

A Family's Story

My son Pierce was a wonderful baby. He cried little, smiled often and slept well. His big personality and determination to succeed was evident from early on. When he began rolling over, you could see the resolve on his face to push his little body ahead of its time. When he turned six months old and was given a baby walker, he quickly learned to glide across the floor to reach his destination. Of course, this willfulness was also evident when he began having temper tantrums, often for no apparent reason. We began to notice that Pierce was different from other children. He only used a few words to communicate and swiftly dismantled any object in our house that he could get his hands on. Though it took some time and the right person to suggest autism to us, once he received a diagnosis, Pierce went on into early intervention services and the world of education.



Pierce was fortunate to be placed in a fantastic program, with wonderful teachers and support staff. He made gains academically and developed more language. However, Pierce's ability to interact with others was limited and unusual. He could talk, but lacked conversation skills and the desire to play with other children. He chose only to direct activities and when someone didn't follow his rules, including scripts he expected all to use, the tantrums were monumental. We realized that something was missing.

That missing piece was found when we enrolled Pierce in the Social Competency Program at the Center for Autism. In the program, they began working with him one-on-one, then gradually moved him into groups of two and three children, and finally to the group of six that he attends now. They worked on many areas that couldn't be addressed at school. His conversation skills began to develop and he began to better manage his behaviors. They helped him work on increasing his flexibility and to manage his body space. Over time, Pierce's language and ability to work with others greatly improved. He now works on more complex issues like understanding that

others may not feel the same way he does, and how to pay attention to body language and the social cues of others. He no longer receives speech therapy, and his behaviors are limited to typical 13-year-old rebelliousness. He still keeps in touch with friends he made at the Center who have moved on, and has continued to make other true friends in the program. He can compromise, listen to their interests and spend time on the phone talking about favorite video games. Pierce is in 7th grade and his life is now full of possibilities, thanks in good part to the Center for Autism.

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