



# Ellen Notbohm's Newsletter

*Award-winning author and columnist*

EllenNotbohm.com

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*“Fear keeps pace with hope. Both belong to a mind in suspense, in a state of anxiety through looking into the future. Both are mainly due to projecting our thoughts far ahead of us instead of adapting ourselves to the present.”*

~ Seneca

## You're Doing Fine

“Show me the autism parent who hasn't at least once wondered uneasily where lies the boundary between encouraging a child and pushing too hard. There seems to be so much at stake (we dread even an inch of backsliding in our hard-won progress), and the line keeps moving! How do we know?”



It's a question that will never go away, as each new developmental milestone

redraws the line. From watching Bryce jump into the deep end of the pool for the first time to dropping him off at his first school dance to watching him board a plane by himself to watching him drive off to school, I've churned out enough stomach acid to float a barge. I know that angst, but I also learned to say no to letting it rule me. Sometimes we already have the answer, obscured only by the veil of that uncertainty. That's why I was delighted to read the following letter. I get to tell a mom, "You've got this one, and here's why . . ."

*Dear Ellen,*

*I'm struggling with how much to push my daughter, and how much to let her be. She's six and likes to be in groups with other kids. She likes to do fun things. I want her to do a variety of new things so she's able to have an easier time with transitions. But I've signed her up for a new after-school club, riding the bus with her brother, meeting a support person from her ABA agency after she gets there who will observe and help her and possibly pull her for 1:1 instruction if needed. Now I am a nervous wreck wondering if the environment is going to be too stimulating. I know it will be more stimulating and have more kids than she's used to from other things because I have chosen things to be less stimulating and have fewer kids. But, this program is structured and has a level of noise and chaos that I have seen her do well with. But I am worried it will be too much for her. The worst case is that she doesn't go back until she's older and we try something else instead. If she has a horrible time her tutor can take her from the building to another place. I am just very nervous anyway. But I feel strongly that I want her to have opportunities for more independence. This is also a strong area for her; she has a desire to do things on her own and she likes a lot of typical kid things (she does things like getting bored during stories that may be above her comprehension or language level). I am just having a hard time knowing if I am giving her a good opportunity or if I am pushing her too much.*

*Dear Mom Getting it Right,*

*You're doing fine! Yes, your letter is saturated in apprehension. But when we strip out the 40% anxiety, we're left with 60% well thought-out parenting, exactly the kind so many of us strive for. Look what happens when I delete the anxiety.*

*My daughter is 6, and likes to be in groups with other kids. She likes to do fun things. I want her to do a variety of new things so that she's able to have an easier time with transitions. I signed her up for a new after-school club, riding the bus with her brother, meeting a support person from her ABA agency after she gets there who will observe and help her and possibly pull her for 1:1 instruction if needed, or take her from the building to another place. It will be more stimulating and have more kids than she's used to from other things, but this program is structured and has a level of noise and chaos that I have seen her do well with. The worst case is that she doesn't go back until he is older and we try something else instead. I want her to have opportunities for more independence. This is a strong area for her; she has a desire to do things on her own and she likes a lot of typical kid things.*

Your thought process and actions are a lovely model for how to manage the inherent risks in any new situation and set your child up for the best possible shot

at success.

1. You have a clear and reasonable goal.
2. You've identified your daughter's strengths.
3. You've evaluated the program as one your daughter has already demonstrated she has a better than average chance of being able to handle.
4. You've provided her with familiar support people, in transporting to the program, and during the program.
5. You've provided her an out if she needs it during the program.
6. You have a healthy attitude about "worst case." You didn't call it failure or quitting, you called it not now, maybe later, maybe something else.

