

Dealing with Disabilities

By Sarah Stahl

“Oh, he’s just all boy!” or “Sometimes they just need to get a little wild!”

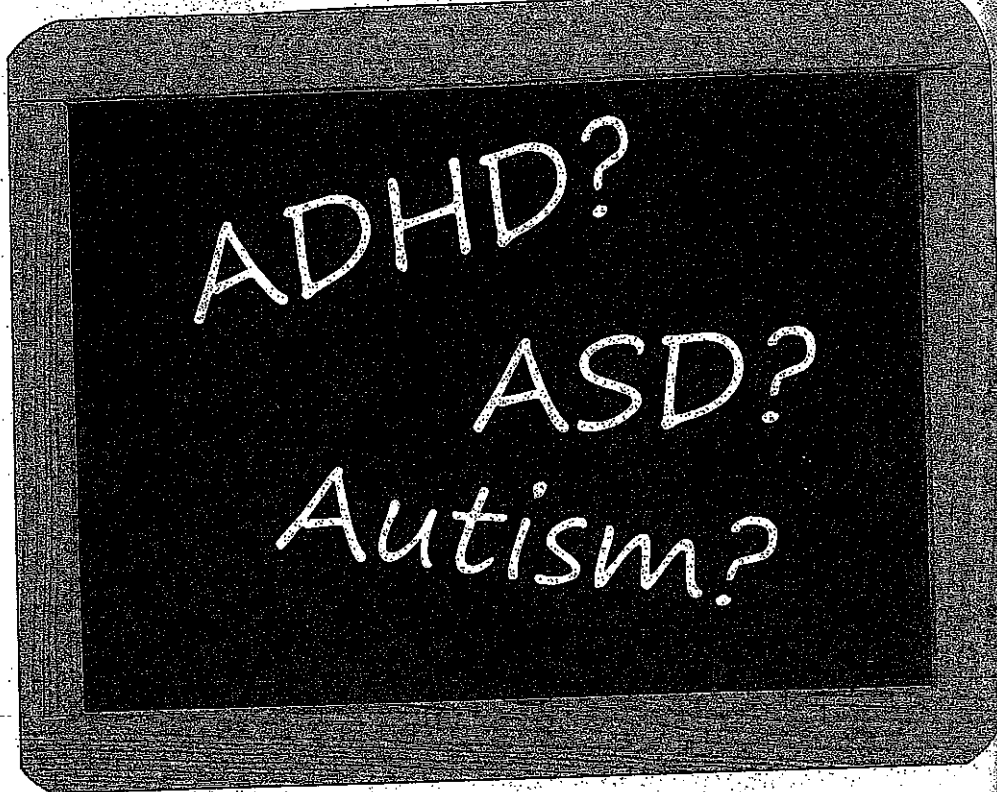
Sound familiar? Do you have a child in your life that is extremely energetic or in some areas amazingly gifted, but requires an unusual amount of individual attention?

You have changed schools, talked to teachers, attempted creative discipline and organized play dates, but nothing seems to work. This article is intended to help parents face Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as a contributing factor in your child’s emotional affect, thoughts and behaviors.

In 1985, one of 2,500 children were diagnosed with (ASD) Autism Spectrum Disorder. Astoundingly, more recent estimates show one in 88 children have some form of Autism Spectrum Disorder. So, you may wonder, what does ASD and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) look like? How would I know if my child has ASD or ADHD? Where can I learn more? How can I help my child reach his or her highest potential?

First of all, knowing is half the battle! Often a parent, caregiver or teacher will begin noticing unique differences in children before the age of 3. Both ADHD and ASD represent a spectrum of complex, neurological and developmental disorders characterized by impulsivity, a need to touch, sensory, inattention or focus and a streak of frustration.

Don’t let this description of your child be discouraging. One of the biggest reasons children are not helped early on is that parents are in a state of denial and cling to the belief that the child will grow out of it. As long as this mindset is maintained, our children will continue to slip into a state of isolation, confusion and frustration. The earlier the disorder is diagnosed, the sooner interventions specific to your child may be identified



and implemented. Early intervention is critical and may also improve your child’s IQ, language development and everyday functional skills, also called adaptive behavior.

While searching for what was best for our son, we found these great local resources:

Barnes Early Childhood Center: Specialists guide and direct you in how to begin. Barnes specializes in children from infancy up to pre-school ages. Visit gpschools.schoolwires.net

Henry Ford or Beaumont Health Systems: A diagnostic team of specialists will evaluate your child through parent interviews, direct observation, physical examination and other diagnostic tools. Visit www.autismspeaks.org or www.beaumontchildrenshospital.com/autism-treatment-programs.

The Family Center: Free enrichment programs are offered. For more information, visit www.familycenterweb.org

Kids on the Go: Kids on the Go offers physical, occupational and speech therapies in a summer camp setting. Visit www.kidsonthegocamp.com.

Special Kids: This charity offers low cost speech, occupational and other therapies. Visit www.specialkids.us.

Parents of and children with ASD or other conditions are emotionally and mentally drained, overwhelmed and frustrated. A treatment program is not complete without including ways to cope and heal in a non-biased environment. Research has shown that involving your family in programs with spiritual influence and opportunity, encourage meaning and hope to the seemingly incomprehensible life of autism.

Locally, there is a program called Celebrate Recovery for adults and Celebration Place for children. Visit www.crosspointechristianchurch.org/connect/adults/celebrate-recovery.

You might ask, “Recovery?” This support group offers recovery for all of life’s situations. Divorce, death, alcoholism, family coping and co-dependence are among them. In a safe and structured way, children learn how to deal with life issues that coincide with the parents. ☐

Grosse Pointe resident Sarah Stahl is a wife and mother of three. She is a psychology/counseling student inspired by her son’s diagnosis of ADHD and is also the director of the children’s recovery program Celebration Place/Celebrate Recovery.

