

# Resources Addendum for *Benjamin Breaking Barriers: Autism — A Journey of Hope*

First posted: December 2013

## *Resources That I Like...*

People often ask me to recommend books or resources (beyond those listed in my book) that resonate with my life philosophy and my way of working with Benjamin. Below is a listing of favorite web links, news articles, books, movies, and other resources. (The bibliography found in my book includes only materials that are directly referenced in the text; those materials are *not* included in the listing below.) This list is a “living document” which gets updated as new things come to my attention; it doesn’t strive to be comprehensive, but it does reflect my values and aesthetics when approaching pedagogical issues, autism therapy, and life in general.

### **Blog:**

My favorite blog for cutting-edge information and thoughtful, well-modulated opinions on the “politics” of autism; written by bestselling author, John Elder Robison, a brilliant man who has Asperger’s.

- <http://jrobison.blogspot.com/>

### **News Articles:**

The last portion of the article cited below has a fascinating segment on a pair of identical twins with vastly differing degrees of autism. The discussion is focused on “epigenetic processes,” a promising field of study, particularly in relation to autism (see pp. 61-65 of the article). In essence, *epigenetics* posits that there is a genetic predisposition to developing autism and that this tendency is triggered by external factors which can differ from one individual to the next.

- National Geographic, January 2012. *Twins: Alike But Not Alike*.

The article below gives some insight into the issues that come up as a child with autism approaches adulthood.

- [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/us/autistic-and-seeking-a-place-in-an-adult-world.html?\\_r=2&emc=eta1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/us/autistic-and-seeking-a-place-in-an-adult-world.html?_r=2&emc=eta1&)

*Spezialisterne* is a company that assesses, trains, and employs individuals with autism as consultants in IT and other sectors with technically oriented tasks and jobs; however, only a small percentage of the autistic population actually fits the profile of skills and interests required for success in the field.

Below are informative links.

- <http://usa.specialisterne.com/>
- [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/magazine/the-autism-advantage.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/magazine/the-autism-advantage.html?_r=0)

The following three archived magazines offer valuable, “in a nutshell” information about autism. Although I clipped the relevant articles years ago, I still think they are excellent summaries. Well written, concise, and touching on many important points.

- Time Magazine, May 15, 2006. Cover title: *New Insights Into the Hidden World of Autism*.
- Newsweek, Feb. 28, 2005. Cover title: *Babies and Autism: Why New Research On Infants May Hold the Key to Better Treatment*.
- Time Magazine, May 6, 2002. Cover title: *Inside the World of Autism*.

## Books:

I think that Temple Grandin’s most recent books are particularly interesting. When Benjamin was little and I read Grandin’s book, *Thinking In Pictures*, I was fascinated, but also had the sense that Benjamin’s perceptions of the world were *not* so similar to Grandin’s. Over the years, Grandin’s perspective has broadened greatly, and these two recent books include descriptions of more varied ways in which a person with autism might perceive the world, as well as delving into the newest directions being taken by autism researchers.

- *The Autistic Brain: Thinking Across the Spectrum* (2013)
- *The Way I See It: A Personal Look at Autism and Asperger’s* (2011)

*Be Different*, by John Elder Robison. Written by someone with Asperger’s, providing advice to fellow Aspergians and sharing insights into how he perceives the world. Gives examples of how to compensate for the challenges of Asperger’s and emphasizes the importance of building on a person’s strengths and special talents.

*You’re Going to Love This Kid*, by Paula Kluth. The book has a video curriculum about how to teach inclusively (especially kids on the autism spectrum) which is sold by Brookes Publishing and goes by the same name, “You’re Going to Love This Kid.” She has a bunch of other excellent resources, and her website is [www.paulakluth.com](http://www.paulakluth.com)

*Disconnected Kids*, by Robert Melillo. Describes the brain-balance program developed by Melillo for children with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurological disorders. Also, *Reconnected Kids*, by Melillo. I appreciate that his books are easy to understand and allow parents to be proactive in working with their children at home. His approach takes many factors into consideration. These include: sensory-motor; academic; dietary; behavior modification; balancing right and left brain functions.

*Wild Child and Other Stories*, by T.C. Boyle. Written by one of short fiction’s contemporary masters, the title story, *Wild Child*, is a retelling of the life of Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron, who was born to a peasant family in revolutionary France and who became a “feral child” after being abandoned in the deep woods. After the boy is

trapped and caught at age nine, Dr. Jean-Marc Itard of the Institute for Deaf-Mutes in Paris tries to teach Victor to both speak and reason. I am astounded by how closely the described process parallels autism therapy; I'm also fascinated by the author's insightfulness in bringing to life Itard's therapeutic path. This is an example of "manufactured autism," where many symptoms of autism stem from the absence of verbal stimulation and language acquisition during the early, formative years of a child's life.

