

To The People I Have Encountered Throughout My Autistic Sons Life

by Angela Stanfield

To the “normal” person, who I knew from years ago, who laughed uncontrollably at the size of my son’s head when he was a baby and toddler – *That was cruel and rude.*

To the people who said my baby was beautiful – *Thank you, I thought so too.*

To the woman who screamed in the face of my son when he was 7yrs old – *What gives you the right to scream in any child’s face let alone one with special needs, but that’s right you told me you didn’t care he has autism.*

To the parents who have tolerated and understood challenging situations between my child and theirs – *Thank you for your tolerance, patience and understanding.*

To the people who insist on telling off special needs children in the supermarket – *It is unnecessary, the children are not usually doing anything wrong, they are dealing with sensory issues that other people don’t understand or they hate going to the supermarket just like “normal” children do. Sometimes we just don’t have a choice not to take them.*

To the shop assistants who said a cheery “Hello” to my son when he said “Hello”, read your name badge and asked “how are you” – *Thank you, this was a huge step for my son, he was using the first part of conversational language which took years for him to understand. Your smile and his smile was able to light up everyone’s day.*

To the customer in the supermarket who insisted on telling off my son when he was 3 – *Please mind your own business, he was not hurting anyone nor disrupting anyone nor destroying anything. Anyway he didn’t understand a word of what you were saying.*

To the teacher aides who have worked with my son – *Thank you for your patience and devotion to your job. My son’s funding is what brings you into a classroom but you don’t just help my son, you help all the children of the class as well. You go beyond what you are expected to do for little financial benefit, you do it for the rewarding feeling you have when you see the children grow, develop and blossom.*

To the woman who accused my son of spitting at her granddaughter and then told me you “don’t care that he has autism he is a very rude boy” – *You stormed off in a huff before I could tell you that my son couldn’t physically spit and that I could provide a doctor’s note if you wished. Maybe your granddaughter was simply mistaken when you made her point out the offender, after all my son was hanging upside down in the playground at the time. Maybe you are a rude person for not listening and acknowledging that you and your granddaughter made a mistake.*

To the parents of children at school, who say a cheery “Hello” to my son when they see him – *Thank you for treating him like a person and acknowledging that he has feelings too.*

To the museum curator, when we were on a school trip, who looked at my son like he was dog poo she had just stepped in – *My son caught another child’s arm by accident when he said shush to her. He was on edge because everyone was constantly telling the class to shush and be quiet before going into the gallery, so my son was trying to cope with a situation he didn’t quite understand. FYI, my son isn’t dog poo he just has autism.*

To the children at school who accept my son unconditionally and enjoy laughing with him, not at him, but with him – *Thank you, you are wonderful people with wonderful hearts.*

To the people who stop and stare when I have to deal with challenging situations in public – *Please stop judging us and offer help instead or maybe just understand that not all children are created equal. All children when they are*

little have “moments” in public, actually some adults still do! Older children and adults with special needs often have an emotional age of a toddler.

To the people who see the potential in my son that I do – *Thank you for not writing him off, our children with special needs have special talents and are capable of a lot more than many give them credit for.*

To the system that continues to tell us there is adequate funding for the special needs community – *Maybe there is and maybe there isn't. I understand there is only a defined pool of funds but maybe your priorities are in the wrong place at times. Maybe the money you give isn't being spent effectively or efficiently or maybe there just isn't enough money being spent? Our kids lives and education matter too.*

To the teachers who have accepted my son in their class without hesitation - *You have adapted your classroom to fit in his needs and resources. You have never said we can't do anything, you have worked out a way how. You have accepted working together with me to ensure my son is fully included in all aspects of school life. Thank you.*

To the system which assumes what we need for funding and support – *Please ask us personally how the system has failed our families and children and then do something to address these issues. If you don't know what it is we are struggling with then how can you effectively solve the problem. Come and experience our lives.*

To the specialist professionals who have supported my son – *Thank you to those of you who have understood my son, have worked with him and me to help him achieve goals. Thank you for your knowledge and fresh ideas. You have supported me through some trying times, you have helped me navigate the system to ensure my son gets whatever help is available.*

To the people in the world who just don't care because it's not their problem – *You don't know if your next child or grandchild will be born with special needs. You don't know what accident waits around the next corner that may leave you with brain damage. Please have compassion and thought for someone other than yourself. No one in this world is perfect not even you.*

To the people who volunteer or work tirelessly to support people with high needs – *Thank you, you are wonderful, wonderful people who put others needs before you own and you give the person you are working with dignity for their existence. You do make a difference in people's lives. You all deserve recognition for it.*

To all the people who will criticise what I have written and feel the need to make nasty or rude comments – *that doesn't get you anywhere in life, I don't understand why you feel the need to do this because there is no value in what it serves you or the person you direct your negativity?*

To my two children – *Thank you for being the great people that you are. Thank you to my eldest for all your support, love and laughter, it means a lot. Thank you to my youngest, your autism changed my world, it has taught me to be less judgemental, it has given me a passion to help others the way I have helped you. I love you both unconditionally.*

I will keep adding to this over time with the good and the bad that happens.

This letter is not available to be copied or reproduced in part or full without my permission – *Angela Stanfield*