

# Homeschooling Autism

FROM KINDERGARTEN TO GRADUATION

**PENNY ROGERS**

# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO HOMESCHOOLING MY NEURODIVERSE KIDS?

- Match their curriculum to their special interests, which makes learning fun!
- Learn at their own pace
- More time for building interpersonal and familial relationships, which helps in all aspects of life
- Therapies are easier to coordinate, plus they work better when integrated into schoolwork



# Is There A Window Of Opportunity?

- IS IT TOO LATE TO TEACH YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD NEW THINGS? NEVER!
- WORK AT THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL FOR EVERY SUBJECT
- EVEN SLOW PROGRESS IS STILL PROGRESS!
- NEUROPLASTICITY REMINDS US THAT LEARNING CAN HAPPEN AT ANY AGE, AT ANY TIME, IN ANYONE
- CELEBRATE THE SMALL VICTORIES, THEY ARE THE STEPPING STONES TO BIG WINS
- IT'S A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT.



# WHERE DO I BEGIN?

1. Join a homeschool community,  
online or in person
2. Breathe, get your bearings
3. Research your state guidelines
4. Look into curriculums
5. File the necessary paperwork

# How Can I Find My Child's Developmental Level?

- WHY CAN'T WE JUST USE THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL AGE? HOW IS THEIR DEVELOPMENTAL AGE DIFFERENT?
- NEURODIVERGENT KIDS FREQUENTLY HAVE GAPS IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT THAT CAN STUNT THEIR GROWTH
- WHAT ARE THE AGES OF CHILDREN THEY NATURALLY GRAVITATE TO WHEN PLAYING?
- WHAT TV SHOWS DO THEY WATCH OR TOYS DO THEY PLAY WITH?
- PLAY WITH THEM! GET ON THEIR LEVEL AND SEE HOW THEY PLAY.
- DO A DEVELOPMENTAL CHECKLIST FROM [CDC.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/earlychildhood/developmentalchecklist.html)
- ASK SOMEONE FAMILIAR WITH THEM WHAT THEY THINK, THEY MAY SEE SOMETHING YOU DON'T

# SOMETIMES ACADEMICS NEED TO TAKE A BACK SEAT

- Addressing therapy needs first can lead to better academic success
- Meeting sensory needs makes learning easier for your child
- Take time to 'unschool' if removing your child from a school that did not work well for them
- Taking time to work on pressing therapeutic needs will make life easier for everyone
- Resist the urge to 'press on' to keep your child from 'falling behind'

# WHAT ABOUT SOCIALIZATION?

- Everyone will ask how you will handle socialization while homeschooling, especially if your child is neurodivergent
- Homeschooling allows you to work on socialization at their developmental level, with any and all age groups
- Homeschooling allows you to purposely work on specific social skills, making filling in developmental gaps that much easier.
- It's a myth that autistic kids only learn social skills from their neurotypical peers, all kids learn social skills by experience with all kinds of people.





# Figuring Out A Realistic Schedule

- FIRST, MARK ALL THERAPY APPTS, DR. APPTS, AND OTHER NON NEGOTIABLE APPTS, WE'LL BUILD A SCHEDULE AROUND THESE
- DON'T TRY TO MIMIC PUBLIC SCHOOL AT HOME! HOMESCHOOL IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT BALL FIELD
- IT'S OK IF YOU JUST DO THE BASICS OR JUST WORK ON LIFE SKILLS
- IT'S EASIER TO BUILD A RHYTHM THAN TO STICK TO A STRICT TIME SCHEDULE
- LOTS AND LOTS AND LOTS OF SENSORY BREAKS
- ALWAYS END ON A SUCCESSFUL NOTE! EVEN IF THE SUCCESS ISN'T ACADEMIC



# INCORPORATE ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY!

- Be their scribe, let them tell you what to write
- Let them type or use speech-to-text technology, instead of writing by hand.
- Use a communication device or teach sign language.
- Use an abacus!
- Copy their homework on different colored paper.
- Use large pencils, markers, pens, chalk, crayons, whatever your child likes to write or draw with
- Lower your expectations, it's common for a child to stagnate, or even regress, some skills.
- Slow progress is still progress

# Forget About Grade Levels

- GO AT YOUR CHILD'S PACE FOR EVERY SINGLE SUBJECT. IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR KIDS TO BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS FOR DIFFERENT SUBJECTS
- FOCUS ON YOUR CHILD AND ONLY YOUR CHILD. YOUR CHILD IS NOT IN COMPETITION WITH ANYONE.
- TEACH TO MASTERY! BY SHORING UP DEFICIENCIES, YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE BIG DEVELOPMENTAL GAINS.
- FIGHT FOR LIFE SKILLS THAT DEVELOP INDEPENDENCE, ANYTHING YOUR CHILD CAN DO THEMSELVES LEAVES THEM LESS VULNERABLE TO BE PREYED UPON BY OTHERS

# SELF CARE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL PARENTS

- It's ok to admit your child is a ton of work
- You help your entire family by taking care of yourself, you can't pour from an empty cup
- It's not selfish to take time away from your child
- Scheduling regular breaks help you stick it out during the autism rising days
- Put your own oxygen mask on first
- Find someone who will insist you take a break when they see you need one.

# DON'T NEGLECT LIFE SKILLS!

- Life skills are safety skills for our autistic children. You can't afford to not teach them.
- The more your child can do for themselves, the less likely they are to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous people
- Start with basic hygiene skills. These will increase quality of life for them and your family
- Some skills may take longer to learn, kids may regress and have to be retaught skills. This is completely normal!

# Know When To Call It A Day

- SOME DAYS WILL BE HARDER THAN OTHERS
- THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILD AND PARENT, AND BETWEEN SIBLINGS, HAS TO BE A PRIORITY
- DON'T BE AFRAID TO CHANGE SOMETHING IF IT'S NOT WORKING
- DON'T BE MARRIED TO ONE CURRICULUM, THERE IS ALWAYS NEW WORKSHOPS OR CLASSES THAT MAY WORK BETTER FOR YOUR FAMILY
- WE'VE ALL BEEN DISCOURAGED BEFORE, EVEN 'SUCCESSFUL' HOMESCHOOL PARENTS.



# YOU CAN DO THERAPY AT HOME!

- Occupational, speech, and physical therapy can all be worked on at home
- Even if you go to a therapy center, therapy goals should be worked on daily at home
- Treat therapy like a school subject. Schedule it throughout the week, just like you would math or history.
- Make a plan with clear goals so you are spending your resources wisely, this also makes it easier to see all progress and achievements
- There are tons of resources online!



# You Can Do This!

- RE-ASSESS OFTEN ON WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T.
- MAKE CHANGES AS NECESSARY, EVEN IF IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE YEAR
- REMEMBER THAT THE FIRST YEAR IS ALWAYS THE HARDEST, WITH NEURODIVERGENT AND NEUROTYPICAL KIDS
- RELATIONSHIP TRUMPS ACADEMICS. A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD WILL HELP YOU BOTH WEATHER THE STORM OF AUTISM RISING DAYS.



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