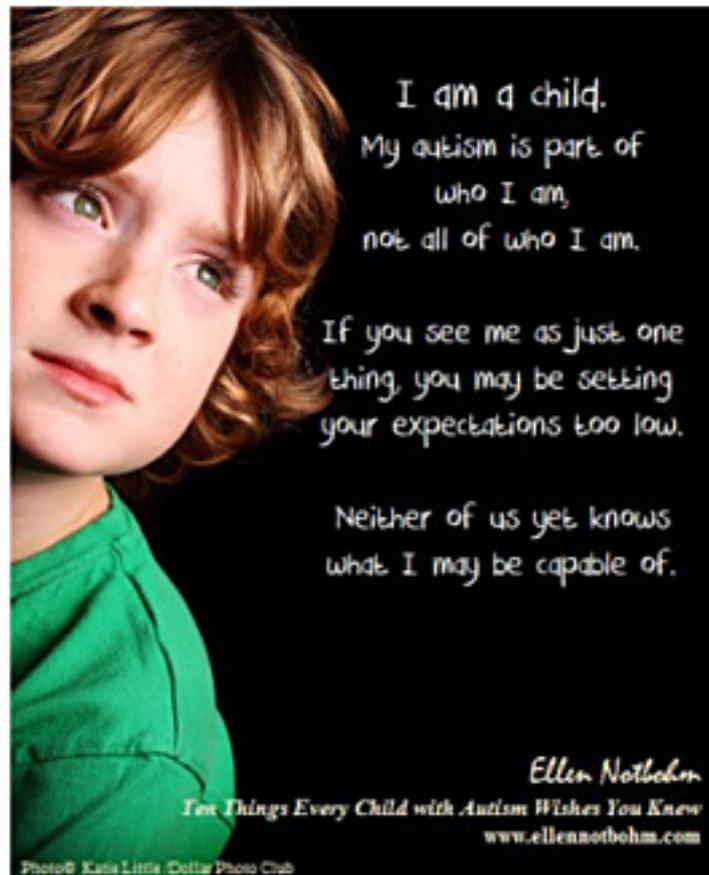
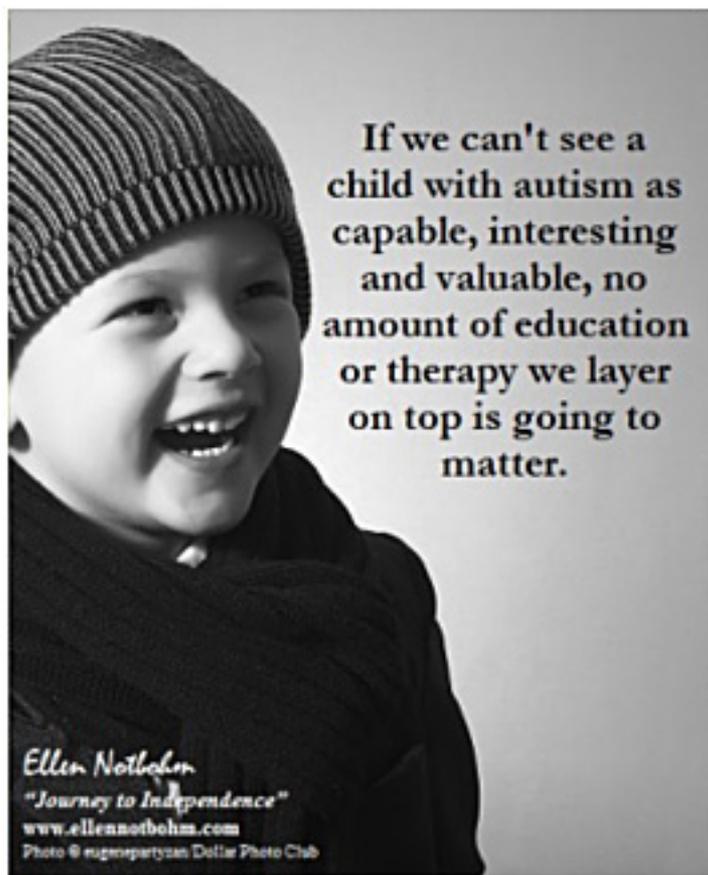
You want to know if you've set up a good opportunity or a push too far. Most often we don't get to know such things until they unfold; every minute of daily life brims with variables and even the most seemingly sure-fire things can go awry. But you can know that you've made a good decision based on the information and opportunities you have available at this point in your child's life, and more importantly, that you can have confidence in your ability to make these decisions and do it well. The challenge you now face—perhaps a bigger one?—is not allowing your daughter to see your fretfulness. Whether your attitude is excitement or anxiety about her new experience, be assured she'll pick up on it and likely adopt it. Reinforce your stance that the courage is in being open to trying new experiences, not dependent on the outcome. And be sure to let your child see you trying new experiences, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, seldom with dire or lasting consequences. It won't be long before the thrill of exploration and discovery, hers and yours, lifts you above your anxiety, with the sparkling possibility that your child is already out in front of you.

\*Further reading: [Raising a Quitter](#) | [Risk is Not a Four-Letter Word](#) and [The Wind Beneath My Wings](#)

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**This month on my Pinterest memes board**



See more pins:

- If a child with autism has voluminous knowledge about a single subject, why is that “obsessive interest” rather than “expertise?”
- Buy into the idea of balance before your child’s autism envelops you.
- At the good old IEP meeting . . .
- Autism parent: looking up to someone others may overlook

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## Welcome to our newest member of the family



Italian translation of *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew* now available from Erickson Publishing. [More information here](#)

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Downloadable PDF summaries of [\*Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew\*](#) and [\*Ten Things Your Student with Autism Wishes You Knew\*](#) now available on my website.

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Did you miss my [last newsletter](#)? Visit the [archive on my website](#) for past features.

- The Road Potholed with Good Intentions
  - The R-Word You Want for Your Child with Autism
  - When Great Expectations Aren't—and Why That's Great
  - Dude, where's my IEP? Ten Things Parents of Children with Autism Want Principals to Know
- 

### [On my blog:](#)

- Squelching echolalia—or not
  - Autism awareness is not enough
  - “Our son is being suspended due to his autism”
  - Taming those public meltdowns. Yes, You Can.
  - How to answer, “How is he doing?”
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**Writing your story?** Contact me about affordable rates for developmental editing and writer coaching at [emailme@ellennotbohm.com](mailto:emailme@ellennotbohm.com)

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Excerpts from all my books are on [my website](#), including full chapters from *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew* and *Ten Things Your Student with Autism Wishes You Knew*. [www.ellennotbohm.com](http://www.ellennotbohm.com)

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