

What I Learned From My Challenges: If you Have Children with Disabilities, You Need to Reach Out

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It is hard to have kids with disabilities. My kids have autism, so it is difficult for them to communicate with me. Usually it is hard for them to tell me what they want, but sometimes they surprise

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me with something they say. I have to be very patient, but it is worth it when we finally understand each other. It makes me happy, and they feel happy, too. In order to manage all the challenges of having

autistic children, I have depended on support from my kids' teachers and from other parents.

When my sons were young, the doctor told me that they had disabilities. The doctor referred me to services and a special day care. When they got older, they went into a special needs program at the elementary school. The school developed an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for my children. I went to meetings to see what the boys were learning. They gave me strategies for communicating with the kids. It was helpful to go to the classroom. I could see what they did there, and the boys could show me what was important to them.

Communication with the teacher was so important. When the boys were in elementary school, I kept a journal with the teachers. The teachers

wrote notes to me about homework and what happened that day in school. At night, when the boys were in bed, I wrote back to the teachers to tell them how the boys were doing.

Other parents were a tremendous support. We talked to each other and shared ideas for how to take care of our children. Parents got involved doing activities after school. They did cooking projects, went bowling, and took the kids on camping trips. I am worried about what will happen to my kids when they are done with school. But I watch the other parents and I see what services they are using for their kids, and I feel reassured.

Other parents have taught me that it's okay to have kids like this. At the beginning, I blamed myself that my kids are this way. Now I know that the kids are fine. I learned that as long as I love them, they will love me back.

The key to raising kids with disabilities is having help and support so you know you are not alone. If I had to do it over again, I would because I love them so much.



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What do You Think?

List three ways Fawkia got support.

Write a letter to someone whose child has disabilities. What support and advice could you offer?

Fawkia Boulerice, originally from Egypt, is a student at the Adult Literacy Center in Pittsfield, MA. She is now a U.S. citizen, and the GED is one more important step for her. Her boys are very proud of her for going back to school. This is the first time she has been published, and she is very excited about it!