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The AUTISM

TAP INTO IT™

perspective

THE AUTISM PERSPECTIVE

TAP INTO IT

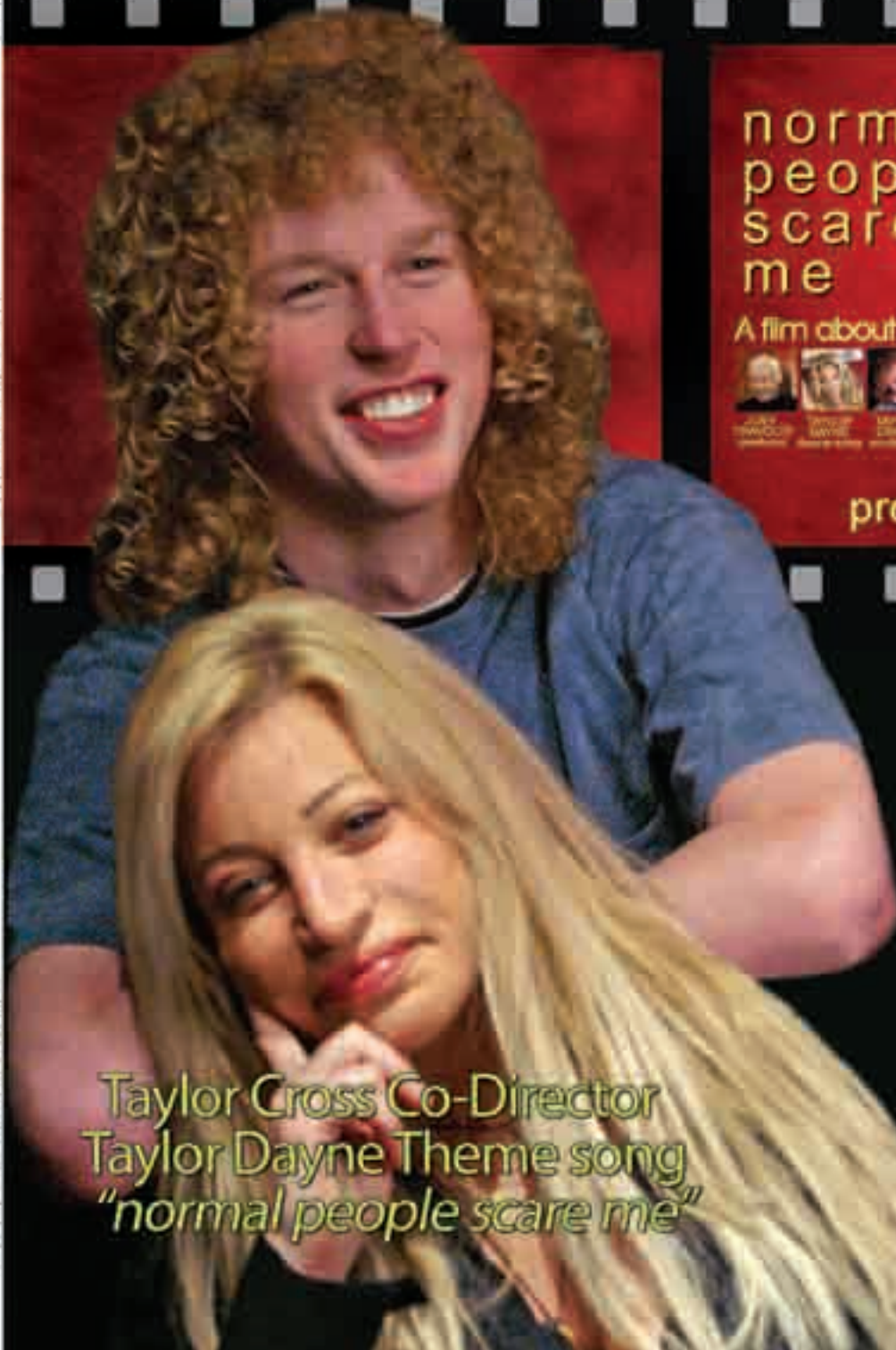
WINTER • 2006

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normal
people
scare
me

A film about AUTISM



produced by joey travolta



ENGAGING AUTISM:
BUILDING HEALTHY FOUNDATIONS

**Opportunities Called
Restrictive and
Repetitive Interests**

O.C.D. & A.S.D.

