

# 5 SECRETS

To Controlling Your Child's Autistic Meltdowns

MY SOLUTIONS  
TO CARING FOR  
MY ADULT SON  
WITH AUTISM

The Real Mary Elizabeth

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# 5 Secrets to Controlling Your Childs Autistic Meltdowns

## Introduction

My name is Mary Harrison. I'm the author and creator of:

### **"5 Secrets to Controlling Your Child's Autistic Meltdowns"**

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read my book which I believe offers you some valuable insights on dealing with your child when they're experiencing an Autistic meltdown.

Even if you walk away with one new method, or perhaps something that confirms what you already know, then I feel I've done my job.

So, why should you listen to me?

What can I possibly offer you that hasn't already been discussed?

Here's a little about me so I can qualify to speak to you at a certain level.



Over 30 years ago, I moved to the US with my parents from the Caribbean. I married, graduated with an (MBA) from a top-tier business school, embarked on a career in brand management and worked in both the corporate and nonprofit sectors. I've endured many miscarriages in my attempts to become a mother.

Finally, almost 22 years ago, I was blessed with a beautiful baby boy.

**The world was my oyster!**

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I dreamt about and meticulously planned my son's life - what schools he would attend, what sports he might participate in and how certain rites of passages might unfold. I even thought about him marrying and having his own children, you know, the circle of life.

But plans don't always turn out the way we want them to, and life didn't give us what we expected.

At the age of 2, we noticed certain developmental milestones were not met. At the age of 3, my husband and I received the dreaded diagnosis of autism. I was stunned! I was also pregnant with my second son when the news came.

I recall one friend asking: "Knowing what you know now, would you have remotely considered having another child"?

Although I thought that question was hurtful, my response was a resounding: **"YES"**.

It was at that moment I realized **the path I must travel would diverge from all of my expectations**. I had to make some accommodations and I learned to lean on the professionals; doctors (functional as well as traditional); teachers; therapists; aides; and definitely the support of other parents with children on the spectrum. I had to learn a whole new way of living that many take for granted.

Unless an individual is living with a child or an adult with autism, it's almost impossible to imagine. My son Jewels is a gifted pianist and he's very loving. While I cannot imagine my life without him, all the research I'd done and books I'd read could only give me a glimpse of life with autism.





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I'm now sharing my "**key learnings**" with you in the hope that it not only provides comfort but also offers guidance and support.

**You are not alone.**

Because our community is growing, there's a high probability that you've met

a parent, sibling, friend or coworker who knows someone living with autism.

The fundamental tenet I've learned is that it's essential to **stay the course**.

**Consistency is key** in teaching any child but imperative for children on the autism spectrum who thrive on structure.

**Remember to breathe.**

I'm not kidding.

Taking 5-10 mindful breaths, each and every day, despite the challenges, has incredible therapeutic effects on our bodies and minds. The best thing any caregiver can do is to **remain calm**. I've had to learn this lesson time and again over the years.

So, here's my gift to you.

Please feel free to share my guide with anyone who may be experiencing the challenges of raising a child with Autism.

Always Be Grateful and Blessed,

*The Real Mary Elizabeth*

## Time Management & Independence

Establishing a daily schedule of activities or events provides order and structure to children and adults on the autism spectrum.

Many individuals in this community do not easily welcome change. Conversely, they respond favorably to a consistent routine. Although flexibility is a part of life, managed flexibility is necessary in order to reduce agitation and explosive behaviors.

**Jewels' day begins with:**

- 1) waking up
- 2) getting dressed
- 3) change into street clothes
- 4) using the bathroom (brush teeth and use deodorant)
- 5) making his bed.

He showers at night due to an early morning school schedule. Evening showers signal to everyone, especially Jewels, that his day is complete and the bedtime routine begins. Having a schedule allows Jewels to **mentally organize and navigate his actions throughout the day**, understand the expectations, and provide some level of control as to his "choices" for his breaks. I'm amazed how a schedule helps him move forward and remain positive when daily expectations are noted.

