

## GUIDELINES FOR AUTISM MOTHERS BOOK CHAPTER

Thank you very much for considering sending a chapter to be included in the upcoming Autism Mothers book. Following please find the guidelines.

- Adhere to a word count of 1200-2400.
- Submit the document in Microsoft Word format.
- Use Arial font size 11 and single spaces between sentences.
- Check your document for spelling, capitalization, and grammar before submitting. If you reside outside of the USA, please use a US English spelling dictionary in Microsoft Word. If selected, your chapter will also be proofread and edited as needed by our team.
- Spell out the first use of an acronym or initialism, and double-check that this is correctly spelled out. For example: "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)," "applied behavior analysis (ABA)," and "Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)." Thereafter, use the acronym or initialism. The term "autism spectrum disorder" is not capitalized. The initialism "ASD" is capitalized. Only the "A" in "Asperger's syndrome" is capitalized.
- Look up the correct spelling and capitalization of any nutritional supplements mentioned.
- Emphasize the positive and what has helped your child and your family.
- Take care to present fact as fact and opinion as opinion.
- Give attribution to quotations from studies if you cite these.
- Include, as closely as possible, the time period during which you first noticed symptoms and continue through to your child's current status and future expectations. For example: When did you first begin to think your child might fall under the diagnostic label of autism? What positive changes have you seen/accomplished? What are your hopes or expectations for the future?
- Include your child's level of affect at diagnosis and where s/he is now. For example: "Henry was diagnosed with severe full-syndrome autism in 2002. Today he is classified in the mild-moderate range." "Although Jessica is still considered on the severe end of the spectrum, we are so grateful that the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) has given her a way to communicate her thoughts, feelings, and dreams." "We took Liam to Kennedy Krieger Institute in 2009, and they said he had pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). We came home and immediately started the gluten-free/casein-free (gf/cf) diet and – WOW – the problem behaviors vanished. Today you wouldn't even know he'd ever had a problem." *The range of diagnostic labels do not need to be said together at one place in the chapter*, but this should be evident from reading the complete chapter.
- Above all, write from the heart.

- Send a high-resolution portrait of your child and one of yourself. A high-resolution family photo is fine. Provide your two- to six-sentence biography.

Submittals will be accepted during the period of September 7 to September 13, 2010. Please do not send your submittal early. Include your snail mail (United States Postal Service) address and telephone number in your e-mail. Sign, scan, and e-mail the "Letter Agreement" at the end of this document.

The e-mail address to use is [teri@autismfile.com](mailto:teri@autismfile.com) with carbon copy to [smallmp@comcast.net](mailto:smallmp@comcast.net). Specify "AUTISM MOTHERS BOOK" in the subject line of the e-mail. Your e-mail will be acknowledged. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within 1 week, please send your chapter again with "AUTISM MOTHERS BOOK 2" in the subject line.

(Please proceed to the next page for sample articles.)

## RECOVERING MARK

By Cynthia Macluskie

I had the opportunity to testify before the Senate Health Committee expressing my support of Steven's Law, which mandates autism insurance coverage in Arizona. As I spoke of my struggles financially and emotionally, I broke down and cried. My son, Mark, leaned over, hugged and comforted me. As I looked up, every Senator had tears in their eyes, not because of my emotional testimony, but because of my son's empathy and compassion. Mark then stepped up to the podium and testified on behalf of all children with autism. You see, Mark was diagnosed with autism at age 2 and today, at age 10, most people ask me if he ever really had autism. I can assure you he did. Here is our journey of recovery.

Mark, like so many of our kids, was born with no issues and developed normally until age 14 months. He then became ill and ended up in the hospital. The next 6 months were filled with antibiotics, doctors' appointments and constant illness. One day, I suddenly realized he did not call me "Mommy" anymore, and he no longer seemed to hear what I was saying. We saw our developmental pediatrician and were shocked to leave with an autism diagnosis. We traveled to the University of California, Irvine, for a second opinion. The head of pediatric neurology told us that we would have to institutionalize our son. That was the day our recovery journey started. We would not accept the hopeless picture the doctor left us with that day. Luckily for us, the Internet was invented and showed us the way!