COGNITIVE THERAPY INTERVENTION:
THE MILLER METHOD

Taylor Cross Co-Director
Taylor Dayne Theme song
"normal people scare me"

A "STRANGER" Among Us

How to Find Quality In-Home Providers to Support your Child with ASD

By Lisa Ackerson Lieberman, MSW, LCSW

"The phone rang. I was unearthing the contents of a box amid a formidable wall of moving boxes, yet to be opened. Having just moved from out of state, we knew few people locally.

I wondered who could possibly be calling. I answered the phone, expecting a "wrong number." To my dismay, it was the family day care provider where I had left my two-year-old son, Jordan, less than an hour before. She insisted I come pick him up immediately, as he had been crying inconsolably for the past forty-five minutes.

This episode was yet another reminder of how our "high-need" child (later to be diagnosed with autism) had never been able to thrive in previous group child-care settings. Although I desperately needed uninterrupted time to unpack, I quickly brought him home, with final resolve to choose a different path for child care. The emerging need to find support for him in our home was no longer possible to ignore."

(Lieberman. *A Stranger Among Us*. AAPC, ©1995, p.xiii)

MY EXPERIENCE WITH HIRING IN-HOME SUPPORT

My family has hired people to provide in-home support since 1987. My husband has an advanced case of multiple sclerosis. He needed minimal assistance twenty years ago, but the progression of his disease now requires total personal care. Jordan (now 17) had in-home providers until 8th grade when he became more independent. Over the years we have employed 50-60 different providers to support the needs of our family. Numerous mistakes were made along the way as we fine-tuned our ability to successfully bring those "strangers" into our home. But that steep learning curve proved to be worthwhile in the end, as those wonderful strangers became integral parts of our family circle.

AN INCREASE IN THE NEED FOR IN-HOME PROVIDERS FOR CHILDREN WITH ASD

As the diagnosis of young children with Autism Spectrum Differences (ASD) has skyrocketed, so has the emergence of new treatment methods. Increasingly, families are looking to hire providers to implement these approaches in their home. For people who have never

done professional hiring, this can feel daunting. And the stakes are so much higher when trying to find that "stranger" to support your precious child.

DEFINING YOUR FAMILY CULTURE

So where do you start? First, think about who you are as a family, or what I refer to as "defining your family culture." Reflect on some of the following questions:

- What are important beliefs, values, religious traditions shared as a family?
- What is a comfortable pace and activity level in your home?
- Do you tend to be more casual or formal? Structured or spontaneous?
- Do you highly value privacy or do you tend to be more open with people outside your family?
- Do you have time to provide training, as opposed to hiring someone with more experience?

IDENTIFY DESIRED TRAITS IN A PROVIDER

By answering these questions, you begin to identify personality



L to R - Lisa Ackerson Lieberman, Jordan and Craig Ackerson

traits that will complement your family culture. For example, if you know your family operates best with structure, then you will seek a provider also comfortable with structure who has an organized approach with your child. If you value a quiet, slow-paced environment, look for a person with a calm, easy demeanor.

WRITE A JOB DESCRIPTION

Once you know the type of person you are seeking, begin to shape your job description and list specific tasks required. Expect to revise your job description as your child matures. List the responsibilities a provider could fulfill specifically related to your child, e.g., teaching self-care, transportation to therapies, help with homework, participation in school team meetings, etc. Also, decide if you want other kinds of help in your home, e.g., time with siblings, dishes washed, your child's laundry, help preparing dinner, etc.

Here is a sample job description geared for a preschooler: (from Lieberman, *A Stranger Among Us*, AAPC ©2005, pp.43-44)

Caregiver/companion (part-time) for 3-1/2-year-old boy with ASD. Job-share situation for two people, ideal for students who need flexibility in scheduling. Prefer self-starter with patient demeanor, who also can accept or seek direction when appropriate. First-hand experience with children with challenges strongly desired.

Philosophical Orientation

- View son's behavior as an attempt to communicate, rather than something requiring disciplinary action
- Understand the need to solicit his input, as often as possible
- Promote development of self-advocacy skills whenever possible

- Implement positive behavioral support when developing interventions

Mandatory Job Responsibilities

- Report to work on time, as scheduled
- Arrange for coverage when unable to cover shift (unless emergency situation)
- Assist son with learning self-care and personal hygiene
- Provide transportation to and from appointments
- Facilitate social interaction with peers at home and in the community
- Assist child in learning specific life skills
- Ongoing communication with parents and a variety of professionals

- Assist child in visually organizing and structuring his day

- Complete all required written documentation daily

Additional Preferred Responsibilities

- Provide care of siblings, as needed
- Participate in multidisciplinary team meetings
- Willing to attend ASD trainings and read related materials
- Perform miscellaneous household tasks as needed

Requirements

- Minimum one-year commitment
 - Driver's license, own car in good mechanical condition, auto insurance, and good driving record
 - Criminal check for any state where applicant has worked or resided
 - Personal and professional references
 - CPR and first aid training
- Hours: Monday through Thursday, noon-8 p.m. Friday, noon-5 p.m.

