



*L*iving
autism
day·by·day

*Daily Reflections and
Strategies to Give You
Hope and Courage*

PAMELA BRYSON-WEAVER



(Johnny)

Picture card for Mother's Day just after
Johnny received the diagnosis of autism.
So begins unlocking the mystery.

This Gift of *Living autism day.by.day* is given to:

Provided by:

What People Are Saying About

LIVING AUTISM DAY.BY.DAY

“Pamela Bryson-Weaver has done a remarkable job creating a beautiful mosaic consisting of heartfelt disclosures, universal wisdom, and scientific knowledge. *Living autism day. by. day* is a journal chronicling the trials and tribulations and most importantly the joys and the growth that a loving parent of a child with autism goes through on a daily basis. And while the book is a useful, heart-to-heart guide to all parents of children with special needs, it is also a love letter from mother to son. For a moment, I started reading the book as if I were the child for whom it was written. The love, compassion, and devotion that emerged made me feel invincible. *Living autism day.by.day* is written with the kind of love that makes us all better people.

~ Theo Tsaousides, Ph.D., Neuropsychologist,
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

“This devotional, soul-searching book *Living autism day.by.day*, will provide the missing component that all professionals rarely address. The feelings of a parent or caregiver of a child with an autistic spectrum disorder diagnosis. It is from the point of view of a mother that has experienced these feelings for over 15 years. The daily tidbits of information in each month offer hope, advice, inspiration and resources. A great read for moral support, even if your child doesn't have autism.”

~ Kathryn Thorson Gruhn, MA
Speech-Language Pathologist, (Positive Parenting Expert with thirty five years of experience and Author of *My Baby Compass*. Kathryn speaks and appears on television nationally as the Positive Parenting Expert.)

“Living autism day.by.day. It is beautiful! What I found so powerful and inspiring was that your content can apply to ANYBODY!!! It does not have to be about autism. I loved it! I love your writing! I see your book as a tool to inspire others!”

~ Ann McIndoo, CEO / Founder of So, You Want To Write! Author of “7 Easy Steps to Write Your Book” — #1 Bestseller on Kindle and Amazon!

“Great passion here, Pamela. The depth of your care and your commitment to providing support, and a supportive book for people living with autism is strong. Kudos on living the challenges bravely and bringing this manuscript together. Your strengths in this manuscript include your passion and commitment, which is evident in the writing, and some great points of wisdom, both in your writing, and the quotes you’ve collected. You share some great insights and perspective and many useful, practical suggestions. Just for Today: these are an excellent idea—to conclude each day’s segment with focus point that a person can personalize and take into their day. Well done.

~ Karah Madrone, Freelance Editor & Writing Coach

“Understand, My Love, I BELIEVE in You, and you make a DIFFERENCE. I do believe in you, honey, and know that your book will be successful because you did it with the intention of helping others. I also have seen firsthand that you make a difference by the number of people I meet when I travel that somehow or another are connected to you. You are a beautiful soul who has definitely given back to the world and who still has more to give. I have loved you from the day we met, love you now, and will love you for all time.”

~ Your Love-Crazed Husband, Perley Weaver

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*Daily Reflections and
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by Pamela Bryson-Weaver

Editing:

Katheryn Gruhn, Joshua Bryson-Weaver, Karah Madrone

Layout:

Go Beyond, Cindy Teevens

Cover Design:

Dunn & Associates

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With Gratitude

To my wonderful book editors: Kathryn Gruhn, for your incredible experience, support, and friendship. I will forever remember our special time together in Montreal with Oprah Winfrey. To my son Joshua Bryson-Weaver, who graduated from university this year with two degrees and two majors, one being English Literature. Your input was invaluable. I am so proud of you, Son.

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To my daughter, Jennifer Bryson-Weaver—your advice, creativity, and knowledge regarding photography and graphics was instrumental to the final touches in the book. You are beautiful and talented.

Thank-you to Autism Canada (<http://www.autismcanada.org>) for their permission for specific references to autism treatments, especially in the months of November and December.