The gluten-, casein- and soy-free diet was the first treatment we tried, and this was hugely successful. Within days, the head banging stopped and language started. Eventually we learned that Mark's diet must also exclude dyes, preservatives and be primarily organic. The few times we deviated from this diet, Mark had behavior issues and complained of "brain shaking" and feeling "high as a kite." Today our whole family is on this diet and we are all healthier because of it.

We also found that Mark was very sensitive to chemicals and environmental triggers. We ripped out our carpet and removed all chemicals from our house, including cleaning supplies. We now clean with vinegar and baking soda. We also bought an expensive air filter system that would clean out chemicals, as well as other allergens. We removed clutter (dust collectors) from our home. We sleep in organic cotton sheets, pillows and pajamas. I believe that our children have a difficult time eliminating toxins from their bodies, so I do my best to avoid them. We spend approximately a third of our lives sleeping in bed, so I have attempted to make our bedrooms as healthy as possible. We used the book *Home Safe Home* to make incremental changes in our house. We found that the whole family improved physically with these changes.

Supplements were also extremely helpful. Subcutaneous methyl B-12 injections were started when Mark was 5 1/2 years old with great success. Within days, Mark stopped wetting the bed and stuttering. We took him off methyl B-12 injections twice, and both times Mark's bedwetting and stuttering came back. We also noticed a slowing down of his learning capacity. Methyl B-12 is definitely one of the interventions at the top of our list.

We completed several IV glutathione injections. Each time, we saw huge gains in social skills. After the first injection, Mark played hide-and-seek and tag at the park. I could not believe how well he fit in with his peers. I cried on the way home from the park. He had never played that way before. However, the effects did not last for more than a few days, and the effects decreased over time. I still strongly believe that the IVs kick started something in his system and helped develop social skills gains.

We did use a lot of other biomedical interventions. We chelated with IV EDTA, but we could never decide if it truly helped. We used homeopathy – which we still use today – to address any illnesses in the family. I can assure you that we were not an "all natural" family when we started this journey. This journey has caused us to stretch our knowledge and open-mindedness.

The other hugely successful intervention was to remove Mark from the school system. Mark attended developmental preschool for 1 year where he lost skills and, in my view, wasted time. We decided to set up an intensive applied behavior analysis (ABA) program 35 hours per week in our home. We could not afford a master's level expert, so I read books and designed my own program. Mark made more progress in 3 months than he did in a whole year of preschool! Both our speech and occupational therapists were astonished with our success. We turned a room in our house into a Montessori-style ABA room. At age 6, we transitioned the program from an ABA-style program to a typical school program. We removed all therapists from our home, and I spent 2 hours per day for over a year reading aloud and bonding with Mark. Today he is at or above grade level for every subject.

Mark is now a 10-year-old happy and well-adjusted little boy. He has many friends, is an active member of a robotics team, plays piano beautifully and loves all things little boys love. Our journey was filled with many ups and downs, especially because there was no clear roadmap to follow. Unfortunately, not everything works for every child. Our family was lucky that Mark was a child who responded quickly to these interventions. My best advice is to trust your instincts, never give up hope and always keep an open mind. Don't become too loyal to a doctor, therapy or treatment and always be willing to make a change. I can promise you that every choice we have made on this journey was outside of our comfort zone. We never thought we would homeschool our child, and yet this has been one of our greatest joys. I always envisioned myself as an "Oreo cookie" and "Mac and Cheese" mom, and now I am an expert gluten-free dessert maker! Lastly, I wish you good luck, determination and success in your journey of recovery.

## **From the Frontlines of Autism, We Find Hope**

By Kristin Selby Gonzalez

### **The Diagnosis**

As if possessed with the focused determination of a marathon runner, my son sprinted around the kitchen table over and over again. The two evaluators glanced at one another sharing a knowing look. I wanted to shake them. Don't trade silent thoughts and leave me in the dark! Over the past year Jaxson, now 2 1/2 years old, had been evaluated by a neurologist and two psychologists. Each visit was preceded by a 4-month wait as well as 20 pages of medical forms – every time asking the same questions. I racked my brain for a good reason why these professionals could not simply share my information with one another, but I could come up with nothing to justify what was happening. My son's simple repetitive behaviors, avoidance of eye contact, disinterest in people, and utter lack of verbal communication pointed toward autism. And yet, despite 12 months of begging for answers, pleading for help, and suggesting outright that my still nonverbal son might have autism, I had wrung not a drop of clarity from the dry cloth of the medical profession. An hour had passed. I asked them for their opinion based upon their evaluation. I was desperate to know if they thought my son had autism. "You need to have your son evaluated by our psychologist; we'll set you up with an appointment," one of the evaluators explained.