## Peer Mentoring:

Projects which pair up disabled individuals with neurotypical peers provide powerful learning experiences for all involved. Below are a few links that might inspire you to join or start up a group project.

- <http://www.penguinproject.org/>
- <http://www.waldorftoday.com/2011/09/creating-new-worlds-circus-arts-for-asd-students-at-the-alabama-waldorf-school-in-birmingham-by-cynthia-mwenja/>

The *Tapestry Theater Company* (in which Benjamin has been acting since its inception in 2012) is an offshoot of the *Center Stage Theater Company* for youth. *Tapestry* was inspired by *The Penguin Project* (see link above). Read about Benjamin's experiences on our Benjamin Breaking Barriers Blog (see *Thanks To Tapestry Directors*, Oct. 5, 2012; also, *Annie, jr*, Oct 17, 2013)

- <http://www.centerstagetheatercompany.org/index.html>
- <https://www.facebook.com/tapestrytheatrecompany>

## Self-Regulation; Sensory Integration:

Benjamin and I both find *EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) Tapping* to be helpful. It's a simple-to-do routine which combines activating many of the body's energy meridians while verbalizing specifically targeted affirmations. I found the following link to be most useful in learning the technique:

- <http://eft.mercola.com/>

For a soothing auditory experience, try bilateral sound recordings. The sound continually moves back and forth from one ear to the other in a steady fashion. Benjamin likes the nature sounds mixed with music (CD title: *Inner Mirror*), and he has his teachers' permission to use an Ishuffle so that he can unobtrusively listen to soothing recordings during school.

- <http://www.biolateral.com/catalog/cds/feed>

The following site is an excellent resource for parents who want to engage in occupational therapy activities with their child at home.

- <http://www.therapiststreetforkids.com/index.html>

The site below offers products such as “autism swings,” “body socks,” “dance silly sacks,” hammocks, and bed sheets which are designed to alleviate various sensory issues.

- <http://www.laceandfabric.com/>

The LENA Research Foundation develops advanced technology for the early screening, research, and treatment of language delays and disorders in young children. They have created a language analysis tool that can help screen for autism using software to analyze recordings of a child’s voice (all sounds, not just verbalizations) in order to pick up nuances and patterns that are difficult to hear with the plain ear

- <http://www.lenababy.com>

Various autism software and teaching apps are available and, while these may be useful tools, my sense is that the ongoing energy of human interaction during teaching and autism therapy is paramount and that the use of technology should be minimal, particularly with young children. However, this 2006 article suggests the useful application of a hand-held device for older kids with autism who are learning to self-regulate their interactions.

- [http://www.boston.com/yourlife/health/mental/articles/2006/04/23/for\\_autistic\\_students\\_social\\_skills\\_from\\_a\\_handheld\\_device/?page=full](http://www.boston.com/yourlife/health/mental/articles/2006/04/23/for_autistic_students_social_skills_from_a_handheld_device/?page=full)

## **Waldorf Education:**

If you are new to Waldorf education, here is a good introductory video:

- <http://www.urbanoakschool.org/excellent-video-that-describes-waldorf-education/>

I love the following newsletter for its interesting articles, thought-provoking ideas, and its gallery of images:

- <http://www.waldorftoday.com/>

Here’s an astounding website where Waldorf teachers are pooling their ideas. The drawback is that it’s in German. But I’ll list it anyway because it’s awesome, even if you can only look at the images!

- <http://www.waldorf-ideen-pool.de/index.php?katid=1>

Setting up our playroom like a Waldorf kindergarten was important—it created a harmonious space that was conducive to Benjamin’s therapy. Unfortunately, Waldorf supplies tend to be pricey, and if you are like me, you will want to handcraft many things on your own. If you aren’t yet crafty, be brave and learn! You will benefit from putting your heart into the process. Here’s a “do-it-yourself” blog that might come in handy.

- <http://katesapartmentsteading.wordpress.com/2013/04/26/diy-waldorf-for-poor-people/>

There are plenty of beautiful “how-to” books, and you can find other websites as well (one of my favorites is listed below). Remember to take advantage of your public library, to find some of your materials at thrift stores, and to look for many of your supplies out in nature.

- <http://www.bellalunatoys.com/>

Here’s a page demonstrating wet-on-wet watercolor painting. Several vignettes in my book describe Benjamin’s positive reactions to painting; this webpage will help you get started on painting with your own child.

