

ASPERGER SYNDROME AND MOMS: TEACHING STEP BY STEP



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Here's another great submission from our friend and colleague Dan Coulter, adult Aspie, father of an Aspie and owner of Coulter video.

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By Dan Coulter

Ever since I was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome last year, I've had flashes of understanding about my childhood. I was a confident kid in many ways, but I also remembering worrying about things. As Mother's Day approaches, I particularly remember how understanding and encouraging my mom always was.

I appreciate this even more now because I see how easy it can be to dismiss the fears and concerns of a child with Asperger Syndrome. Especially when those fears don't seem reasonable. But realizing that your child's mind works differently -- and that his fears are real and rational to him -- can be one of the keys to helping him conquer his anxiety.

Recently, the mom of a very thoughtful young man with Asperger Syndrome wrote me about how she handled one of her son's concerns. She graciously agreed to let me share the story with you. The mom is Becky

Strickland, who is an instructional coach at a middle school in South Carolina. When Becky's son, Jacob, entered his teens, he became concerned that he'd lose his imagination as he grew older.

Luckily, Becky had a mom's intuition that this was a serious issue for Jacob. I'll let her tell the rest of the story in her own words.

"I was puzzled because I remember having imaginary friends and playing as a child, but have never once worried over the loss of my childhood imagination...missed it at times maybe. I was at a loss of what to say to him because I saw how distraught he was over it. This lasted for several days and then it hit me. I took him to the computer and pulled up various clips of movies he likes. I asked him who created these movies. I asked him to name his favorite books...mostly fantasy/sci-fi...and then asked who wrote them. I told him to think about inventions.

"I then asked him if the people were children or adults who made/wrote/invented these things. He looked at me with the biggest grin of relief and said that they were adults. I then told him to think about the possibility that your imagination may actually get better with age because you have had more experiences in your life. And, that people show/use their imagination in different ways. He breathed a huge sigh of relief.

"I had to think about why this was so critical for him. I realized that because of his struggle to relate to and interact with others, his imagination was his comfort/safe place. I

think he would feel lost without having it to escape to. I hope he never feels like he has lost any of who he is."

I was impressed that Becky worked hard to understand the problem from Jacob's perspective, and then used that understanding to help him to make the step-by-step mental connections that relieved his fear.

Teaching is not just telling. Teaching someone with Asperger Syndrome can be helping him absorb information in his own way at his own pace.

Fortunately, that's often a mother's gift.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR -- Dan Coulter is the producer of ten DVDs about Asperger Syndrome and autism, including "Understanding Brothers and Sisters with Asperger Syndrome" and "Understanding Brothers and Sisters on the Autism Spectrum." You can find more articles on his website: <http://www.coultervideo.com>.
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