

# **Light, Love And Laughter On This Journey**

**Despite the challenges and difficult times,  
there will also be many wonderful times.**

**Parents who have been on this journey much  
longer will tell you that the children will bring  
an abundance of love and laughter into your  
lives.**

**Such as Eleanor, a young lady with autism spectrum disorder, whose mother tells of times when she was young;**

***Eleanor can be the most rewarding of the three children to be with because she is so funny and so mischievous. When she's in a good mood, there's no-one more fun to be with. It's like having a beacon of a lighthouse on you. It's mesmerizing. She's wonderful.'***

Eleanor's mother continues to share;

*Sometimes she doesn't want to go to bed because she just wants to play games. She'll climb into bed and get underneath the blankets and she'll be giggling and giggling and she won't let you out of the room. She'll grab you and pull you back into the room. She's having a lovely game and she doesn't want it to stop.*

*You really don't want to put her to bed. You want it to continue as long as possible. Now that's not autism. That's Eleanor's personality.*

Eleanor's mother stresses that when a child has been diagnosed with a disability:

***What Parents need to hear immediately are the nice things, because you only think of the bad things.***

**There are so many Nice Things that parents should hear,  
such as the experiences shared by;**

**Jenny's dad, talking about Jenny at 2 years of age**

*At the time we found out about her autism,  
she hated being touched. She would squirm  
and push you away. Now she wants the  
attention. She seeks a lot of attention and  
loves cuddles.*

And Jenny's mum;

*Jenny is quite good associating with people. In fact she is really starting to show off. Last night my brother was here and she really loves him. She was running around and she wouldn't go to sleep. She will actually give us a kiss now.*

Eleanor's mother:

*The people at the centre love Eleanor. She's still adored by her dad. He totally adores her. He adores the ground she walks on. They're totally compatible. She's delicious.*

To quote Michael's mother

*'Michael most of the time is a delight and he is totally loved by all of us. I have learnt so much from him that I'm very glad he picked me to be his mum.'*

**The children can bring so much laughter into the house by their actions and unique view of the world, such as Alex, when she was 7 years of age.**

**Alex's mother shares the joy she felt as she watched her daughter with autism spectrum disorder starting to make sense of the world around her and use these experiences in her play;**

*'A lot of what Alex sees on television comes through. She's acting out the disposable nappy advertisement where you put 2 balloons in a disposable nappy and they prick them to see how absorbent they are. Well, she goes to get one of her little brother's nappies and then she fills up a bathing cap which of course isn't quite like a balloon and it prone to excessive leaking and lays it on the top of the nappy. She's very clever. She's realised that it's not incredibly absorbent, particularly when one fills a bathing cap with water, so she'll lay a towel down underneath it. She just picks up the whole sodden mess when she's finished experimenting. What's going through her mind when she does that I don't know. But it's hilarious.*

There will be treasured times such as the experience shared by Peter's mother;

## **Peter – 17 years**

***We had never been able to take Peter to the movies because of his autism he couldn't sit through a movie. But when he was about 11 or 12 years old I decided to try him out and Peter sat through the whole movie and loved it. The movie was 'Dick Tracy'. He just absolutely loved it.***

***In the movies he put his arm around me and leaned over and looked right into my eyes. This amazing eye contact, looked right in and smiled at me looking at me as if to say, 'This is fantastic, this is neat'. He kept doing it, putting his arm round me in the movies and I just sat there. I think I watched him the whole movie. I just sat there absolutely fascinated and his eyes were just glued to the screen and he was laughing and he'd laugh before everyone else did. It was amazing. He'd get it before anyone else did when it was funny. It was the most incredible experience.***

***Driving home in the car, my mother was sitting in the back seat. I was just watching her in the rear vision mirror and he leaned over and he put his arm round my mother and looked her in the eye too and smiled at her. Well, she was just about crying, she couldn't believe it. I was just about crying, driving the car. It was amazing and she said, 'He's never done that, he's never, ever touched me.'***

***It was incredible.***

**The children also often spread their love and laughter wherever they go and bring joy into other people's worlds;**

John's mother talks about John, 22 years of age:

*John has a neat sense of humour. He loves funny, slapstick things and things that are blatantly funny and roars his head off. He's very loved and has a lovely laugh. Often you hear him laughing at church if the minister says something funny. The people at the church love having him there.*

## John - 22 years

*When John had his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday nearly two years ago, he sent out invitations to 150 people. I suggested that he made lists of people that he wanted to have there. He made a list of people from church. He made a list of people from the railway and people from school. He used to be quite involved with Special Olympics. There were over 100 people there that came. He gave a speech, he sang. It was really quite neat. A lot of people know him that I don't know. My hairdresser goes to his church she knows him. She didn't know at first that I was his mother then we were talking about something and made the connection. So she always tell me about him and how they love having him there, how he sing above everyone else in church and he's really friendly.*

**Love and laughter will also come from people who the child has touched:**

As Joseph's mother shared;

*'Joseph, (7 years), loves his school mates. He runs into class and loves seeing them all and they're wonderful with him. They turn music on and sing him a song when he is upset. They're wonderful.'*

**Often love comes from the unexpected  
kindness and consideration of others;**

Eleanor's mother:

*'One of our neighbours used to notice that Eleanor would be out in the garden at twilight and would watch the light in her living room. Eleanor loved the light so the neighbour used to keep the curtain open. It was so sweet of her'.*

**As a speech-language therapist, I love working with children with special needs. Even though I have been a therapist for over 30 years, I continue to learn daily from each child. They can teach us so much about love, how to laugh and the priorities of life;**

As Richard's mother shares;

*'As a family you have to keep laughing too. And I think that's why I enjoy Special Olympics myself. It's a very positive atmosphere and we all laugh. We realise there are other things in life. I think it makes you more accepting. The whole family are now involved in special Olympics, Richard, his 2 brothers, and his dad.'*

**Many parents have also shared how this journey has allowed them to see things in a different light, including themselves;**

## Michael's mother;

I've adopted very much a 'go with the flow' approach and I find it creates a calm, happy environment where little things don't matter. I think parents of any child with a disability develop an odd sense of perspective and sense of humour that keeps their nerves firmly rooted in their nerve sockets.

## Mother of Peter: 17 years

You've got this amazing communication between the two of you. People say to me, 'You've got amazing patience.' Well I'm such an impatient person, I really am. I don't have any patience with hardly anybody, but why do I have it with Peter and no-one else?

I've always had patience with Peter. He couldn't help his fears. It was something I was meant to do.

**Yes, as parents of a child with a disability, there will be pain and there will be challenges but the child will most definitely bring an abundance of Light, Love and Laughter into your lives.**

**Finally to quote Alex's mother, whose daughter is now 22 years of age,**

*If I reflect on the last 22 years, there has been huge laughter. We've laughed and it has been the loving laughter that's been there for Alex, with Alex, us and the incredible people we've met because of Alex. It's been a gift.*