- <http://lavendersbluehomeschool.com/wet-on-wet-watercolor-painting-in-the-waldorf-inspired-kindergarten-homeschool/>

The celebration of seasonal festivals creates a sense of order and beauty that permeates the course of a year and develops a strong sense of connection to the rhythms of life and family. The book cited below is filled with wonderful ideas, and although it is based on the Christian calendar of celebrations, many of the suggested ideas can be adapted to fit other religious/cultural traditions. Use it as a springboard for your own creativity.

- *Festivals, Family, and Food*, by Diana Carey and Judy Large. (England: Hawthorn Press, 1982.)

## **Eurythmy:**

From my book, you got an idea of how I integrated a little basic eurythmy into Benjamin’s therapy. Now, as a young adult, Benjamin loves the therapeutic eurythmy exercises that Glenda Monash (co-founder of *Sound Circle Eurythmy*) has recently taught him, and Benjamin will use these exercises (as well as doing some “tapping” sequences) when he is feeling “off.” Below is a link to a YouTube video produced by *Sound Circle*. It begins with a dynamic example of eurythmy in performance and continues with student interviews.

- <http://vimeo.com/42471029>

## **Special Schools & Living Facilities:**

*Camphill Special Schools* are Waldorf-based schools for students with special needs. A beautifully nurturing approach.

- <http://www.camphillspecialschool.org/>

Here is a listing of anthroposophically-based therapeutic residential communities where dedicated volunteers and people with developmental disabilities share a full life together (*Camphill Communities*):

- <http://www.camphill.org/?p=41>

Public schools have much to learn much from this school for individuals with neurological differences (located in Houston, Texas).

- <http://www.monarchschool.org/>

## Movies:

I've been screening quite a few films (including documentaries) where the central character has autism, and I've found only a few that I have truly enjoyed on many levels, where the autistic traits are treated with sensitivity, realism, and humor, where moments occur that deeply touch the heart and make you think, and where I've felt thoroughly caught up and entertained, with my thoughts returning to the film days or even weeks later:

- ***The Story of Luke*** (2013; a comedy about a young man with autism whose life circumstances thrust him into an unexpected living arrangement, where he pursues his first job and first love-interest, and gets help from another “non-neurotypical”)
- ***Adam*** (2009; a comedy-drama that follows the growing relationship between a young man with Asperger's and the young woman who moves in next door)
- ***Rain Man*** (1988; a drama starring Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise as brothers; Hoffman plays an autistic savant who lives in an institution, and the story follows the development of the sibling relationship that ensues when Cruise's character learns of his heretofore forgotten sibling)
- ***Temple Grandin*** (2010; a biographical picture starring Clare Danes; it depicts Grandin's life-story as she grows from being a teenager severely hampered by her autism to being someone who's unique insights have made her a leading figure in the livestock industry and have propelled her into the spotlight of autism advocacy)
- ***Song of Our Children*** (2005; a documentary about inclusive education of kids with special needs; can be obtained through Fanlight Productions, owned by Icarus Films. The webpage for this film is: [http://www.fanlight.com/catalog/films/482\\_sooc.php](http://www.fanlight.com/catalog/films/482_sooc.php) They sell to the school/library market at what are fair prices for that market, but not reasonable for parents/individuals. If you contact the distributors and explains your needs, they may offer a different price.)

## Diet:

Benjamin has been on the GAPS diet since the summer of 2012, and there's been a clear correlation between his progress on the diet and the decrease of frequency and length of his tic/OCD episodes. ***Gut and Psychology Syndrome***, by Dr. N. Campbell-McBride, is full of basic information, but Benjamin's process did not follow the “average” progression described; we have been working with a homeopath who has extensive experience with GAPS patients, and my careful charting combined with her suggestions has allowed us to successfully customize Benjamin's diet. I've also learned an enormous amount from the book cited below, and I use many of its recipes and fermentation processes.

- ***Nourishing Traditions: the Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats***, by Sally Fallon with Mary G. Enig. (Washington D.C.: New Trends Publishing, Inc., 1999.)

I particularly like this GAPS-oriented blog:

- <http://www.mygutsy.com/>

In the text of *Benjamin Breaking Barriers: Autism—A Journey of Hope*, a number of children's titles are mentioned in passing. Since most of these are *not* included in the book's *Resources/Bibliography*, I am listing them here in the approximate order of appearance.

St. George and the Dragon

The Little Engine

Flower Fairies

Children of the Forest

I Can Help (board book; out of print)

Hush Little Baby (by Silvia Long)

The Complete Mother Goose

The Complete Tales of Beatrix Potter

Teddy Bear's Picnic

The Rainbow Fish

Little Blue and Little Yellow

What Are Friends For?

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

In the Company of Bears

King of Shadows

Grimm's Fairytales