A very special thanks to each of the parents and their children around the world with ASD, who lovingly shared their photos in my book *Living autism day. by. day*.

Lastly, thank *you!* my readers and followers on Twitter, Pinterest and Facebook. Thank you for looking into the hearts and minds of the incredible parents and caregivers who care for loved ones with an autism spectrum disorder. Thank you for buying this book, sharing this book, and supporting families dedicated to living with autism.

Pamela Bryson-Weaver

Dedication

To my husband, Perley, for your unwavering support and faith in me. You are my rock. To my children, John, Jennifer, and Joshua, thank you for teaching me so many things about being a mom. I love you all dearly and feel so blessed to share this astonishing life with you in it. To my sister Nancy, who has inspired me my whole life. You are truly an angel. To all my family and friends who keep sending love and encouragement, I am deeply grateful to all of you.

To all people with Autism Spectrum Disorders; every one of you is unique, exceptional, and beautiful just the way you are. Thank you for teaching us daily how truly blessed we are to have you in our lives.

To every parent, family and caregiver who lovingly cares for a person with autism, this book is in honour of you. I am humbled and inspired by your love and dedication. With enormous gratitude, respect and admiration,

Pamela Bryson-Weaver

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Foreword

Right from the book's cover with a powerful visual image of removing the puzzle pieces to reveal a daily inspiration guide on living autism day by day this book is genius and timely. This is a book that delivers. It is full of insights, a beautiful almanac of inspiration, resources, strategies, and tips for parents, educators and caregivers alike.

The book is chock-full of helpful ideas that can immediately be put into use. The journey of Autism is filled with challenges which take immeasurable patience and understanding to navigate. From a parent's perspective Pamela Bryson-Weaver's book provides daily useful readings in a concise and comfortable manner which allows the reader in just a few minutes a day to navigate successfully many obstacles a family faces with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Despite the numerous books about Autism on the market, parents and people living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, continue to search for a book that explains this disorder in a way that makes sense to them and is easy to digest especially when newly diagnosed.

This is a book that will fit into the incredibly busy lives of parents, working adults, numerous therapists and doctors, while not overwhelming them with all the other responsibilities and information sources that are dropped on them like a bomb shell when the diagnosis comes.

When reading *Living autism day.by.day*, the reader will learn:

- about genetic and environmental factors that lead to atypical brain development
- how early experiences shape behaviors and skills that influence the autism spectrum

- how to deal with personal emotions, issues, and insecurities regarding autism
- how to recognize early signs of atypical brain development and how to procure appropriate services
- how to work with professionals to develop effective treatment plans
- how to help children and adults with ASD find success and happiness
- how as a parent, family member, or friend to find success and happiness while loving and supporting someone in their life with ASD
- how to see the humour in life when it seems so difficult
- to see the paradoxes and the blessings of autism

This book does that by:

- Using easy-to-understand explanations of current research and anecdotes to explain autism.
- Describing the range of behaviors and difficulties seen in the autism spectrum.
- Helping parents, caregivers, educators and clinicians to manage challenging behaviors and learning styles using strategies supported by research and the author's clinical experience.
- Comparing available interventions for effectiveness, risk, and practicality.
- Discussing public health and educational approaches for allocating available resources to help children with autism become successful members of society.

This book that Bryson-Weaver journal led and journeyed for over 12 years is a book she truly wished was handed to her when her youngest son was diagnosed over 12 years ago. This is the book she wished she had, to give to her parents, her friends and family members. *Living autism day.by.day*, is an amazing gift that will inspire and help so many families dealing with this very difficult disorder.

Author Bryson-Weaver knows well the challenges of her audience after having three children, two with special needs and her youngest having Autism. Her experience as a mother, wife and professional in the autism world helped her gain valuable insights into this mysterious disorder.

Using a narrative style, current research and the author's experience, this book is written in an informal and entertaining way that will appeal to readers on a daily basis in a comfortable manner, on topics such as autism awareness, self-awareness, tips and concepts about living with autism. This book propels the reader into real life experiences throughout the year in short daily readings. By understanding how the autistic person thinks, what parents feel and what issues on a daily and yearly basis come up, the reader will be able to breathe a sigh of relief that what they are experiencing is shared and that there are ways to help them achieve success and happiness for their families. The book is meant to be read for only a few moments each day with an inspirational quote, a daily dialog about a real life autism issues and a thought or action for that day.