Great, enter doctor number four. I held my sarcasm. "When would that appointment be?"

"In about 6 weeks."

"Six weeks? Do you know what I have been through trying to get some answers for the last year?"

"I am sorry, Mrs. Gonzalez. The soonest we can get you and your son in is in 6 weeks."

Anger at these two women, fear for my son, and frustration at the system that was set up to supposedly help me collided in a messy tangle of emotions. I couldn't help it, tears flowed down my cheek. I knew that crying in front of these strangers would only reinforce all of the hysterical mother stereotypes they already walked in here with, but I had already passed caring. I turned toward them, my glaring eyes burning through my tears.

"You look at me. Look at my son. We have waited long enough. I will be at the psychologist's office with my son first thing tomorrow morning. And, make no mistake, we will be seen."

The two women exchanged worried looks.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Gonzalez. That's just not possible. The soonest we can get you in is 6 weeks from now."

They worked their way nervously toward the door. I helpfully opened it for them and, as they exited, I repeated my voice flat, "Jaxson and I will be there first thing tomorrow morning."

My son was diagnosed the next day. Validation never tasted so bitter.

### **The Prognosis**

I sat in the administrator's office at the school district nervously clasping my hands. Okay, so I knew my son had autism, but at least now I would learn how we would begin to "fix" this. I loved my son more than I felt my heart could contain. When I looked at Jaxson, his sweet round face immersed in a world all his own, I knew with crystal clarity that I would do anything – absolutely anything – to help him. The gray-haired administrator sat across from me ready to tell me, so I thought, what I needed to do to bring my little boy back to me.

"The first thing you need to know is that he'll probably never talk," she said.

My brain was reeling, desperately trying to compute this sledgehammer blow.

"I...I 'm sorry. What? What do you mean he'll never talk? He's only 2 1/2 years old? How can you know that?"

"Mrs. Gonzalez, please. The only way this is going to work is for you to be realistic. I have been doing this for a long time. Autism is something you can't fix. This is a lifelong condition. Now we have services – free services – that we can set you up with for your son. What we are trying to do is to make your son's autism more tolerable to live with. The best we can hope for is that he eats with a spoon and fork and is potty trained by the time he is 8 years old. Usually at that point the children get put into group homes."

Her voice was like listening to nails on a chalkboard.

"Mrs. Gonzalez, you are naïve to believe anything more will be possible for your son. You need to grieve for the child you thought you had. I hate to put it so bluntly, but once a duck, always a duck."

While she continued to bury my son, her assistant repeatedly interrupted asking what she wanted for lunch. I was happy to know that she could still maintain an appetite during my son's funeral. I marveled at the fact that this woman who felt that she needed to devote several distracting minutes to consider what she would eat for lunch could so casually and with such confidence decide the outcome of my son's life.

I left in a daze, my eyes wet, and my spirits low.

I sunk in a black depression, unable to get out of bed. It was a couple of weeks later when I finally asked myself the obvious but crucial question: "If I give up on my son, who will he have?"

I made a decision then, one I would never take back.

I did not know what the future held for Jaxson. I wasn't sure how I would find all of the answers for him. But, by God, I would never give up on him.

## **Finding the Right Educational Program for Jaxson**

I gently jiggled Jaxson awake. He gave me a crinkle-nosed smile.

“Good morning,” he said.

“Good morning, pumpkin head.” I planted a kiss on his forehead. Jaxson blew me a kiss back, a maneuver he pulled off with the casual laziness of a pop singer greeting his adoring fans, which certainly included me. My son had been awake only for a few minutes, but he’d already done two things: spoken and shown me affection – deemed beyond his reach only a couple years ago.

I get Jaxson ready for the day, and we head toward his playroom.