Hourly pay: Dependent on experience; periodic raises over time
DECIDE HOW TO GET THE WORD OUT

Let creativity run wild in advertising your position. If your child is on a special diet, post a flyer at your favorite health food store. If you want someone of the same religion, put a notice in your congregation's newsletter. Although most people prefer finding candidates by word-of-mouth, that is not always possible.

My family has been most successful by placing a classified ad in our local newspaper. Although it requires more time and energy to screen prospective candidates, it reaches a much larger group of viable applicants. If you run an ad, it's worth it to spend a little extra money highlighting the positive aspects of the job. This goes a long way in attracting desirable candidates. Here is an example of a more descriptive advertisement:

In-home care and tutoring for delightful girl (11) with Asperger's. Experience preferred. Fun, no-smoking home. Need own car. References required. Great student schedule. (999) 123-4567

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR WHERE TO SEEK PROVIDERS IF YOU DO YOUR OWN HIRING

(adapted from Lieberman. *A Stranger Among Us*, AAPC, ©2005, pp.61-62)

- College departments in related fields (special ed, speech therapy, OT, PT)
- Schools of massage therapy, acupuncture, and other healing arts
- County and state developmental disability departments
- Non-profit organizations, including Independent Living Centers
- Early childhood centers
- Senior centers
- Church bulletin boards, newsletters and religious leaders
- Community bulletin boards
- Hospital social work and care management departments
- Neighborhood schools (school secretaries are often aware of people in the school community who might be looking for part-time opportunities)
- Child-care centers
- School personnel who hire educational assistants, substitutes, and so on
- Private for-profit programs in your community that serve children with ASD
- Internet websites devoted to respite care
- Internet websites focusing on both prospective employers and employees

By taking the time to define your family culture, write a job description and decide how to advertise your position, you have taken crucial steps towards finding that remarkable "stranger" who will enhance the circle of your family. Completing these tasks lays a firm foundation for the next step in the process, i.e., screening candidates and conducting a fruitful interview.

Look for "The Art of Interviewing" in the next issue of TAP... **TAP**

Lisa Lieberman is a skilled trainer, writer and speaker with over twenty-nine years of professional experience. Along with a private psychotherapy practice, Lisa travels nationally to present issues related to living with disability in the family. Author of "A Stranger Among Us: Hiring In-home Support When a Child has ASD or other Neurological Differences," AAPC, ©2005, she has been married twenty-six years to a man with multiple sclerosis. Together they parent Jordan, a seventeen-year-old son, with autism.



Photo by Edis Jurcys

"A Stranger Among Us" is available through Autism Asperger Publishing Company. www.asperger.net or call 1-877-277-8254



OUTREACH CLINICS

The Great Plains Laboratory provides clinical testing and biomedical research for children (and adults) that have autism, AD(H)D, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, allergies and other behavioral disorders. Our goal is to help children and families affected by the above-mentioned disorders to achieve their maximum potential through world-renown, quality laboratory testing, knowledgeable staff and excellent customer service with continued support via phone consultation.

The Great Plains Laboratory is pleased to announce outreach clinics in cities all over the United States, specializing in the treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders, allergies, AD(H)D and behavioral abnormalities. A DAN! physician will be seeing patients on Saturday and Sunday from 8:30am-6:00pm at each clinic. The Great Plains Laboratory will provide a highly skilled phlebotomist, who will be on site as a convenience for any patients requiring blood draws.

2006 Outreach Clinics

March	Corona, CA	June	Dodge City, KS
April	Elizabeth, NJ	June	North Carolina
April	Orlando, FL	July	Oklahoma City, OK
April	Atlanta, GA	July	Alexandria, VA
May	Indianapolis, IN	July	Detroit, MI
May	Spokane, WA	July	Aiken, SC
June	Central Ohio	August	Providence, RI

To get more information about these event dates and locations, or to make an appointment, please call Our toll-free customer service number: 1-800-288-0383