Some of the daily readings share how a combination of genetic and early prenatal factors can lead to atypical brain development and what that can mean. Some of the daily reading shares early signs of autism and shows how early experiences shape child development, leading to what we see as a spectrum of autistic behaviors. And then there is that all important question, "Is there a cure?"

Other books have proposed various biomedical and complementary/alternative therapies as “cures” for autism. This book reviews the risks and benefits of available treatments and addresses the question of whether we should really be searching for a cure or simply an understanding of how to encourage an autistic child’s strengths while teaching them the skills they need to be successful in a social world.

Is this permanent?

Autism lasts throughout life but it does not have to mean lifelong impairments. Families, educators, and clinicians working together can help people with autism live fruitful, happy and successful lives. Some of the daily readings provide specific recommendations for dealing with common behavior problems, such as sleep and aggression, based on peer-reviewed evidence and the author’s clinical experience. It further explains how to help a child with autism develop essential skills for transition to school and success in adulthood.

Is there anything I can do?

Families cannot manage the treatment costs and challenges of autism alone. This book explains how autism affects individuals, families, and society. It addresses the much-publicized autism “crisis” and proposes strategic plans for how the reader can take action to help ensure people with autism become successful contributors to society. This book has come at the right time.

Dr. Mel Gill,
Best-selling Author of “The Meta Secret,”
Educational Consultant, Autism Foundation School, Singapore Committee
Head Pre-school Autism
Council CEO, Georgi Lozanov Foundation for Suggestopedia, Bulgaria.

Introduction

I know full well the challenges that face the caregiver of an autistic child. For fifteen years, as the mother of an autistic son, I have navigated the waters of the autism community; finding little-known resources, communicating with parents about their special challenges, and discovering—yes!—even the blessings of autism. Now I share my findings with the millions of parents who struggle with autism via a day-by-day almanac that offers concise yet powerful entries even the busiest caregiver will appreciate. Just as each new day in the life of an autistic parent brings surprises, so *Living-Autism, Day by Day* will present a fresh approach to each new day.

Each daily reading begins with a quotation, and a reflection meant to get you interested and thinking about autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) in a comfortable, easy manner. Following the daily reflections are simple actions that can help you live autism day by day. At the end of each reflection and action is a space to add your own notes, thoughts, ideas and results for each day. Entries will address the world of autism from all angles, and help will come in many forms. They will include:

- practical advice
- inspiring stories and quotes
- household tips
- humour anecdotes
- national and community resources (see also appendixes)
- facts and statistics
- hope and encouragement
- educational and professional resources (see also appendixes)
- strategies and tips on autistic child-care

- insights for clients, family, and friends wanting to understand autism
- treatments and research (specifically discussed in the months of November & December)
- appendixes with additional resources on specified topics and to find more help

This is a book to help you feel good and assist you in the process of discovering:

- Autism awareness
- self-awareness
- many of the blessings in your life!

Written with compassion and a true understanding of its readers, *Living autism day.by.day* may be read in bite-size daily moments or all at one time. Either way, this book will be an indispensable resource guide for families to turn to again and again.

There are many reasons I felt compelled to write this book. I am the mother of three beautiful children, two with special needs. My youngest son has autism. As a parent,, denial, anxiety, guilt, confusion, anger, depression, and fear were the mainstream in my daily thoughts in the beginning of my journey with autism. As a way to cope, I began a journal of my feelings, what I was grateful for, and many of my findings on autism. Two years into living with autism every day I knew I was going to write a book. Twelve years later, I did.

Shortly after my son received the diagnosis of autism, I felt all the dreams I had for my child's future died, and inside, my heart died as well. One of the greatest things I desired during this time was a little solace and peace of mind. I didn't know how or where to find it; there was so much to learn, much more to do,

too much to accept, and deep inside all I wanted to do was scream “go away!” I didn’t want autism to have any part of in my life or my child’s life.