“Hut-one, hut-two, hut-three!” I say to Jaxson as I am holding a Nerf football. He looks at me with a beaming smile. I say, “Catch!” He puts his arms up and catches the ball. He is laughing and says, “Run!” I run to catch him and miss on purpose. He looks at me with excitement and says, “Catch me, Mama!” I run around crazy and tell him to make a touchdown. He sprints like a pro across the room and yells, “Touchdown!!” I cheer with excitement and run over to him and give him a great big hug.

I believe that none of this would have been possible had I not found The Son-Rise Program®, an educational method that involved joining Jaxson in his own world before inviting him to join us in ours. Raun Kaufman, the CEO of the Autism Treatment Center of America™, had himself been diagnosed with severe autism as a boy but had fully recovered through The Son-Rise Program, which his parents developed specifically to help him.

I began the course with some trepidation, not knowing whether this program would be what I was looking for. When I saw, on the first day, how the staff at the Center believed in Jaxson and didn’t in any way write him off, I knew I was on the right track. I got home and immediately began implementing this child-centered, parent-directed program with Jaxson.

And look how far he’s come already! From nonverbal to over 500 words (we have really lost count), from disconnected to engaged, playful, and interactive. After all that I was told he couldn’t do, I am so excited as I continue to run his program and see all that he CAN do.

## **Finding the Right Biomedical Interventions for Jaxson**

One aspect of my son’s autism that became apparent very quickly was that it had many biomedical components. My son had heavy metals such as mercury in his body. He had chronic constipation along with severe stomach pain; and he has extreme sensitivity to a wide range of foods, such as dairy, wheat, and other grains. It was hard to watch my cute little guy crying and pushing huge yoga type balls into his stomach in an effort to get some relief. I was so grateful to have found a Defeat Autism Now! doctor who was instrumental in helping Jaxson with mineral supplementation, DMSA chelation (to eliminate the mercury and other toxins), detoxification of Jaxson’s gut, and other crucial treatments. Some of what we used included: aerosol glutathione, secretin, methyl B-12 injections, a far infrared sauna, Epsom salt baths, and vitamin

supplementation. Unfortunately, when we began giving Jaxson the recommended dosage of aerosol glutathione, the rather high rate and intensity of his detoxification led to him becoming aggressive (a real change for him!). We cut the dosage in half, the aggression ceased, and there was a small jump in his language and ability to follow directions. The sauna sessions created something new yet so simple: Jaxson, for the first time, was able to perspire, and he began sleeping much better throughout the night. It was also very interesting to see that when we began methyl B-12 injections, we saw no change; however, once we started enzyme therapy (see below), the injections suddenly yielded results. The day after each injection, we would get comments from those working with Jaxson that he was more connected, had more eye contact, and was more flexible in games. (As I'm sure you know, it can be so challenging to discern exactly which biomedical intervention leads to which improvement, since many of us use interventions concurrently.)

As you may already know, dietary intervention is so crucial for so many of our children. Food can either be medicine or poison. In the early days, though I didn't realize it at the time, most of Jaxson's food was poison. Drastically altering Jaxson's diet became one of the cornerstones of his treatment. One of our big goals has been to do everything we can to heal and seal Jaxson's gut.

My own research led me to the dietary intervention that is best for Jaxson: a gluten- and casein-free version of the Specific Carbohydrate Diet ([www.pecanbread.com](http://www.pecanbread.com)) in combination with the Body Ecology Diet ([www.bodyecologydiet.com](http://www.bodyecologydiet.com)). One of the most exciting interventions I found was enzyme therapy. Because Jaxson has such severe digestive issues, this therapy has been of utmost importance to him. I also had digestive issues (although not as debilitating as Jaxson's), and this helped me within the space of one meal. Jaxson's language exploded! I could now ask him a question like, "Jaxson, how are you?" and he would suddenly reply, "I am doing good." He would spontaneously say, "Good-bye. I love you!" The combination of dietary intervention plus enzyme therapy benefitted Jaxson enormously.