There are many research papers and schools of thought relating to **the importance of making one's bed**. Despite his autism, it's one thing I have been teaching from a very young age. I remember looking at a YouTube video of a navy seal and a high-ranking military officer talk about the importance of making one's bed as it mentally and physically prepares one to face his day with the knowledge of having completed one important task.

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I've come to realize how the **management of time and activities** are directly linked with **independence**. Because Jewels has been working on ADL (Activities of Daily Living) skills from a young age, I no longer need to closely monitor certain routines.

As he matures, the skill levels change. If he wants to ride his bike, he knows what items are required, such as wearing a helmet. Similarly, to go sledding outside he would need snow pants, boots, gloves, a hat, and, of course, his sled.

Having a schedule also builds up other skills such as meal preparation.

Another example is food prep. In following a recipe, one must ensure that all of the ingredients have been purchased and are available for use. Adherence to directions is important to ensure a positive outcome. This is accomplished by breaking down the steps so that anyone can understand what is expected.



For instance, what items are necessary for purchase versus those that are already in our pantry. **Schedules can be made for almost any activity** like loading and unloading the dishwasher, doing the laundry or cleaning a room, taking a shower, and many more activities.

## The Importance of Sleep, Exercise & Diet

**Sleep is incredibly important for everyone.** It affects our moods and overall well-being.

According to one online article, "our bodies release hormones during sleep that help repair cells and control our use of energy. Many things that ail us today directly result from the lack of a good night's sleep.

This issue appeared even greater for my son. He would be up all-night singing or stimming. **He simply couldn't turn his mind off in order to relax.** I found three different products that are phenomenal. These items are in the form of CBD from the hemp plant.

There are many products that can help support the immune system and aid in sleep and reduce inflammation in the human body.

Waking Jewels up in the early morning for school activities is much easier when he's well-rested, less agitated and his behaviors are modulated. I, like many others, used to joke about "pulling an all-nighter or burning the midnight oil" as if that were a badge of honor.

Now I understand **the impact on our immune system caused by a lack of sleep**, or how poor-sleep is linked to increased inflammation. A good night's sleep enhances productivity and reduces our dependence on high-calorie foods or even smoking.



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Another critical component of good health is a proper diet. Maintaining good gut health directly impacts the brain. **Many individuals on the autism spectrum suffer from gut issues.**



Much has been said about the stomach being the second brain, and how poor gut health directly impacts behaviors. This is exacerbated when an individual lacks the ability to adequately communicate, resulting in meltdowns or other explosive behaviors.

It's no secret that the US diet has been compromised these past 50+ years. **With Globalization comes the need to manage farm-to-table processes.** The quality of our food (milk, meat and produce); lack of nutrients due to an increased presence of genetically modified foods; increased use of growth hormones, pesticides and herbicides; and the rapid increase in drug use as a "cure-all" approach, have wreaked havoc on the immune system of individuals around the world. Today, **we have a poorer and sicker society as we seek quick and easy fixes to address our ailments.**

We must change our course of action! Americans, in general, need to reduce consumption of foods that contain high sugar; simple carbohydrates; avoid sodas and beverages with empty calories, and watch out for the fast-food traps. I encourage clean eating habits, notably vegetables (lots of it); complex carbohydrates, protein and drinking plenty of water.

I also realize that all our nutrients will not come from foods, therefore supplementation of essential vitamins such as Vitamin C, D, and/or Magnesium is necessary. Jewel's brother at times lobbies on his behalf for treats like chocolate chip cookies or a brownie.

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Like sleep and diet, movement or exercise represents the third leg in the 3 legged stool. It is a necessity, for ANY and ALL ages. At an early age, from the days of Tumble Bugs and jungle gym, I have grown to appreciate the importance of movement.



Observing my son from the crawling stage to taking his first step was nothing short of a miracle. He was 13 months of age... but while for some it was considered late, for Jewels it was right on time. He clearly had the desire and that was enough for me. I remember when I was changing his diapers, I would move his limbs around.