I knew this type of thinking was not healthy for me, or my child. Of course it was normal to feel the loss of what I had hoped for my child’s future, but was my grief stemming from my child’s autism in and of itself, or was it my attitude and personal fears about not wanting a child with autism? Did I not want my child? I knew I had to examine my grief.

On a regular basis, I felt panic and an ache in my solar plexus. My mind flooded with questions every day. Will he finish high school? Will he struggle? Will he be bullied? Will he even know that he is being bullied? Will he be labeled? Will he be stigmatized? Will he be able to go to university or college? Will he make friends? Will they use him? Will they harm him in any way? Will his peers make fun of him, coerce him into unhealthy decisions like drugs, or stealing? Will he know he is being coerced? How will I protect him? How will I be there for him always? How can I live with the thought that I was not there for him if something happens?

Will he find his independence? Will he be able to drive? Will he have ambitions for his future? Will he be able to manage his life, decisions, money, relationships, and disappointments? What will he do when things go wrong? Will he find love, be able to express love and receive love? Will he be able to get married and have a healthy relationship? Will he be happy? How will he deal with all these issues? How will we get through this? There are too many questions. Please God take this away! Not my child! Please help me!

I came to know autism, and with it a crisis deep enough to shake my faith. I remember going to a healing mass one evening soon after my son was diagnosed. I prayed to God, “God I can

handle this, you know I can, but I need to know this is your will. I need a sign from you tonight at mass. Anything will be fine.” I was thinking God could talk to me, give me a gift of one of the spirits, like tongues, or prophecy. I had never experienced one of these so any would do. Perhaps even slay me in the spirit to the floor. I watched and listened intently the whole mass and nothing happened. I left that mass empty. I felt like my spirit died that night. I was so angry at God. I was looking for something spectacular, something apart from the ordinary, with an unmistakable divine stamp. All I saw and heard was an elderly man, dear, Father Jack Dolan, performing purification rites with wine and water, preaching a doctrine on repentance that was hardly revolutionary. I looked in vain because I was looking only for the extraordinary. God’s work is seldom something apart from the work of our everyday lives. God most often works through the ordinary. Always has, always will.

It was many months before I found a way to deal with the impact of the diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder that my son received. I came to realize that autism is not something my child has. My child is not somehow trapped inside an invisible force field or wall of autism. I came to realize that autism is a way of being; an extraordinary way of being that influences every experience, sensation, emotion, feeling, thought, and perception of my child’s life. Autism would forever change my experience of as well. I only had to decide if I was willing in my heart to accept what made my child unique, beautiful, and exceptional—like all other children. I came to feel I was given a gift, a masterpiece. My child was a blessing from God. And I began to truly live autism day by day. Hence, my remarkable, sometimes mind-boggling roller-coaster journey with autism began along with the many extraordinary miracles I witnessed, so too my book began.

Every day I journaled my feelings and reflected on them. I was always able to find a way to feel blessed. These daily bless-

ings offered reassurance as I struggled with God's design for my life. Slowly, my heart opened and I began to smile again. I began to experience comfort and joy once again in my family and in my daily life. I began a wonderful journey of soul-searching and exploration. I started to see differently. I engaged with myself, my family, my child and life differently. I was becoming much more patient, kind and loving. Always being driven to accept only 100 percent from myself and others, I had to give that up. It's funny now, no matter how you define it, engagement is something that we most likely underestimate. Engagement touches various moments of truth and the diagnosis of autism would completely change not only how I engaged with someone in each moment but also how the inside of myself works. I began to experience acceptance and even gratefulness for exactly who my son is. This experience of *Living autism day.by.day* ultimately enriched my sense of life's meaning, and a realization that truly there are real angels among us on this earth.

Twelve years after my son received his diagnosis I began to write my book. I will never forget that day. It was December 15th, 2011. For over ten years I had felt I would eventually write my story—a journey about accepting my life, and actually discovering the many blessings within autism. However, the morning of December 15th, I woke up knowing clearly I was not to write my story, I was told to write the book I wished I had received when my son was diagnosed.

