



**“Schools in! Lessons taught without compassion are not lessons and are not worthy of hearing.”**

From Kerri Stocks:

It seems school time is a significant factor in a young life and unfortunately if you are not armed with the right resources it can be quite destructive. Yet let me tell you, it does not always have to be;

My son has been to seven schools! He was put a year ahead due to the education system testing his IQ and finding he was well above the average child. They believed his behaviour was due to being ‘bored’ . Being a new mum, of course I listened to the professionals since they had that powerful piece of paper/degree that made them an expert on my child. Our son was four when he was in grade one. This meant that maturity levels were well behind his peers and of course we know a child with ASD/Aspergers is a bit behind in variable areas and this is one of them. So since he was in a class full of kids one year older than him the teachers would forget he was still a lot younger and hence he was punished instead of being worked with at his cognitive and maturity level. (He will be sixteen years of age when he completes his Yr12 studies!)

I say that school either makes or breaks a child. The school play ground reminds me of “Lord of the Flies”, where kids are thrown into a huge environment and they either fight their way to the top or they are squashed and battered on the bottom. Yet as trusting parents we just drop our children off and may or may not understand the hidden elements that go on in both the classrooms and the play ground. Our son basically had his own desk at the principal’s office. I guess I could give a bit of understanding to the education institutions by saying ASD/Aspergers was relatively unknown of at that current time and was just being explored and so I guess my son and many others were the guinea pigs of the schools.

Never once was I a mother who thought my child did ‘nothing wrong’. Yet what I did know is something was different and a new way of educating and disciplining was needed. But

being a mere mother without a powerful degree behind me I was not heard or was not listened to, I was managed.

**IEPS (Individual Education Plan)- may be known as a different name in various countries:**

Still to this day I do not understand what the point is of sharing your child's personal details with total strangers and once you have signed the piece of paper it is put into a draw, and even the teachers who work with the child may not ever see it. This is detrimental to the child's success in the institution because they are still in a room full of other kids all being taught in a 'one size fits all' mentality.

Usually only when the child disrupts the class will the IEP be pulled out to be twiggled only to be put back in the draw and forgotten about.

I remember getting phone call after phone call saying about how my son did this and that. When I traveled to the school and spoke to the teacher they would say; "I did not know he was like that nor needed that". That is when I knew it was a bureaucratic joke and a play with words. Basically it was a manipulation due to society believing that they need to have funds, and need more and more assistance instead of just thinking "these are kids and I can teach and I have compassion and so what can I do to get a good result from this child".

What I now do is; I do not bother going on with my son's needs as such, and I do not focus on the negatives of my son. I will tell the school what he wants for his future and we hopefully work together to make this happen for him. I then sign the IEP since funding is a huge need for schools (whether that be a true perception or a belief that is inbred throughout the Uni experience I don't know, but what I do know is we can all convince ourselves of things that can be falsified). Basically the child is a dollar sign, read the rest of this article and work with your child so you help them evolve into amazing individuals. Yet be wise with your words as a parent, since your child can be segregated within the school environment under the cliché cloaks known as;

- In the safety of others (what could be missing out of that statement is "As a teacher I was having a bad day and did not approach a child with the respect and consistency they are used to")
- So the ASD child can have down time, decompress.
- No resources to deal with ASD children. (Just like the hospital system and every other mammoth system, they have convinced themselves and their employees that without a huge

amount of funding kids just have to miss out. Yet no matter how much the funding goes up the belief system never changes.)

- Child's responsibility to "control" their reactions. (Again it is easier to remove one instead of punish or investigate ten other kids who have manipulated the child or incident. I believe yes the child holds a snippet of the equation yet adults hold the most and so need to implement consistent consequences and responses to the Child's behaviour. ALL CHILDREN!)

I am sure you can appreciate with the way I stand up and speak for these children, that I have put a lot of people's noses out of joint! I live in a town that is not that big and well after going to almost all the schools around it does not leave many untouched. Society does not like the unspoken truth, the uncomfortable conversations and yet they find it okay to talk about others errors, not their own. We seem to like to live in a place full of fairy floss and believe it until the hits rock bottom.