## **Sensory Savvy**

It is so important to do our best to see through our children's eyes. Children with autism frequently have a sensory processing disorder. This means that our children see, hear, and feel things very differently than most of us do. I can tell you with certainty that Jaxson hears things at different volumes than I do, sees light differently, and has a different sense of touch than I do. He often is very sensitive to things he hears and feels. And, rather than tell him to behave differently, I always try to look for how he is attempting to cope and self-regulate and then help him with this.

It was quite clear that Jaxson had sensory issues. What wasn't clear was what we could do to help him. He is a child with tactile issues (wouldn't wear his shirt), auditory issues, and difficulty with any sudden change in his environment. I discovered a protocol called the Wilbarger Protocol that helped him with his tactile issues. It is a brushing technique where you use a specially designed brush and follow up with joint compression. This is done every 2 hours. We did this protocol for 9 months, and he now has no issues wearing his shirt. In fact, he actually loves picking out what he is going to wear. He is currently doing The Listening Program to

address his auditory issues. We have noticed clarity of speech and improvement in his fine motor skills. This program uses headphones and specially developed classical music. They have something called ABC Modular Design™ that enables listeners to effectively exercise their auditory processing system, providing “warm-up,” “workout” and “cool-down” phases. This really helps children to not become overwhelmed and hyperactive after their session. We also have created a distraction free environment for Jaxson in which to do therapy and play that we learned from The Son-Rise Program. Since doing that, he is less rigid about his environment changing and is becoming more flexible.

Lastly, we added the following programs/tools to his existing therapy and play: the HANDLE Program, Brain Gym, and the Alert Program. These programs offer techniques to help children to utilize both hemispheres of their brain in a balanced and coordinated way. They use exercises to stimulate the brain and set children up for success rather than failure.

A tool that I developed over the course of my program with Jaxson is something I call "the three S's": **Slow, Silly, Shhh**. When Jaxson was being very cranky and rigid, as if nothing was the way he wanted (no matter what I did), I would say to myself, “Maybe I’m the sensory overload here!” So, then I would move away from him slowly and quietly (being silly doesn’t have to mean being loud), and, at the same time, keep my facial expressions very animated (to show him that, even if he was struggling, everything was okay). Above all, I am always very aware of respecting Jaxson’s sensory situation.

### **In Conclusion**

We have worked with Jaxson for over 4 years and, although he is not recovered, he is completely transformed. We will continue to work with him. I am constantly learning, and I will never stop.

As a mother on the frontlines of autism, I tell you all of this to give you some signposts to follow, but, most importantly, to say out loud that no matter what you have been told about what your child can’t do, there is always something you can do. Don’t let anyone convince you to give up. Take it from my son: “Progress for one provides hope for all.”

## **NO LONGER AUTISTIC!**

By Lisa Mize

“This is nothing short of miraculous. I have never seen anything like this, and I wouldn’t believe it if I weren’t seeing it with my own eyes.”

The words of the school psychologist rang in my head. I looked around the table at my son’s IEP (Individualized Education Program) team. This was Ricky’s 3-year re-evaluation for services. They had just told me, based on their evaluations and observations, my son no longer met the criteria to be diagnosed autistic; therefore, the label could be removed.

No longer autistic.

The principal shuffled through his papers. I asked, if had anyone ever seen or heard of this before. The principal replied that he didn’t even realize it was possible. He thought once a child was diagnosed, there was no reversing it. The other teachers and specialists nodded in agreement. Everyone seemed shocked, but with smiles all agreed with the findings.

No longer autistic.

These words echoed in my mind as I left the meeting. As I walked down the hall with my son skipping beside me, I choked back tears of joy. This is what we had worked so hard for. Three years ago, he met ten of the twelve diagnostic criteria for autism, and only six were required to qualify. Now, in the words of this team, he “maybe” met three.

How does one go from autistic to not? An equally valid question, how does one go from neuro-typical to autistic? Many parents of autistic children say their child was developing normally until 18 months to 2 years old, and then their child began to regress.

Mainstream Western medicine tells us autism is a genetic neurological disorder that is lifelong, requiring long-term care for many. If it is a lifelong genetic neurological disorder, how does one suddenly get it? And how is it that growing numbers of families are recovering their children from it?

Ricky may have been the first child these specialists had met who had lost his diagnosis, but he is not the first child I knew of to recover from autism. There are many, and our stories are quite similar.