No, I did not hear voices in my head, but I felt it clearly in my heart. "Start writing, and write as if someone had sat down with you, held your hands, and began sharing with you everything you were about to feel, experience, and learn about Autism Spectrum Disorders. Write in a loving, comfortable way; in a format so that busy parents, guardians, caregivers, family, friends, and teachers can pick up this book and not be overwhelmed." So that morning I began a one-year writing experience which resulted in this book.

My prayer for you is that you take a few minutes every day of the year to enjoy a reflection on autism, and just for that day, take some small action. As you do, relax, breath, and trust the journey. My hope is that you share the blessings of *Living autism day.by.day, Daily Reflections & Strategies to Give You Hope and Courage*, and that this book will help many others as well. Please share this book with your family, friends, your children's' teachers, therapists, and doctors.

Many Blessings,
Pamela Bryson-Weaver

Living autism day by day

*Autism Spectrum Disorder,
No way!
I think you made a mistake,
Today,
My child looks like any other,
Check again" I say,
I'm not ready for this,
Living autism day by day.*

*Irascible anger,
Raging fear.
What do you expect?
Am I clear?
Take this awful diagnosis
Away!
I don't want to be,
Living autism, day by day.*

*I wish that you would bond with me,
Look into my eyes just once and see.
To reach, to touch, to hug, and kiss,
But this is not what is meant to be.
I have had enough.
Dear Lord, on my knees I pray,
Why am I so depressed?
Living autism day by day.*

*Okay, I myself will teach my child,
I say,
To laugh, to cry, to speak,
To play.
As desperate as I may be,
I'll find the way,
To reach inside you,
Living autism day by day.*

*Acceptance, you are my child,
And always will be.
I have learned,
To let go, it was all about me!
Through the pain and joy,
Reaching out to others and finding a way,
I've watched you grow,
Living autism day by day.*

*You are a precious child,
Diagnosed with ASD.
One of God's gifts,
Chosen perfectly for me.
How close you are to my heart,
And from my soul I do pray,
As I have learned to see the blessings,
Of Living autism day by day.*

~ by Pamela Bryson-Weaver

January

Autism affects 1 in 50 children

The most comprehensive report on rising rates of autism came from the National Epidemiologic Database for the Study of Autism in Canada(March 2012). Released last year, it found increases in autism diagnoses in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Labrador, and southeastern Ontario. The increases range from 39 to 204 percent, depending on the region and age group.⁽¹⁾ In Canada, autism is now recognized as the most common neurological disorder affecting children, and one of the most common developmental disabilities.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state the latest stats, showing one in 50 US children now have autism. Consider that thirty years ago the incidence of autism was 1 in 100,000 children. In 1986, autism affected 1 in 2,000. By 1992 it was 1 in 500. In 2004 it had risen to 1 in 150, in 2011 an average of 1 in 88 children, and according to recently released statistics, the autism rate is now 1 in 50 North American children⁽²⁾. Autism is more likely to be found in boys than in girls, with a 5:1 boy to girl ratio⁽³⁾. The latest statistics mean that between 3-4 percent of US boys now have autism.

The number of children diagnosed with autism has increased exponentially over the last few decades. Autism is found throughout the world, in families of all racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Some of this increase can be explained by improved

1 - Works Cited. See Appendix 2.

2 - Works Cited. See Appendix 2.

3 - Works Cited. See Appendix 2.

awareness and better diagnosis, while another portion may be explained by environmental factors. The increase in the prevalence of autism cannot be ascribed to genetic factors alone. Autism spectrum disorders are most prevalent among six to eleven-year-olds, and the rise is nothing short of alarming.

When first diagnosed, Autism can seem like a hopeless puzzle.



