

My daughter, Grace, was diagnosed with Autism at age 3. She's now 10 years old and I've learned A LOT. Prior to Grace's diagnosis, all I knew about Autism was what I had seen on TV, so I was determined to learn all I could. I was so hungry for information that I unintentionally signed up for a training class through Cincinnati Children's Hospital that was geared toward professionals. It ended up working out though, because I met someone there who introduced me to all sorts of classes that would be helpful for me and my family.

Some of the classes that I've attended, from an outsider's perspective, may not seem "successful", such as potty training. Even after taking this class and working with Grace, she wasn't potty trained. But this class provided me with potty training basics which I was then able to use in partnership with one of the doctors at Cincinnati Children's, and Grace is now potty trained.

Some of the other classes I've attended like Caring for the Caregiver and Charting the LifeCourse, have taught me how to communicate with my partner, how to take care of myself, how to look at Grace's potential despite the behaviors that we sometimes encounter, and to look at our goals for her and for our family. I've also found community through Autism and We, a group designed to support, educate, and advocate for a unique segment of the population that are often misunderstood, under represented, and often forgotten.

In summary, my daughter is sweet, kind, loving and she is the strongest person I know. And I appreciate how I've been supported and what I've learned and continue to learn in the disability community.