

We are the Parents

By Kay Kronquist

We are the parents of children with special needs. Our lives are filled with many things, some good, some not.

We have our own alphabet: M-team, OT, PT, SLP, EEG, EKG, IEP, CDC, AFO, MRI.

We have our own language: cryptogenic, intractable, disorder, syndrome, early intervention, special education, inclusion, developmental delay.

We have lots of doctors: neurologists, developmental pediatricians, neurosurgeons, gastroenterologists, ophthalmologists, dentists, allergists, cardiologists, geneticists.

We have sleepless nights and difficult days. We have fewer dreams and more reality.

We have headaches: school problems, insurance companies, IEP goals, specialists, referrals.

We have more appointments than we have ball games.

We have so much to do today that it's hard to worry about tomorrow, but we must always be looking ahead.

We have other children who also want our time and attention. We have too few babysitters, too little money, too little time to ourselves.

We need our own pharmacy.

We can take apart a wheelchair in nothing flat.

We are part nurse, part insurance specialist, part chauffeur, part "hoop jumper."

We are not looking for pity, but we could probably use some help.

We reach for the stars, and we grasp at straws.

We choose to laugh, but sometimes we have to cry.

We get used to the stares, but we long for the smiles.

We become better people—more thoughtful, more compassionate, less prejudiced, less judgmental.

We decide to be thankful.

We appreciate infinitely those people who stand by us with support and encouragement.

We stick together with other parents because there's safety and comfort in numbers.

We move on from those who don't understand and can't accept our differences.

We have learned a lot over the years.

We live with the knowledge that our children will always need to be parented.

We learn to never take no for an answer. We learn to never give up. We learn to adapt our lives.

We learn that we usually get what we look for. We learn to choose our battles.

We learn who we really are down deep in those places that no one sees but us.

We learn to expect the best from our children and to rejoice in the little miracles.

We learn that loving our children is the most important, most rewarding, most challenging job we will ever have—and we do the best we can each day.



Working in the field of early intervention over the past several years has provided me the opportunity of meeting and forming friendships with many exceptional people. My friend Kay Kronquist just happened to be exceptionally exceptional. I met Kay when working at Special Kids and Families Inc. in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1998. I liked her the minute I met her. I soon found out that behind that huge smile and gift of encouragement she had walked and was continuing to walk a "rocky road." Kay was the mother of a beautiful daughter who began having seizures as a baby for no apparent reason. Because of the seizures that are only partially controlled, Stacy has been challenged with special needs. Kay was an incredible advocate for her daughter and an inspiration to all parents and children with special needs.

The other challenge that Kay faced was a battle with cancer. Despite many long and painful treatments, Kay lost the battle with her disease in May of 2001. To say that she lost is truly not so. She won the big fight. The fight for a life that is fulfilled in the presence of pain and that continues to be an inspiration to all that knew her. Kay's husband Charlie, also an exceptional person lives with their daughter Stacy in Memphis and they are continuing to press on and reach for the best God has to offer. Kay wrote this poem for parents of children who know that life is not always easy but can be a tremendous blessing.

(By Meredith Layton, a speech language pathologist working in the field of early intervention as a parent advisor)