Ricky was born in the evening of March 2, 2000. There was a light snow falling. Labor was short and easy, he was 7 lbs, 11 oz and as healthy as we could have hoped for. My husband Rob cut the cord and spent the night in the room with Ricky and me. The next day, Rob woke up with a strange rash and was sent to the emergency room. He had chicken pox and was sent home. Ricky and I were placed in isolation, and Ricky was given his hepatitis B shot. A few hours later, he stopped nursing, developed a fever, began vomiting and over lost 11 oz in 2 days. By day 4 he seemed better, though jaundiced, and we were discharged.

Ricky’s early development seemed normal for the most part. He was colicky but gained weight and seemed healthy. In April, we moved to Arizona. In June, he was hospitalized for a strange skin rash that turned out to be shingles, a secondary chicken pox infection.

Over the next year, Ricky had multiple ear infections and eczema that would not go away. While he was slow to walk, he eventually did. Some motor skills were lacking, but “boys develop more slowly than girls” was the explanation I kept getting. He smiled, made eye contact and learned words, so all seemed well enough. His first word was the typical “mom,” but his second word was “peephole” and accompanied a fascination with holes in things. He could sit for hours and look at a hole and was quick to declare “peephole” whenever he found one. We laughed and said, “What a quirky boy.”

His ear infections and eczema continued, and he also began to develop allergies. We bounced back and forth between antibiotics and steroids; it seemed he was on them almost continuously. Around 18 months, we had a short break in what seemed like a string of illnesses, and his doctor said it was a great opportunity to catch him up on his vaccines. I agreed, and that day Ricky was given hep B, DTaP, HiB, IPV, and MMR. Six shots containing nine viruses, all in one visit.

Within 5 days we were back at the doctor’s office with a fever of 103 degrees, projectile vomiting, inconsolable crying, and a horrible skin rash. Ricky was given steroids for the rash and Tylenol for the fever, and we were sent home. A week later, we were back again, this time with infections in both ears. He was given antibiotics. All the while I thought, “Thank God we got him caught up on his vaccines while he was well.” I didn’t even realize the illnesses that had besieged him were likely caused by his body reacting to an overload of viruses that his poor little body just couldn’t handle.

Slowly, he regressed. He became obsessed with the strangest things like vents and sprinklers and had no interest in other children. He amassed an impressive vocabulary of big words, but often used them incorrectly or simply to regurgitate information. He went from big smiles to blank stares and started flapping his hands.

Fast forward 2 years. It is the winter of 2004, and Ricky is nearing his fourth birthday. My sister watched him while I worked, and on this particular day when I went to pick him up she said the strangest thing. She said the last time they had gone to visit family; someone had mentioned they thought Ricky seemed autistic. Someone else in the room had replied that they didn’t think so. Apparently a small debate ensued.

I was shocked. I went home and called a friend and said, “You will never believe what my sister just said!” He replied, “That’s funny, a friend of mine asked me the same thing about him.” More shock. Later that day my neighbor was out in her yard. I told her about my conversations that day and she said, “He does have that look.” That look? What does THAT mean? You know, how autistic kids look. The eyes, the vacant stare. I wondered, how did we miss this?

I look in the Internet for the symptoms of autism. He met almost all of them. Again, how did we miss this?

We took Ricky to a pediatric psychologist who diagnosed him with Asperger’s syndrome and sensory integration disorder. She said she believed he qualified for a diagnosis of autism, but we needed to get a diagnosis through the school system.

In addition to the diagnostic criteria, he had many of the other symptoms I read about: unable to potty train; didn’t sleep through the night; extreme sensitivity to sound; prone to bouts of inconsolable rage and crying, called “meltdowns”; didn’t use utensils or draw.

One day I received a forwarded e-mail from a client. It was about a family with an autistic son, being treated for heavy metal toxicity with amazing results. They believed his childhood vaccines and excessive environmental toxins were to blame for the autism.

Ridiculous.

How could people even believe this? With anger, I closed the email and decided it was conspiracy theory bull. But I did not delete it. I couldn't get my mind off the thought . . . all of these years, all of these illnesses and specialists, ENT, dermatologists, allergists, and I always had a gut feeling there was something bigger going on. Something that connected all these things. Could this be it?