The reason I decided to go to Uni was because people seem to trust a degree more so than life experiences. Just like they believe what a computer tells them instead of a real person. (Regardless of the fact that it is people who feed the computer and people make mistakes)

I stood up for my son. He was not going to take the fall for other kid's lack of abilities to socialize and so I was always at the school. I had to be;

One; because my son needed constant assistance in areas that would not grow over night and as a parent it was my responsibility to counteract the stagnant side of the education system. The part that seems to revolve around signing papers, dotting the "I's" and crossing the "T's" regardless of the young impressionable lives that it can destroy.

Two; it shocked me over the years to hear and see adults lying and sending a child in to cop the flack all because they had a reputation and a job to uphold. This is probably the part that still to this day I cannot fathom. I always believed teachers were there to educate, in a way that taught the child self growth, self dignity, self restraint and respect of others.

I have learnt that regardless of degrees, the individual is still made up of parts that they hide and are undisclosed and they can either be good or negative.

Some names my son has been called by educators (either to his face and to mine as well!);

- Mental retard
- Loser
- Freak

- Retard
- Manipulator
- Jerk
- The sad part about this is I reported the individuals responsible for speaking to my son and another boy this way to the education system (and yes I get gossiped about and you know that look people need to give you to show you they are not impressed with what you did), and the teachers are still teaching in the same manner. I hear other parents talk about how disgustingly these teachers treat the children and when I ask them why they have not reported them, they say; "Oh I can't do that I have other kids at the school"> and adults wonder why kids hate school or hate themselves??????

Now I am sure all kids and adults can be hard to handle at times yet I do not see how this warrants a person put in charge of your young child for six hours a day, insulting your child with these words.

We have been told our son knows the work, he just chooses not to do it. That may be the case, yet not always. And hey, kids are kids and they don't always want to do the work. Yet what shocked me was the fact my son spent hardly any time in school and they still passed him. I could have sold his books new again the following year.

As the parents;

This part is not written to insult or upset any of the parents. It is what helped me propel my son to his success at this current time.

No amount of time will alter a person's mentality or ways that do not want to change and who may see the child as the problem. By that I mean; an educator can sit there and smile and nod and um and ah throughout a meeting in all the right places, yet you do not know what they are genuinely thinking, UNTIL the results of your child's school work comes through.

You are a parent that holds the biggest part of the equation and responsibility. As a parent you will have to pick up the pieces at the end, the consequences due to others lack of ability will fall on your shoulders. An educator's main job quite rightly is to EDUCATE an individual.

Sometimes as parents we can expect the person to hold the same understanding, or to have the answers that as parents we don't hold, and to have the deep compassion for our child. You will very rarely come across an educator like that. We have and I wish we could bottle them up and clone them!

Some people go to their job and have the mentality that the guide lines of their job is all they will be doing. Some go with an extra amount of compassion and love for children and you will see your child thrive. (Those people I believe are given to you to allow you some breathing time and allow your child to finally feel good about them until the next educator.)

As a parent you need to remind yourself that it is still your responsibility to fill the holes in your child's life and education that educators were unable to do.

Teachers hold a big responsibility and having a lot of different individuals with different upbringings, and different behavioural issues is a lot for one person to deal with. I believe as a parent it is my job to pick up the areas that my children were slack on, teach my children at home where they are most comfortable, things that they may not have been able to absorb at school.

After attempting the public system (I think the flaw in the public system is no one is willing to say a genuine sorry and admit they may have been at fault. The public system seems to allow their teachers to do what they want and scream and rant and rave at children without any consequences to the teacher.) And seeing my son honestly going downhill and just not evolving, my husband and I moved him to a private school. We are not made of money and my husband is the only one who works and we just had to make that decision .

Our son's school is good for educating. Yet it is still me as the mum who must stop my wants to help my son catch up where he has fallen behind. The difference with this school is there are some teachers that genuinely see my son's potential. The label is irrelevant and one teacher (his English one) pushed my son past a level that my son did not know he was capable of achieving, and that was writing fast. It always hurt my son's hands and still does but his teacher who is of the old school would not hear it and just keep going, yet in a nice way not an ignorant way, and my son can write quickly now.