Exercise, i.e. outdoor activity is imperative for all children and in my opinion, especially youngsters on the Autism spectrum.

Negotiating obstacles and learning how to navigate a playground is a requirement for learning. Learning should not be relegated to the classroom only.

Movement and exercise also help children with autism have better body awareness, balance, spatial relations and self-awareness. It enhances confidence when entering a new space and relieves the anxiety that may come from going into unfamiliar settings.



### The Necessity of Communication, Socialization & Discipline

When I was asked if Jewels spoke at the age of 3, I said yes sure. He would repeat “apple” “dad”, “Ma”, etc. When asked about eye contact? I didn't understand because as a child I was taught to never look at an adult in the eyes; it was basically considered disrespectful. I think it's important to understand the cultural nuances associated with eye contact and speech.

What I should have been asked is whether my son verbally communicated with me. Was he able to tell me if he wants a toy? Or that he needs to use the bathroom or is hungry. While Jewels was able to repeat words, unfortunately, speech development during those formative years was a challenge.

My focus was so targeted on getting my son to speak in sentences that I literally dismissed the importance of nonverbal communication, the reciprocal exchange between two individuals where words are not ALWAYS necessary.

If I knew back then what I now know, I would have focused more on communicating in any way I could, - joint attention – two individuals banging on a drum (instead of considering it noise), or just being “present” in the same room not trying to elicit a response or demanding action, but simply being mindful and consciously “present”. One example is, it was natural for Jewels to physically lead me to the refrigerator when he was hungry. He was communicating.

There are new and expanding methods of communication today, some with varying degrees of acceptance in the larger community. I encourage each family to seek out the method that works for them regardless of current public sentiment. One such practice is RPM, (Rapid Prompting Method) where an individual selects one letter at a time, from a letter board – the alphabet on a clear sheet of paper, to form words, which are strung together in sentences to convey the thoughts of the autistic person.



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Another method employed is the **Type to Talk Program**, where a person selects letters on the iPad to create sentences. These communication tools have been dismissed based on the lack of “empirical data”. However, it is very costly to fund such research projects to facilitate greater acceptance by health care communities – which in turn leads to insurance coverage.

In my opinion, communication should never be relegated to the spoken or written word only. Thankfully, individuals on the Autism spectrum are learning about alternative, functional options that enhance communication via word of mouth, from parents who have attained some level of success.

Socialization and the need for “community” is critical for adults and more so for young children. I definitely believe this is where one’s sense of belonging is developed. I am neither a psychologist nor a social worker; I am a mom who has spent a large part of my life in the great outdoors and with family (siblings cousins), friends from school and our neighborhood and church groups. It was at a young age that my identity was formed, my sense of right and wrong learned, and the need to practice kindness developed. BUT, socialization is one of the most difficult milestones, if not the last skill to master for many on the autism spectrum.



I remember creating small play dates with friends in the first few programs for children with special needs that Jewels was a part of: notably, Birth to Three and preschool. It wasn't always easy. Many “well meaning” adults, when learning that Jewels was “autistic” would say, “wow, I’m so sorrrrrrry”, I felt worse. It would be better if they said nothing.



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I told a dear friend, that I after serving God most of my life, I felt He gave me a lemon. Yet, deep down I believed that wasn't the case; I just felt hopeless. **I was WRONG!** There is a PURPOSE to this population; their presence is meant to teach us about our humanity. Do you really think the growth of this population is a coincidence? **The parents of typical kids that did respond with a "Yes" to a playdate, learned how both children were emotionally enriched by the experience.**

Many learned how to be friends by their mere interaction with Jewels. They played games; yes Jewels required assistance, but the interaction created foundational building blocks with teachers, family and friends that helped his relating as he got older.

Today Jewels plays in a band and is able to jam and socialize appropriately with members of the Especially Everyone Band as well as accompany professional musicians on gigs.

