

## Their Voice: Finding peace as a parent of a child with autism

Monica Villar Rise Updated 14 hrs ago

Ten years ago if you randomly asked 20 people, myself included, in Utah County to define autism spectrum disorder (ASD), I would guess that the majority would probably not be able to do so.

However, based on statistics released as recently as March of this year, one in 50 8-year-old children have been identified with autism. The probability is high that today not only would most people know what autism is, but they also would likely have someone close to them with the diagnosis. Some families even have multiple children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

While scientists and researchers work to pin down the causes and new possible treatments, parents must focus solely on how to maneuver their current lives around this new challenge.

Humanitarian Albert Schweitzer said, "Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being."

I suspect that receiving news that a child has autism for many parents feels like their light has been blown out. Fortunately, there are many other human beings who share their fears and trials and have made it their mission to help them through it. For many parents and caregivers, knowing that you are not alone must truly be one of the most important pieces in managing the autism puzzle for a parent.

One such "human being who is helping to ignite that new flame" is Emma Hunsaker. 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. Both worked with her daughter in developing skills that would help her be successful in her life.

However, Hunsaker 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 with autism.

Hunsaker, founder of Find the Missing Peace Mentoring Program, will be presenting, "Finding Your New Normal. Surviving Survival Mode. Managing Your Triggers," a curriculum provided by The Autism Empowerment Project ([www.autismep.org](http://www.autismep.org)).

The Autism Empowerment Project's purpose is to make available education resources to people in need of learning empowerment — especially those who live or work with autism. It is the aim of the autism project to teach, train and empower groups at no cost.

"As a parent, I understand the fears, concerns and questions asked by other parents about their children with autism" Hunsaker said. "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 strengths."

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."

Hunsaker's presentation will be at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 2, at Kids on the Move, 475 West 260 North in Orem. 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.

The famous American automobile executive Lee Iacocca said, "Apply yourself. Get all the education you can, but then, by God, do something. Don't just stand there, make it happen."

Emma Hunsaker is one of the many people that are actively making things happen in our community to help families of individuals in the autism spectrum.

For more resources, visit [www.findthemissingpeace.com](http://www.findthemissingpeace.com).

Finding Best Buddies in High School



**Monica Villar**

Courtesy