders of this newsletter and the BBB Autism support club are not physicians.

This newsletter references books and other web sites that may be of interest to the reader. The founders make no presentation or warranty with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained on any of these web sites or in the books, and specifically disclaim any liability for any information contained on, or omissions from, these books or web sites. Reference to these web sites or books herein shall not be construed to be an endorsement of these web sites or books or of the information contained thereon, by the founders.

Past Issues

To request, email <u>liz@deaknet.com</u> and indicate which volume/issue(s) you prefer. You can order in HTML, MSWORD or PDF. Newsletter Archives are also available on our website at http://www.bbbautism.com.

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Volume 1; Issue 1 WELCOME ISSUE!

Volume 1; Issue 2 SUMMER CRISIS ISSUE

Volume 1; Issue 3 SPOUSAL CONCERNS ISSUE

Volume 1; Issue 4 SENSORY INTEGRATION

Volume 1; Issue 5 CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Volume 1; Issue 6 BACK TO SCHOOL

Volume 2; Issue 1 IEP

Volume 2; Issue 2 KEEPING YOUR COOL - WHEN YOUR EMOTIONS ARE ON FIRE
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UPCOMING CHATS:

HOW TO SET UP A HOME PROGRAM - Guest hosted by **Kathy Lear**, creator of <u>Help Us Learn</u>; A Self Paced Training Program for ABA. Date and time to be announced...

SOCIAL SKILLS FOR THE ASD CHILD WHEN RELATING TO A SIBLING, SOCIAL SKILLS IN GENERAL AND KEEPING YOUR COOL...BEHAVIORAL CHATS

Guest hosted by Deanna Pietramala of Leaps and Bounds (Specialized Programming Service in Ontario) - Thursday, November 1 from 1:30 to 2:30 pm eastern time.

Convert to your time zone here.

PLEASE NOTE: TRANSCRIPTS FROM APRAXIA, CHALLENGING
BEHAVIORS, EVERYDAY SENSORY STRATEGIES AND AUTISM, DEANNA
PIETRAMALA (CHAT #1) AND ENZYMES CHATS AVAILABLE UPON
REQUEST liz@deaknet.com

COMING SOON: "Autism and Essential Fatty Acids", "Central Auditory Processing Disorders", "Siblings of Children with ASD", "ADHD/ADD and ASD", "Autism and Nutrition", "Acceptance and Denial".

Regular chats take place Mon-Fri at 1pm and 9 pm daily. If no one is in the chat room when you get there...give it a chance. You never know who might drop in!

INSTRUCTIONS ON ACCESS ABOUT.COM CHAT

Hi! Floyd Tilton of <u>About.Com's autism/pdd community</u> has generously invited us to borrow their wonderful chat room to use for our chats. The following is a detailed description of how to access this room.

- 1. Click here to access About.com's Autism/PDD Community.
- 2. On the grey bar (under Floyd's picture) click on "CHAT".
- 3. Click on "Log on to Chat".
- 4. On this page: (a) Under "nickname", delete "guest" and type in a name for yourself. (b) Choose your preferred "font size".
- 5. Click on "Connect" and after a very short time; your chat screen will come up.
- 6. Move your screen by clicking the icon at the top left hand side of the window. Then drag the window to centre of your screen.

For chat questions, please email

liz@deaknet.com

NOW AVAILABLE: **"BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO AUTISM IN PRESCHOOLERS IN YORK REGION"** - A step-by-step approach. You've got a diagnosis, NOW what do you do? Also includes resources, links, recommended reading and guidelines for funding forms.

"GENERAL BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO AUTISM" Includes a dictionary, short guide to communication, sensory integrations, autism and diet, ABA/IBI and a list of other therapies, recommended reading, links and more. Designed as a companion to the York Region Guide, it is also a stand-alone and can be used for any area.

Totally free of charge! Email us at bbbautism@deaknet.com

New on the BBB website: Newsletter Archives, Parent Empowerment Resources

PLEASE COME CHECK OUT <u>BBB KIDS</u>.....A GREAT CHAT ROOM FOR SIBLINGS AND HIGHER FUNCTIONING KIDS TO MEET!

UPCOMING PARENT EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOPS

Writing Effective Needs Statements - Lindsay Moir, Educational Consultant

Tuesday October 23rd, 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm, 2nd Floor Boardroom

Special education is a 'needs' driven' process and boards have a statutory obligation to MEET the needs of the exceptional pupil. As an arbitrator, Lindsay has often found that parents have difficulty in enunciating their child's needs and the school often doesn't know what the parents expect. Good programming starts with clear communication of the students' needs.

Cost: Members \$15.00, Non-Members \$25.00

Financial Concerns & Taxes presented by Morty Cohen, Chartered Accountant

Tuesday November 6th, Room B13

Cost: Members \$ 5.00, Non-Members \$ 15.00

Sensory Integration Make 'n Take Workshop Instructor Shirley Sutton, Occupational Therapist

Saturday, November 17th Room B 13 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Shirley's specialty training areas include early intervention and sensory integration. She brings more than 20 years' extensive clinical experience from a wide variety of settings, including consulting work with Geneva Centre, two private therapy centres, several community living associations and early intervention programs. Shirley co-authored the book 'Building Bridges Through Sensory Integration' and the workbook 'Learn to Print and Draw: A Tactile-Kinesthetic Approach'.

Cost: includes lunch, materials, handouts. Members \$ 25.00 Non-Members \$ 40.00

P.E.C.S. Picture Exchange Communication System

Tuesday November 20th, 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm, 2nd Floor Boardroom

Shana Elman, Speech & Language Pathologist with Bloorview MacMillan Centre. Visual communication materials to aid and facilitate learning and leisure by 'Graduate Beginnings' will be available for sale, and custom orders can be taken.

Cost: Members \$ 5.00, Non-Members \$ 15.00

Dental Care and Autism with Dr. David Isen at his office – 4800 Leslie Street suite 111, North York

Tuesday December 11th, 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Cost: Members \$ 5.00, Non-Members \$ 15.00

Living With Asperger's Syndrome. Gary Waleski, An Adult With Asperger's Talks About His Experiences

Tuesday, December 18th, 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm, 2nd Floor Boardroom

Understanding how the disorder affects the child and tips on how to effectively deal with children in your care. To help parents, teacher and EAs better understand and help facilitate the child's growth in school. Gary is totally independent, works fulltime, has further career goals, does frequent public speaking presentations on autism/PDD, and is newsletter editor for Autism Society Ontario – Halton Chapter. He has a large circle of friends, many hobbies & interests and leads a well-balanced and fulfilling life.

Cost: Members \$ 5.00, Non-Members \$ 15.00

...Proudly Presented by Autism Society Ontario ~ York Region Chapter and BBB Autism Support Network

Registration Required, Limited Enrollment. Email asoyork@axxent.ca Location: 11181 Yonge Street, Richmond Hill

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE...

ALERT ALERT ALERT ALERT

Get ready to email the Oprah Winfrey show on November 1st, requesting she do a show on autism. Her email can be found at: http://www.oprah.com/email/email_landing.jhtml. Simply write about how autism affects you personally and ask everyone you know to write as well. We are hoping to get an answer this time! Please join us!