

New Experience With My Daughter's Diagnosis

Magdalena Reyes

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. **Diagnosis** (noun) is when you or a doctor figure out the name of the condition or disease you have. For example: *I was tired all the time, and I didn't know why. The doctor finally gave me a diagnosis. She said I have Lyme disease.*
2. Were you ever surprised or scared by a **diagnosis** in your family? Try using **diagnosis** and the verb form (*to diagnose*) in sentences.

At First, I Was Scared

How would you feel if you got a note from your child's teacher saying that your daughter had something wrong with her?

When my daughter was nine years old, the school met with me to talk about why my daughter was having problems in school. She was bored during some activities but full of energy for other activities. Then the teacher told me that my daughter might have ADHD and needed to go to a specialist. At first, this scared me because I didn't know what it was. I had a lot to learn.

Meeting with a psychologist was new for me. I was nervous because in my culture, I had never heard of ADHD. And I had never visited a psychologist. I thought that it was for people who were crazy, and I felt sad about the diagnosis. I have a friend who explained to me that many children have this problem and that medications can help. But I was still scared.



In my country, we did not think a child like this is a problem. The elders said this child is smart and creative and a hard worker. My grandmother told me that children like my daughter were allowed to do what they wanted to do. They would do very well in what they set out to do. That was years ago—a different time and place.

Looking for Ways to Help My Daughter

In the U.S., ADHD is treated as a problem. After some studies the doctor diagnosed her with ADHD. So, I started to look for ways I can help my daughter. I did not feel comfortable giving her medication. The doctor prescribed it, and I picked it up. But then I decided not to give it to her. I

What Is a 504 Plan?

A 504 plan removes barriers to learning. It provides accommodations that don't change what kids learn, just how they learn it. It's a common school support for kids with ADHD and other kinds of disabilities.

<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/what-is-a-504-plan>.

Note: A 504 Plan is different from an IEP. See the box on p. 11 for more information about IEPs.

decided to change her routines. I made sure she exercised, slept well, and had only healthy food. However, I was very frustrated because I didn't see any change.

So, I talked with her. I said we needed to try the medication. I was afraid of how the medication would affect her, so I asked her to tell me how she was feeling. The first day was okay, but on the third day she had no energy. On the fifth day she was like a zombie. When I asked how she felt, she said, "Good." But that was not normal for my daughter. She was just "good"? Normally, she was full of energy and joy.

I thought, "Oh, no. This is not my daughter. I need my daughter back." So we started looking for other alternatives to medication. I found an organization in Santa Rosa that helps families and children. I attended the weekly meetings. They helped me with strategies to help my daughter. We worked together. We signed up for swimming class, Mexican folkloric dancing, and martial arts.

Many Strategies

In the house, I put notes for everything to remind her what she needs to do. For example, on the bathroom mirror, one note said, "Don't forget to brush your teeth." On the door, I put a note that said, "Did you wash your hands?" I put a bracelet on her wrist that said, "This is for you to help you remember to bring your jacket home from school."

We developed other strategies. For example, I made a little bag for her that she could carry on

her shoulder. The bag contained all the important items she needed to remember to bring to school. When it was time to do her reading homework, I set the timer for 10 minutes. When the timer went off, she could move around or do something else. Then she would read again for 10 minutes. Even though she does not like to read, she understands why it is important in reading.

When my daughter started middle school, she got a 504 Plan. This plan is for children with learning differences. With this plan, she could get more time to finish her assignments. In high school she had problems because the 504 Plan ended. She didn't have enough time to finish her tasks, and her grades went down. Finally, she graduated from high school.

A Parent's Pride

She continued with her education. She went to college. Now she has a job, and she is very organized and smart. Now, she helps me with my education at SRJC. She is like my tutor. Every child is different. As parents, we have an important role to help our child succeed. I love my daughter and I am very proud of her.

Magdalena Reyes is a student at Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC) in Santa Rosa, California. She is from Michoacán, Mexico, and she has been living in the U.S. for 27 years. She got her high school equivalency in 2019, and she is staying in school to improve her English.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Based on the text, how does Magdalena's perspective as a parent evolve over time?
2. Share a time your role as a parent or family member evolved over time. Try using presentation software (like Google slides) to tell the story. Use pictures and text.
3. Study how the author uses quotation marks. Write down some rules about how to use them.
4. What do you think of how the elders would have described someone like the author's daughter? (See the 4th paragraph.)