

As some of you know, my son Alex has autism, so I was intrigued when I came across an article from the Spectrum News with the headline “The Children Who Leave Autism Behind”.

Here is the introduction to the article:

*Autism is usually thought to be a lifelong condition, but a small number of children lose the core symptoms and shed the diagnosis. Some researchers are beginning to explore how common this may be, and why some children outgrow autism.*

### **Outgrowing autism**

Alex just turned 16 which means, my wife and I have been living with the word “autism” for almost 15 years. When he was first diagnosed we turned to doctors and other families in the autism community for guidance. Everyone seemed to have their own opinion as to what approach would help the most and we researched and tried a variety of these options.

There were special diets, special vitamins, special programs, and special schools. Not to mention the various therapists: speech, vision, hearing, physical, behavioral and social.

Even though every program we tried had research behind it and success stories they could point to, most of them didn’t achieve the results we were hoping for.

What the programs gave us was progress, what we wanted was perfection.

## **Behavior modification**

The heart of every autism therapy is to adjust the child's behaviors: *"Look at my eyes when talking to me instead of looking at the floor."* *"Talk in a normal voice, don't scream."* *"Use your words instead of hitting or crying, etc."*

While our son was attending these sessions, our behaviors also began to change. We learned that sometimes it is easier to adjust what we can control rather than get angry at what cannot be controlled.

For example, when we used to take him to loud places such as Disneyland or the mall he would constantly be covering his ears with his hands to block the noise. Many people would give him dirty looks for this strange behavior that we just couldn't stop him from doing. One day, however, we gave him a pair of noise reducing headphones to wear and it worked like a charm. He was happy since the noise level was lower and no one seemed to notice him since he looked like all the other teenagers with their headphones on.

## **What does this have to do with investing?**

I strongly believe I am a better advisor now than I was earlier in my career because of struggles my wife and I have faced with Alex.

- I've learned to have humility. There will always be a child who advances faster or goes farther than Alex.
- I've learned to have patience.
- I've learned just because a program works for one child and their family doesn't mean it will work for ours.
- I've learned to adapt our behaviors.
- I've learned I may not find perfection but I am happy with progress.

Take care.

Mark Delp, CFP®  
Branch Manager

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