Sometimes we can lose the fact that we are all learning and are in variable degrees, especially the children.

The school lets me know where he is lacking and I use the weekends or after school to fill in areas yet the difference is so does the school, so not only is he getting the knowledge at home it is the same at school.

I get tired and I get upset at the fact that sometimes it feels like I am teaching myself yet have to also teach a child some things that I see other kids grasp easily. I get irritated, annoyed, and just have had enough. But I do not express this verbally to my son, nor do I not do it. I have to if I want him to care for himself as an adult.

After studying I saw how all of us; teachers, professionals, parents, and kids, seem to be running parallel to each other. Until we join and all get our backs down, how will it run smoothly for the child?

Below are some points that I keep front and centre when either dealing with the school or others involved in my son's life.

- Teachers main role is to teach the WHOLE class of students
- Teachers are human regardless of level of degrees so treat them as such
- I do not allow my son's inner being to be altered due to unwise words and I will stand up for him and advocate for him and expect an apology. I will not tolerate my son insulting a teacher and I will not tolerate a teacher insulting my son.
- I never complain about a teacher or a school in ear shot of my children. (Sometimes kids can take that and think they too can be rude back to the school/teacher.)
- I know I must be willing to drop all other projects that I am in the middle of to get my son back on board of his studies and emotional level.
- My complete loyalty lies with my children.
- Remember also that a teacher's loyalty lies with their employee.
- I remind myself that when an adult starts to pick at my son's errors I take it on board, sift through the ones that I know need to be altered and worked on that will assist my son to succeed in his future. I also separate the fact that in society, it is easy to transfer and reflect our own errors onto another and so regardless of degrees or certifications, an individual can still lack the ability to communicate and teach affectively and sometimes it is not the child who needs to change it is the adult. (This point brings me back to the time our son was declined to go on a mission's trip. The teacher who said no spoke like this; "Well he is disruptive in my class, he falls asleep sometimes and he is not engaged". Not once did he mention my son hands in all assignments, nor take into consideration that he donates his own chore money to poor kids with no shoes. He was not even prompted to show that compassion to the children. He won't go to school without having his hair cut short because the rule of the school is short hair, neat and tidy, even though other kids still go to the school with messy hair, and other things.

I realised at that point that that teacher was not willing to see it from a slightly different angle. Maybe his class is plain boring. Maybe he is unable to teach effectively enough to engage children. Maybe he needs to question the kids and see what may engage them by giving them

some sort of choice or responsibility in the decision making. So the reason I am sharing this specific point is that years ago I would have been at home in tears trying to get my son, yet again, to change, change, and change. Yet sometimes it really is not the child. Yes he should not fall asleep in class, yet please have any of us been somewhere where it is so damn boring your eyes have a mind of their own. What I do now is realise that some of the ownership belongs on that man's shoulders, not all of it on my son's.

- Adults do lie when they are frightened or scared and will allow the child to carry that burden of untruth.
- Teachers are human as well. They have families, they have naughty kids, they have external family issues, bills, problems, stresses, lack of abilities, feelings, emotions, tempers, tiredness, pains, etc. Yet the difference between a good one is they can be open with their pupils and let the child know they as the teacher are not as tolerant as other days. They don't allow all of the above to affect the child's inner being or allow the child to feel that they themselves have done something wrong. They do try to leave it at home – yet admit when they can't-. Just like when I have a bad day, I know it is not my children's fault and I refuse to let them cop the brunt of what belongs somewhere else.
- I know that I have to teach myself as a parent some new things in order to help my child succeed.

School is not an easy place for our kids on the Autistic Spectrum Disorder. They can either study or socialize, they struggle in doing both. My main advice would be not to take everything you are told as 'gospel'. What is written on paper is not what always happens and so by becoming aware of this, it will help with any disappointment in the future. Prepare yourself to be the main educator in your child's life, you will just have to pick up the pieces that others don't.

Kerri Stocks