

## Their Voice: Events help parents of autistic children find support, guidance

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The Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 in 68 children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Despite this high number, there are still many family members and caregivers who feel that they are isolated and on their own in working through the many facets of the disorder.

Fortunately, there are a variety of resources available in Utah Valley to provide the necessary support and help at no cost.

In October, I introduced a new program that is being offered by Kids on the Move. This series of presentations is being offered as a way to support families of people diagnosed in the autism spectrum. Emma Hunsaker, founder of "Find the Missing Peace Mentoring Program," held the first workshop "Finding Your New Normal. Surviving Survival Mode. Managing Your Triggers," in early November. The value of learning from someone like Emma is that she presents from experience.

Emma is a mother who received the diagnosis that her then two-year-old daughter had severe autism. Like many, she looked for resources and found one first at Kids on the Move early intervention program and later at the autism center to work with her daughter in learning skills that would help her be successful in her life. However, she also realized very quickly that she also needed to find her own support system to help her navigate through her new role as a parent of a child in the autism spectrum.

"As a parent, I understand the fears, concerns and questions asked by other parents about their children with autism," stated Hunsaker. "It's not easy to handle the overwhelming levels of stress and information that that we are expected to deal with. My daughter has given me a special opportunity to confront my weaknesses and make them my strength." She continued, "Every parent has the ability to be everything they and want and need to be in their life to raise their child with autism."

According to Joe Dixon, senior supervisor at Kids on the Move, "The first event went really well. The families that attended gave really good reviews on the content and stated it helped them with strategies to refocus and prioritize the many tasks that needed to be done."

Part two of this ongoing program will be held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 8 at Kids on the Move Parent University at 475 W. 260 North in Orem. In this session Hunsaker will address something that most families can understand and relate to. Being able to stay calm and neutral during your child's autism meltdown feels frustrating, overwhelming and impossible. But it is possible if you know how to manage your energy and emotions.

Emma Hunsaker will be teaching some simple and effective tools that will help you master your own personal emotional triggers so you can be a calming influence and safe place for your child during his/her meltdown. Not only will it help you be a better parent, but it will also help you become a better person! The techniques that will be taught are invaluable in creating and maintaining peace and calm.

There is no fee to attend and free childcare is available on a limited basis with reservations made in advance at (801) 221-9930 extension 100.

### MORE INFORMATION