I re-read the e-mail. I started researching. I spent hour upon hour, day and night. I ate, slept, and lived research. I read everything I came across. I was shocked at the data. In 1988, one in every 2,500 children had autism. Now it is one in 150. And actually, autism didn't even exist until the 1930s, just a few years after Thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative, was added to vaccines. The childhood vaccine schedule was increased slowly for decades, but then in 1989 it was more than doubled, from 10 to 24 vaccines. It continued to rise in following years.

In 1999, the US Public Health Service and the American Academy of Pediatrics acknowledged that mercury exposures from a multitude of shots exceeded federal health guidelines. The more I read, the more the metal toxicity, antibiotic and steroid overuse, and viral overload made sense. I got angry. I cried. How could I have let this happen? I came to believe my son's body was so overloaded with these toxins that it was affecting his mind, causing the symptoms called autism.

I found an online community of parents who had taken their children to specialists called Defeat Autism Now! doctors who specialized in and were on the cutting-edge of finding new treatments to heal the bodies and minds of these children. I told my husband about all of this and of my desire to pursue biomedical treatment for our son. I feared he would think I was nuts. He listened and agreed.

Our first appointment with a Defeat Autism Now! doctor was in the summer of 2004. The first thing she did was to put Ricky on probiotics, as research was showing that many autistic kids have horrible internal yeast infections. Probiotics are the opposite of antibiotics. They are the good bacteria that live in our digestive tract that help maintain a balance and keep us healthy, because 70 percent of our immune system is our digestive tract. Many of these healthy bugs are killed off when we take antibiotics for other infections, thereby leaving us vulnerable to illness and contributing to a syndrome common in autistic kids called leaky gut.

Within a week of starting probiotics, Ricky's horrible and nearly lifelong eczema vanished. He began to sleep through the night. We added multi-vitamins, digestive enzymes, zinc, and vitamin C. His sensitivity to sound diminished. We added other supplements and modified his diet. He potty trained. We put him on a gluten- and casein-free diet, as the side effects of these difficult-to-digest proteins can bond with opioid receptors in the brain and cause symptoms of opiate addiction. Now I understood why he liked to eat slice after slice of bread and bowl after bowl of noodles . . . it made him high.

About this time, kindergarten started and the school evaluated Ricky and diagnosed him with autism.

We kept adding supplements and kept seeing improvement, and we were eager to get him healthy enough to try chelation therapy, a treatment used to remove heavy metals from the body. We found out about a new study at a local medical center whose purpose was to assess the possible relationship between heavy metal toxicity and autism. They checked his body burden of heavy metals; he had toxic levels of lead and mercury with elevated aluminum. I cried, a mix of anger and guilt for letting this happen to my baby . . . but also hope and joy. Now I knew what was wrong. This we could fix. This was not the life sentence of autism.

Ricky received strong antioxidants and an oral chelator for 4 months during kindergarten. With each round he made huge leaps in cognitive functions, social awareness, and language. He began to interact with his peers. He wanted to play! He participated in class. At one point his teacher, a 30-year elementary school veteran, pulled me aside and said, "I don't know what you are doing, but whatever it is, don't stop!" Round after round, he dumped huge amounts of metals. And round by round, we began to see our son again.

After the study, we stayed on with one of its doctors and continued chelation. We also tried other treatments, like antivirals after finding his body was burdened with high viral levels.

Looking back, I have to say I do believe that autism is an illness that has a genetic component—but genetics are only the start. These kids have a genetic predisposition—a sensitivity—that makes them prone to the effects of environmental toxins. And our environment has become increasingly toxic in recent history, hence the epidemic of autism we have seen over the last 2 decades. More and more kids are reaching the tipping point and falling over the edge. If you think one in 150 is staggering, how about this statistic: one in 5 kids today suffers from some sort of developmental delay. How much of this can we fix by healing the body and cleaning up the environment we live in?

Ricky is not out of the woods yet. He may not have autism, but he still has issues we are working on. Now his label is ADHD, which I hope we can change, too. Here's the bigger question: how many kids out there can be helped by doing what we did? And how can I spread the word? How do I pay forward that life-changing e-mail on a grand scale?