Discipline is, in part, what it means to be human. The dictionary defines discipline as "the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior." Punishment can be used to correct disobedience which is negative. **Positive reinforcement or a token reward system is what we use in our home.**

The latter is called ABA (**Applied Behavior Analysis**). Jewels earns checks or points for appropriate behavior and eventually is given choices of preferred activities. Rewards may include, but not limited to, time on a device of his choice; playing the piano; listening to music; or maybe eating his favorite chocolate chip cookie. **ABA is a flexible treatment.** It can be used anywhere, and with any person. Some trainers have even used the ABA method on their pets.

Like typical children, persons on the autism spectrum need to learn discipline. This, I admit can be a challenge, but establishing boundaries is absolutely necessary. It creates meaning in the child's world and teaches them what they can and cannot do. It also teaches them that they have an effect on other people. Causing anger or pain will only have a negative impact on them.

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**It's important that parents (or caretakers) remain calm during meltdowns.** It's equally important that the child understands what is expected of him or her -what is appropriate behavior. When Jewels gets into that mental loop where reasoning is not an option, **I allow space and time for a return to a calm state of being.** If he was earning points for time on his iPad, I change the "Reinforcer" or the desired item. I do this to reduce the memory of the meltdown or trigger another negative emotion.

BUT it was imperative that I do not give him the desired item as it indirectly can produce future meltdowns. In my son's mind, if I gave him the iPad after a meltdown, he has succeeded in breaking my resolve. And the token (ABA) system no longer works.

Therefore, I provide another opportunity or different option where he can quickly earn the Reinforcer of his choice, such as a drive-in Mom's car, or a favorite snack. As a mom, I believe discipline and self-control are requisite for members, if our community is to function within the greater community and be a part of growing and diverse groups.

**ABA therapy has helped my son tremendously at home and in the community.**

He has learned the principles of FIRST (appropriate behavior be it quiet sitting) THEN (5-10 minutes on the iPad). While it is easier to introduce ABA to youngsters, it remains an important methodology as children with autism become adults.

At times, I've had to remove Jewels from certain spaces and places by putting him in a "safe zone" or time-out corner, in order to get him to calm down or simply decompress.

## Monitoring Technology

Our society has changed significantly in the past 20-30 years. We have become an online society, dependent on the many gadgets and devices meant to simplify and provide ease in our lives. But is there a side effect to all this technology? It is not unusual to see 5 or 7-year-old children with some sort of device in hand. **They are not only addicted to these devices but have lost the skill to play and to improvise in problem-solving.**



Just for fun, I challenge you to observe families of 4 or 5 members out to dinner. Chances are you would see everyone at the table with a device in hand. While television has been replaced by iPads or iPhones, all this screen time can impact a child on many levels. Studies were conducted on how children's

brains "think" they're moving when using an iPad, especially when playing a game, and stopping is difficult. Children get addicted to the need to feel this movement.

As a result of overstimulation and the desire for more time on the device, adverse behaviors increase, their mood becomes erratic and sleep is affected. **I limit screen time for Jewels to 1 to 1 ½ hours, (including all technology) due to the addictive nature.** This time is broken down into small chunks of 10-15 minutes intervals.

When Jewels gets the iPad, it's because he earned it! (using ABA) And the time limit is 3-5 minutes. **Such 'rewards' should be done with adult supervision.** I encourage puzzles, piano practice, singing and reading. I'm not ALWAYS successful but I do give it a valiant effort.

## The Need for Freedom of Self Expression

All children need the freedom of self-expression. This can be achieved through sports, music, theatre or art. Unfortunately, and too often, parents of children on the autism spectrum have been so intently focused on “fixing the person” that we are consumed or become distracted by “therapies or interventions” with false promises to reverse autism, enhance communication and cognition or at best, getting our children to “appear typical”. I am guilty of all of the above and I have learned of the awesome importance of LOVE.

The last thing I wanted was my child to be a musician. That was just not a priority. I wanted Jewels to speak, to communicate, I wanted him to function as a typical adult, I wanted independence and all that is associated with these concepts – going to college, finding employment, marriage, and maybe having children. These were MY dreams.

