

TITLE: Autism Adulthood: Strategies and Insights for a Fulfilling Life

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There have been more books about adults on the autism spectrum recently, and this is very encouraging indeed in light of the abysmal state of affairs for adults with ASD. Most of the books focus on so-called higher functioning people like Temple Grandin and John Elder Robison who are verbal and able to communicate their thoughts and feelings and who are holding down successful careers. What about people with more severe autism...folks who cannot communicate their feelings and who experience more intense sensory processing challenges and other medical problems who are often seen as the “bottom of the barrel?” Many people with severe ASD are relegated to group homes, day programs and sheltered workshops that don’t always meet their needs and they are often square pegs squeezed into round holes. This has been the case with Susan Senator’s son Nat who she writes about in her latest book, Autism Adulthood: Strategies and Insights for a Fulfilling Life, as she attempts to help her son who is more significantly affected by the challenges that autism presents. Nat has very limited communication skills, difficulties with emotional regulation and has significant developmental delays.

Senator describes in minute detail the process that she went through to find the best possible living situations for Nat including housing, personal care and supports, employment, finances, and all the other nuts and bolts that make up adulthood. In addition, she describes how to go about setting up a living situation for a loved one with ASD, how to secure funding and find an appropriate agency and contacts. The book combines narrative and concrete information so it is both a memoir and a handbook rolled in one which is the best possible combination for a book covering such a complex and emotionally fraught subject.

The author covers so much else, including health issues often experienced by adults on the autism spectrum such as obesity and diabetes, food selectivity, food sensitivities and medications. There is the little known horror of catatonia that her son experienced and was treated by Dr. Margaret Bauman, a pediatric neurologist in Boston. This and other issues relating to the dismal state of affairs for adults on the autism spectrum are touched upon in greater detail by Susan Senator than any other author I have seen to date. What she has to say is like the proverbial canary in a coal mine; many people who were children in the 1990’s are becoming adults who still have autism and society still doesn’t know what to do! I was both enlightened and depressed by reading this book as it exposed how things still are today and the lack of progress with regard to supporting adults with ASD that still prevails. This is important and essential reading for parents of teens with ASD who will become adults all too soon!