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Awareness and Acceptance ---- the Heart of Healing ADD

Most parents are unprepared for the challenge of raising a child with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or with any of the disorders that impact learning, life and the home. Awareness and acceptance of the special needs of these children is very limited. Few parents, teachers, or other professionals have received special training and the public, in general, is mostly intolerant or unaware. Most teachers, family members and friends are not appropriately responsive to the intensity, curiosity, creativity, questioning and frustration that often surround these students of all ages -- elementary grades through college. Many of them feel misunderstood, alone and puzzled as to why they don't fit in. Usually the first glimmer of hope and help come with a professional diagnosis. A hunger for healing begins.

“Parents need hope in the wake of diagnosis, they need to know they are not alone and isolated by ADD/ADHD or LD (Learning Disabilities). How do you teach and reach the child with ADD? How do you protect their fragile self-esteem? Behavior modification or medication? It's a unique decision, depending on the individual issues, but most often there is a delicate combination of the two. These are the questions all families with developmental issues must face.” So writes Terry Nolan, Talbot County resident, mom and author of newly published **Michael's Mom, A Road Warrior Without a Map** (Tate Publishing, 2006). Terry is Michael's mom and fellow “road warrior,” who embarked on a journey that opened their hearts and has forever shaped the impact that ADD has on their relationship, their family and their individual lives. A journey that took mother and son, and for some portion the whole family, on a trip through all fifty states --- charting a course to new territories, building dreams, creating positive memories, empowering the glorious gifts of curiosity and creativity that come with ADD.

Through this magic of travel and adventure, Terry learned that she “cannot control the harsh judgments or high expectations of society toward (her) ADD/LD children. But, (she) now sees clearly that true human nature and dignity are revealed in the way people treat a person with special needs and NOT the way the child struggling with imperfections tries to fit into the natural order of things.” She goes on to ask ... “Do

people grow from the experience of befriending a special needs child and learn that all special gifts are not packaged with a tidy bow? Do they learn through the child's pleading eyes, a humanity of inclusion, and what unconditional love looks like?" And Terry brilliantly perceives that yes, this IS "the blessing and hope of ADD!"

"Thinking and living life outside the box is so necessary for parental survival and the understanding and management of daily life with ADD." By paying close attention, you may even discover that these children are uniquely wired exactly the way they are so they can fulfill their amazing dreams and unique visions. You may even see your own bottled up dreams and creativity come alive and take hold in ways you had never understood or allowed before you started to explore this world of learning challenges that your child embodies. Be open to new ways of looking at these challenges and appreciate these gifts and advantages that are mislabeled disabilities.

A whole new world of advantages can be seen when you accept this diagnosis and embark on your own journey of discovery. ADD can be a powerful and positive force for your child and your family, and potentially the world. When you focus on the strengths and help to nurture each child's uniqueness to reach their full potential, you may become aware that rather than being "problems," these children (and adults) are a vital gift to our society and the world. Awareness and acceptance of the real gifts and talents of these often challenging minds can cultivate a new generation of enlightened, empowered innovators, inventors, explorers, and entrepreneurs. The kind of minds that have been critical to the survival and development of our modern civilization and will be necessary as humanity faces new challenges in the future. Doesn't that get to the heart of the matter?

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