



A Letter to My Mom

In 2013 April's Autism Awareness Month, Pathfinders celebrated the often uncelebrated siblings of children and adults with Autism. April's Parent Tips article, "A Letter to My Daughter" was an emotional statement from me to my daughter about the guilt I feel for not really being there for her. My focus for all of her life has been mostly on her brother and I look back and feel that I cheated her in so many ways.

In this article we feature a response to that letter, not from my daughter, but from another young woman who wants her own mother to know she can forgive herself and release herself from guilt.

- Shelly McLaughlin, Pathfinders for Autism

Mom, I want you to know:

I understand why you had to give more attention to my brother at times when we were growing up, and I respect you for it.

Even though it may have seemed like it, I was never embarrassed of him. I was just hurt when I felt like other people were judging him.

I have never, and will never, resent you for putting us in daycare. You were only doing what you thought was best for us.

Your unconditional love for us and acceptance of our flaws means the world to me.

Even though I may not show it as often as I should, I still love my brother to the moon and back.

I know I'm not perfect and I haven't always made things easy on you, and I'm sorry for that.

I have no idea what it's like to be a parent, but I would assume that it's one of the hardest jobs to do, and the fact that you've done such an amazing job even with a child who has autism makes you a superhero in my eyes.

The unconditional love and patience you have for my brother is one of the things I find most admirable about you.

You picked the best man in the world to have and raise children with.

I don't believe that God gave you and dad the challenge of raising a child with autism to make you stronger. I believe that God gave you to him because there aren't two people in this world who would love and support him as much as you do.

I don't look at my brother as a burden. I look at him as a blessing, because it has made me a stronger, better, more compassionate person.

It kills me when you doubt how good of a mother you are because of things others have said. My brother and I are the only credible sources on that subject and I'm telling you now that you are and always have been an amazing mother.

I love you more than I can express in words and I know that you love my brother and me just as much because you've always shown us that.

Throughout the good times and the bad times, I've always been happy to have you as my mother.

Thank you to our guest author, Paula Kane. Paula is the daughter of Pathfinders' Director of Programs, Trish Kane.

Read "A Letter To My Daughter" at http://www.pathfindersforautism.org/articles/view/parent_tips_a_letter_to_my_daughter

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Additional Resources

Parent Tips: Siblings

<http://www.pathfindersforautism.org/articles/view/parent-tips-siblings>

Autism can have large effects, good and bad, on a disabled child's siblings

http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-03/national/35495677_1_siblings-autism-spectrum-disabled-child

Autism's effect on the "normal siblings"

<http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/news/autisms-effect-normal-siblings-09277321>

Autism's Invisible Victims: The Siblings

<http://ideas.time.com/2012/11/30/autisms-invisible-victims-the-siblings/>

Effect of Autism on Siblings

<http://www.autism.com/index.php/siblings>

Social side effects of autism harrowing and enlightening

<http://www.examiner.com/article/social-side-effects-of-autism-harrowing-and-enlightening>

Sibling Perspectives: Some Guidelines for Parents

<http://www.autism-help.org/family-autism-siblings.htm>



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