January 1

*Character is the ability to carry out a good resolution long after
the excitement of the moment has passed. ~ Cavett Robert*

The New Year stands before us and it's always exciting to start a new year making New Year's resolutions. We dig within ourselves, we dream, and we shape goals for ourselves, our families, and also our children with autism. Write down your dreams and goals for the year. Goals give us direction. They are a powerful force to put into play on both subconscious and conscious levels. Take some time to write it all down as an affirmation. Then let it go. Put your list away until the end of the year. At the end of the year look at your list to see how many of your dreams and goals came true. You may be pleasantly surprised.

~ Just for Today ~

I will write down my goals and dreams. I will do that now for the year to come. I will remember that there is a powerful force activated by clarifying goals.

MY NOTES

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.....

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Sometimes, when I need a miracle, I just have to look at my child, and realize, I have already created one!



*Adena loves spending time with her family.
She loves going to school and playing with her brothers.*

About the Author

Pamela Bryson-Weaver is married and has three children, two with special needs. Her youngest son, John, has autism. Pamela



John and Mom (Pamela) now.

is a RDH (Registered Dental Hygienist) who has been in the dental field for over thirty years and is co-owner of a dental practice in Canada. She has spent her whole professional career working with clients who have special needs, including autism spectrum disorders.

Author, speaker, and activist; Bryson-Weaver is uniquely qualified to speak on autism; she is a past president of the Autism Society in her Province. When

Bryson-Weaver was president she met with government members of parliament and worked hard, along with other parents, to raise 1.8 million in funding for therapy.

Now all children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder in her province receive \$20,000 a year for treatment. She is a past president of FTRA (A therapeutic riding association), and she founded and yearly hosts FTRA's most successful fund raiser.

Bryson-Weaver also served as director of Pee Wee Active Living, formally called the Junior Special Olympics (a program she began and directed in her city for over six years, which is now running nationally across Canada).

Bryson-Weaver also produced and promoted through Canada's largest womens' league a resolution on autism that was presented locally, provincially, and nationally, and was passed nationally in Canada 2004.

Share with Me

I would love to know your reactions to *Living autism day.by.day*. Please drop me a line by email, Twitter, and or on my Facebook page and let me know your favourite day of the book and how it affected you, what you learned, or what you did about it.

I also invite you to send me pictures of your family and loved ones with ASD that you would like to have considered for future publications, website, book, etc., including all forms of print, electronic, and online media to promote Living Autism Now worldwide.

Send submissions to:

info@livingautismnow.com

<https://twitter.com/livingautismnow>

<http://www.facebook.com/LivingAutismNow>

<http://pinterest.com/LivingAutismNow>

<http://www.Livingautismnow.com>

About the Book

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD's) is reaching epidemic proportions throughout the world in families of all racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Autism is five times more likely to be found in boys than in girls. Autism is a devastating neurological and biological disorder that typically affects children between the ages of 18 months to five years of age. This diagnosis is so heartbreaking to most families that parents and caregivers are desperately seeking answers. The strenuous demands of specialized care and overwhelming strain of information leave little or no time to absorb the knowledge available.

In her new book, titled: *Living autism day.by.day*; subtitled: Daily Reflections & Strategies to give you hope and courage. Pamela Bryson-Weaver shares as a parent how she learns that her son is Autistic and then spends the next fourteen years working with doctors, Autism organizations, and both government and private professionals, assembling a wonderfully easily digestible resource book for parents and caregivers.

Living autism day.by.day; helps one identify a child with autism, guides them through the early years, and decide which is the right course to take when all paths seems equally daunting. Bryson-Weaver writes a book that provides a comfortable way for parents and caregivers to learn and understand the massive information out there on autism spectrum disorders. With just five minutes a day, through the 365 days of the year you will learn new and hopeful information.

Bryson-Weaver's book offers compassionate, concise daily readings on autism awareness, self-awareness, practical advice, humour, anecdotes, paradoxes, tips, inspiring quotes, and a way to discover the blessings of autism. The reader will be given researched facts and additional resources to follow up on any information they choose to focus on. From a parent's perspective *Living Autism Day-By-Day* is an indispensable reference on the things you need to know about autism, a resource you can turn to again and again.

Visit our website for a free report, "10 Things You Should Never Say To an Autistic Person." <http://www.Livingautismnow.com>