I didn't consider or consult Jewels' about his own dreams. But **one day, he made it clear to me, through his own action that he wanted to play the piano.** And later on, through RPM, Jewels conveyed his desire to learn jazz.



To recognize that each individual exists with his or her own personality and potential is very important. Autism, self-exploration, and self-expression are not mutually exclusive.

To be heard, seen and recognized is crucial for someone who cannot verbally express his or her feelings or needs.

The arts provide a symbolic language in which feelings can be identified and understood. A channel of expression is provided through sound, rhythm and harmony.



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In art, self-expression is experienced through color and form. Through theatre participation, value is realized by being on a “team” and working together to produce a meaningful performance through story-telling. Dance and movement provide physical expressions of feelings and the channel of expression is provided through sound.

And for Jewels, self-expression is through music. He becomes a totally different person. He connects with the members of the band and together everyone for that special time collectively soar to greater heights. He becomes the person that God created him to be.



It is my greatest pleasure sharing my journey with you and I trust you've benefitted from one or more of the helpful tips I've written.

## Limited 30/30 Bonus

Since you made it through this eBook, that means you're serious about finding solutions for your particular situation relating to Autism.

Because of my passion for this topic, my goal is to touch, move and inspire 10,000 families to find more loving, logical and innovative ways of dealing with Autism.

Please keep in mind that I'm not an MD, or an expert of any sort. I don't possess the credentials to diagnose, prescribe or make claims to any cures for Autism. But what I do have, is 19 years of personal and extensive hands-on experience with my son Jewels.

In other words... I have some skin in the game. I understand most of what you may be experiencing. I've been in the trenches.

Because of that, I'm offering 30 people a FREE 30-minute One on One Zoom Meeting or phone call so I can answer any questions that you may have regarding the topic of Autism.

**PLUS**, I'll share more with you my about my secret weapon that takes my son's Major Meltdowns from a solid 10+ down to a 3-4 in just minutes! This by itself may transform your child and family like nothing you've ever tried before.

If you want to be one of the people who I share my experience, strength and hope with go to my FaceBook calendar and add your name ASAP. You can find that calendar by clicking here: The [Jewels Harrison Music on FaceBook](#)

AND as an additional bonus, if you or anyone you know may be struggling with raising an Autistic **Please schedule a free 15 session with me** today where I'll share daily tips, methods and thoughts on how I've raised my son from birth to going on 20 years now.

I hope you find this helpful enough to forward this information on to your friends and acquaintances.

## **Forward** by Dr Stephen O'Connor M.D.

**There are few opportunities where a written work can have such a profound impact on an individual or family's life; "5 Secrets to Controlling Your Child's Autistic Meltdowns" is one such book.**

Straight talk, compassion, love, and common sense guide Mary Harrison's approach to dealing with disruptive and destabilizing behaviors.

As a practicing physician with three decades of Emergency Medical experience, I am well aware of the stress that the autism spectrum can have on a family. Add to this; the traditional western medical treatments often involve toxic and mood-changing therapies which potentiate ongoing behavioral issues.

Now, with a Functional Medicine background, I can appreciate Mary's holistic and natural management strategies as a more reasonable approach.

I met Mary several years ago, and her engagement with Jewels was terrific. There was a tenderness, insightfulness, and deep understanding in how she connected with her son. Mary understands and utilizes her hard-learned modalities in her daily life with Jewels.

"5 Secrets to Controlling Your Child's Autistic Meltdowns" is a must-read for any family member faced with a child or relative on the autism spectrum.

The book sets just the right tone of information, common-sense ideas, and natural supplements that can offer hope and balance.

I encourage you to read and follow Mary's decades of wisdom and experience.

Stephen L O'Connor, MD

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Thank you for taking the time to read my book. I know it's not an easy task to raise a child with Autism but I feel that God has placed your child in your care for reasons that may not be 100% apparent to you now. I will leave you with this...

There is a boy with Autism who has taught me more about life than anything else in this world ever will.

~Author Unknown