Three days ago, we had Ricky's ninth birthday party. He blew out the candles, and we all sang "Happy Birthday" as loud as could be while he sat and smiled. At the end of the song, my mom turned to me and said, "I remember when we had to whisper the birthday song or he would cover his ears and cry. You wouldn't even recognize him now." My dad said, "I was thinking the same exact thing." My heart smiled.

## Letter Agreement

This will set forth the agreement between you (“the writer”) and Skyhorse Publishing Inc. (“the publisher”), a Delaware corporation, regarding an article or book chapter (“the work”) which you have agreed to write, or have already written and submitted, and the publisher intends to publish or has already published and that both parties agree shall be forever treated in accordance with this Agreement.

1. The writer agrees to provide the work on or before September 13, 2010, and deliver the work in a format acceptable to the publisher.
2. The publisher shall have the right, at its sole discretion, and the writer agrees to cooperate with the publisher fully, to revise, alter, adapt, condense, edit, check for accuracy and otherwise prepare the article for publication in accordance with its customary editorial standards and procedures.
3. The writer agrees that the writer shall not receive any compensation for the work now or in the future regardless of how the work is used.
4. The writer hereby acknowledges that the work shall be the publisher’s sole and exclusive property as a work made for hire within the meaning of the United States or United Kingdom copyright laws, and that the writer conveys and assigns all rights, including copyright, in and to the work, to the publisher, which may deal with the work in any conceivable way as it sees fit in its sole and exclusive discretion, including but in no way limited to printing the work in *The Autism File* magazine or in any other magazine, or on its website, or on anyone else’s website, in printed books, ebooks, newsletters, periodicals of any kind or in any other conceivable way in perpetuity. Notwithstanding the foregoing, writer retains the non-exclusive right to publish the work in a book anthology of writer’s own work, provided that such anthology contains at least 50% material that has been published elsewhere.
5. The writer represents and warrants the work is wholly original material, not published elsewhere (unless discussed beforehand with the publisher) and that publication of the work will not infringe any copyright or break any law in any country, and will not constitute defamation, or invasion of privacy or the right to publicity, or constitute infringement of any other right of any kind.
6. The writer agrees that he/she is an independent contractor and not entitled to and shall not claim any of the rights, privileges and/or benefits of an employee of the publisher or any affiliated company. The writer understands that he/she shall not receive any of the rights, privileges and benefits that the publisher might extend or does extend or has any legal obligation to extend to its employees, including, but not limited to, pension, welfare benefits, vacation, termination or severance pay or any other rights or payments of whatever kind by virtue of this Agreement or by virtue of writer’s provision of services to the publisher.
7. Writer hereby releases publisher from any and all expenses incurred in the writing of the work and understands that every conceivable expense must be paid solely and exclusively by writer.
8. Writer hereby releases and forever discharges the publisher, its employees, owners, assigns, affiliates, licensees, partners or any other person, organization, or company in any way

connected to the publisher from any and all suits for damages, injunctions, or any other conceivable cause of action at law or in equity from the date of this Agreement through the end of time.

9. If a photo(s) is supplied with the writer's work, then the writer hereby gives the publisher, his or her assigns, licensees, and legal representatives the irrevocable right to use the photograph(s) in all forms and media and in all manners, including composite or distorted representations, for advertising, in books, on websites, in all other forms of media or for any other lawful purposes, in perpetuity, throughout the world, and I waive any right to inspect or approve the finished version(s), including written copy that may be created in connection therewith. I am over 18 and I have read and understood this release and am fully familiar with its contents.
10. This Agreement represents the entire understanding of the parties and may not be modified in any way without the consent of both parties. This Agreement shall be governed by and interpreted under the laws of the State of New York, United States, without regard to its conflict of laws rules or any international conflict of laws provisions.
11. The writer hereby agrees with all of the foregoing by signing below and returning it to the publisher.
12. The parties agree that faxed or scanned signed copies of this agreement shall be considered original executed copies.

Very truly yours,

Skyhorse Publishing Inc.

Accepted and agreed for the publisher:

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted and agreed for the writer:

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_