

TITLE: Raising Our Son with Autism: A Family's 40-Year Journey

AUTHOR: Tsai, Merling C., MD and Tsai, Luke Y, MD

SUBJECT AREA: Autism-Parent Narrative

PUBLISHER: Autism Asperger Publishing Co.

PUBLICATION DATE: 2015

NUMBER OF PAGES: 179

There have been many, many books written by parents about their sons or daughters with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Many of these books focus on ways to help their loved one “recover” from what is seen as a terrible liability and stumbling block to a happy and successful life. Luke and Merling Tsai, both former psychiatrists, have written another book about autism. This is a narrative about raising a son with so-called “Lower-Functioning” autism which is a more severe form of ASD that includes significant impairments in communication, socialization and navigating the complexities of life. The Tsai's son, Stephen, has been significantly affected by autism and his parents share their story of raising their son for 40 years.

This is a book with a difference; it is told from a deeply Christian perspective with each chapter starting with Scripture verses that reflect the theme of that particular chapter. The authors describe in loving detail Stephen's journey from birth to childhood to adulthood and their constant support as they teach him necessary life skills. His schooling was inclusive with typically developing students. Instead of using tried and true treatment approaches, they came up with resourceful ways to teach him in a natural setting-their own home. While they have tried communication methods such as Facilitated Communication with Stephen, they have not been successful and he remains essentially nonverbal with very limited communication skills.

Nevertheless, with constant love, faith in God, patience and resourcefulness, Stephen gradually learned to cook, dress himself, use the toilet and use the bus to get to and from his job at the library in town. He is very gentle soul without bitterness or guile and he is viewed as a precious gift from God. He teaches patience and love and every time I see him, he has a calming effect as he seems so serene. Though it is hard to know just exactly how he is feeling or what he is thinking at any given time, I am struck by his calm and pleasant nature and am impressed by how he has somehow managed to rise to his challenges and live a happy, peaceful life

Stephen has traveled the world with his family and he pays taxes and helps with expenses. He helps with laundry and house cleaning. As I read each chapter, I wept with joy at the sheer faith in God his parents have and at how he has managed to be far more capable than anyone has ever imagined! I am so gratified that Luke and Merling Tsai emphasize the positive, rather than the gloom and doom so often seen when it comes to raising a loved one with more severe autism. Stephen is happy, has a strong spiritual orientation and an all-abiding faith in God and is kind and loving. This is what matters the most and because of that, he is much more highly evolved than was ever dreamed of!!