

Voice from the Autism Spectrum: Perspective on Change Part 2

Written by Gayle Nobel

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Blog-a-thon: Day 4

Voice from the Autism Spectrum: Perspective on Change

I hope you enjoyed the insights of Sam in yesterday's blog post. If you are just now tuning in, Sam is a young man with Asperger's who regularly writes for my Living with Attitude newsletter. See Blog-a-thon Day 3 for more details about Sam and the first part of his writing.

Sam Speaks from the Spectrum - Change (part 2)

Then, there is the openness to change issue. Recently, as I've been working on growing into my own person, I haven't found the changes as challenging for me as they are for my family. Personally, I will fall into a daily routine, going to work, coming home, etc, but find myself changing it as necessary. As I've done more to take care of myself, to step out, to be bold, my family has become more and more unwilling to let go, leading me to have to do it behind the scenes.

One of my counselors put it best when he said that when we are born, our parents view us as babies. Sometimes, however, our parent's view of us does not grow over time, leading to a reluctance to change the social makeup of the family. In essence, in order to gain the experiences necessary to grow into adulthood, sometimes the parents have to be taken out of our lives for a while, until we can come back into their lives having found our own way.

I've known one person who, because of this, had to send a cease and desist email to his mother cause of the way she continued to treat him over the phone and via email once he moved out (ie- calling them just to make sure his apartment was clean even though they lived in another state). While this might seem extreme, I've also known the exact opposite. Sometimes I will meet adults that still have to seek their parents permission to go anywhere even though they are 27 years old, or will get told that they cannot behave right so often that they become reluctant to go out of the house by the age of 20.

Autistics need to be respected for being unique adults, and need to feel that way in order to keep healthy relationships. This may mean difficult changes are necessary when learning to accommodate each other. Many times this means a long and difficult fight, but a worthwhile one at that. We are socially awkward, but that's not wrong. It is just apples and oranges. One cannot be made into the other.

Thank you Sam.

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My thoughts...

I've had a lot of practice in recent years in the "letting go" department. It can be challenging to launch our children from the nest and watch them struggle and make mistakes without coming in to rescue them, yet still remain supportive. Mistakes are opportunities to learn. Ultimately they are how we all grow.

When a child has special needs, the letting go process is even more complicated and tricky. There is a tendency to be over-protective in our desire to keep our children safe. It's scary for parents and the boundaries feel very muddy. Ultimately, we all really want our children with special needs to be as independent as possible. How to support them in getting there is the challenge.

Your thoughts?