



Children with autism become lonesome and withdrawn, leaning towards their parents or family for support, says Vidhya; (left) Adithya, her son

# Life With an Autistic Child

**Vidhya Venkatesh, mother of a 16-year-old autistic boy, describes the challenges of bringing him up**

**L**ife would never have been so beautiful and meaningful to me if my son had not been diagnosed with PDD (pervasive developmental disorder) when he was three.

Adithya had challenges in communication. He never spoke till he was four. He had a severe gut problem as well, and was on a strict diet.

His perception was also affected. He behaved differently as he could not express what he felt. These are some common problems parents of children with autism face.

Very few mainstream schools are inclusive. Autistic children face basic functional challenges. My son was refused admission in about 20 schools before I managed to get him into a mainstream school with an inclusive set-up.

In the last few years, special schools with a wide range of therapies have come into existence, but what works for one child may not work for another. No two children are the same. Parents explore and learn to cope. They become experts as they become aware of what suits their children.

Children with autism lack social skills, which is why they are not easily accepted by their peers. They become lonesome and withdrawn, leaning towards their parents or extended family for support and care.

As an individual, I always looked for answers around

me. Why does this condition exist? Why was he born with this condition? Was it a mistake on my part? How do I make him better? What would I do if he doesn't get better? How would he cope without me?

That's when I reached Aashwasan, a spiritual science organisation. They made me realise that the answer was not outside, but within me.

In the process of trying to discover my son, I have discovered myself. I have learnt to accept this condition at a deep level and allowed him to be himself.

Despite his other deficits, he has an innate potential for

music and sports. I helped him pursue these interests, which in turn helped him create a niche for himself and become independent.

The changes I made at an emotional level helped him overcome many challenges. Parents of children with special needs find it difficult to cope with their basic challenges. They feel helpless, but learn to let go of many things.

They learn to value the small achievements of these children, trust them, and love them unconditionally.

I want to say that without Adithya, I would never have become the person I am today. My son made me grow with him, and taught me virtues like patience and perseverance. I have learnt to trust him and have faith in him. Yes, it is a struggle, but not a suffering.

**“No two children are the same. Parents explore and learn to cope. They become experts as they become aware of what suits their children.”**

— Vidhya Venkatesh, mother of an autistic child