What is it like? Raising our family; 3 children with Autism and mental health challenges?

CORONADO FAMILY EXPERIENCES
VERBAL PERMISSION FROM CORONADO CHILDREN GIVEN
Autism
Autism

- Language impairments
Characteristics

Autism

- Repetitive behaviors
- Language impairments
Autism

Characteristics

- Social deficits
- Repetitive behaviors
- Language impairments
Comorbid mental health challenges?

- ADHD/ADD
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Learning disabilities
- Nonverbal learning
- Sleep disorders
- OCD
- Bipolar
- Schizophrenia
- DMDD
Why is it important to know all comorbidities that are challenging your child?

- Best fit of treatment, better access to services, and higher success rate
- Goal is to improve functioning and increase mastering of skills which improves resiliency
- We have a better understanding and big picture of what going on with body and neurology, mental health
So...

What is it like?
So...

What is it like?

Hard, intense, scary, overwhelming, exhausting, selfless, non-reciprocal, irrational, EXPENSIVE, busy, being in the twilight zone, confusing, continually challenging, LOUD, Messy, awkward, unexpected blessings, emotional rollercoaster, not for the weak, DEMANDING!!, speechless, rewarding, heart wrenching, flabbergasting, stressful. It’s **worth every moment!**
1996- now
Coronado family is blessed with beautiful children
Zander age 17

Diagnosed at age 13 (2013 Feb)

- Autism
- Depressive disorder
- ADHD
- Anxiety
- DMDD
- Excoriation
Adrianna
age 13

Diagnosed at age 9 with:

- Autism
- ADHD/ADD
- DMDD
- PICA
- Excoriation
- Asthma
- Major allergies
- NO Band Aids/ no Adhesives/ multiple medications
Potential and Purpose Breeds success
Diagnosed at age 6 (2013) provisionally, Confirmed January 2014

- Autism
- Learning disorder,
- ADHD,
- Anxiety
Ashlee
age 8

Has been hospitalized for:

- Severe Asthma
- Allergic reactions to multiple medications
- Pneumonia
- Bronchiolitis
- Double lung infections
Keep Fighting The Good Fight!
We consistently live on the edge of physical, emotional, educational, and mental health crisis.
Where autism and mental health challenges meet physical health

- Poor hygiene skills
- Sensory aversions to topical medications
- High pain tolerance
- Trouble verbalizing feelings
- Hard to receive medical treatment
- Anxiety becomes a barrier
AT HOME…
Child in crisis... Family in crisis...
No one is EATING... well:
No one is sleeping, ..well:
No one is working...well:
No one is learning...well:
Everyone is quicker to snap at each other…
each day feels like …
Groundhogs day.
His entire head, neck, ear
On the inside of both arms from shoulders to wrists
On the back of both knees
WHEN KIDS AND FAMILIES HAVE TO WAIT....

Vicious cycle...

of mental health (anxiety & excoriation) not being treated...

And physical health issues (MRSA infection) are needing treatment.

BUT!!!

No one can treat simultaneously!!
WHO?? & HOW TO TREAT OPEN WOUNDS?
This is my mom. I love you back. Thank you for all the love.
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Autism and mental health challenges meet school

- Frustration levels
- Lagging Skills
- Emotional Regulation
- Sensory
- Movement needs
- Rejection of other kids
- Awareness of being different
- Social awkwardness
- Loneliness, not fitting in, sense of not belonging
Why do we need relationships?
What would have helped...

- My cry for help was heard and if there was a no wrong door point of access.
- If I didn’t have to fight so hard, we are just wasting “kid time”, losing more and more days of school.
- If children didn’t have to fail multiple years first; and then be helped only minimally.
- If we had more crisis intervention, stabilization, and wrap around approach to kids in crisis instead of calling the police going on to JJ, handcuffing our children in school is not ok!!
- If my community had more awareness of autism, FASD, trauma informed, ACE awareness, more access to resources and proper referrals were made.
- Wait lists ended for kids in crisis to get help when they needed it!
What would have helped...

- If Child Find had worked; found my children's' challenges and diagnosed at an earlier age. kindergarten screens, did anyone see? Do parents know how to get help? Do schools know how to help families?
- Home visitors/ consultation earlier
- My school district had better climate and embraced mental health for all students and staff
- If our pediatrician had screenings, access to current providers, call PCPC
- Another parent who talked to me about things, connected me to local resources
SUGGESTIONS For PARENTS...

- Reach out for help
- Know you are not alone
- When your days are hard remember to breathe
- Be consistent and follow through
- Speak up for your needs
- Take time for yourself
- Find your voice
- Keep on squeaking
What can you do by Tuesday to improve your knowledge on child development, your own ACE score, your own resilience, self care plan?
How are you doing as an agency, or school or as a parent to positively impact children's' lives?
Are your policies trauma sensitive?
Is your discipline disability friendly?
Are you proactive or reactive?
Do you have current resources available?
How can you provide a light to another parent, fellow general education teacher, your neighbor, the cashier at the grocery store.

How are you raising awareness of Autism, positive mental health, toxic stress, resources?

Are we working together to change policies and laws that hinder children becoming resilient?
I desire to utilize my lived experiences raising multiple children with severe mental health challenges to drive systems change for children and families in Wisconsin.