



Is it Autism, ADHD, 'Just' a Speech Delay, or Typical Toddler Tantrums?

3 Steps You Can Take Today Instead of Worrying

Dr. Mary Barbera

RN, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Did you know that early signs of autism including speech and social delays can be detected and treated by parents and early intervention professionals without waiting in long lines for a diagnosis?

If you've downloaded this free guide, you're probably worried. I was worried too when my son, Lucas, started showing signs of autism shortly after his first birthday. I was hoping that it was "just" a speech delay or even ADHD, and I went into a deep state of denial when my husband mentioned the possibility of autism when Lucas was 21 months old.

I understand how confusing it all is because many toddlers and pre-schoolers who have language or other delays catch up on their own or with just a little early intervention. Even really bright kids with high IQs without delays often have sensory and social differences. And, typically-developing kids can have lots of tantrums too. With all this factored in, you are certainly not alone in your worry.

If your child is in a child care situation, maybe your child's teacher is indicating that something isn't quite right. He may be falling behind peers, not fitting in, playing alone too much or worse yet, being aggressive towards others.

Maybe your child has even been "held back" in daycare because of immaturity, failure to potty train easily, or separation anxiety. Or maybe he's completely aloof like my son was and doesn't even notice when you leave him. Maybe your child is at home with you all day but when you take him out or talk to friends with kids around his age, you are noticing something that is concerning.

You might even be on a long waitlist for an evaluation by a Developmental Pediatrician but now the wait is producing such stress that you find yourself lying awake worrying most nights.



I am the mom of two adult sons, Lucas and Spencer. Ever since my first born son, Lucas, was diagnosed, I have worked hard to support other parents and professionals navigating the autism maze. My goal is simple: I want you to have the road map I wish I would have had back then.

I was not an autism expert at all back then, and as I said earlier, it was my husband (a physician) who first mentioned the possibility that Lucas might have autism when he was only 21 months old.

I remember the moment he brought it up and I was totally shocked and told my husband that Lucas didn't have autism and that I never ever wanted to hear the word autism again. Lucas didn't "look like [he] had autism" to me, and your child may not either. Your child may not end up with a diagnosis of autism or ADHD, but if you downloaded this guide you're probably concerned about something, and I want to help.

A few months before Lucas was diagnosed with autism, I met a woman who had a son with autism. She told me about a 1987 study which showed that kids with autism could become indistinguishable from their peers. She said, "If they can help kids with severe autism using ABA, you need to learn how to use ABA to help your son even if it's only a speech delay." This is what finally got me out of denial and ready to help my son.



On the way home from this woman's house, I went to the bookstore and started reading about autism and Applied Behavior Analysis or ABA therapy. She gave me direction or at least permission to go into the autism world and find out how kids make progress with ABA.

Probably like you, before meeting this woman, I thought if I started looking into the possibility that Lucas had autism, the curtain would fall and my life would be over as I knew it.

By reading one book that this woman recommended in the day or two following my visit with her, I learned then what I should have learned over a year earlier which was this: The earlier you use ABA therapy to help children with developmental delays or autism, the better. And, that up to half of kids who were treated intensively starting before the age of three are statistically proven to "turn things around," especially those with mild symptoms.

When we eventually got in to see the Developmental Pediatrician, it had been three months of waiting for an appointment, but a year after my husband's initial suggestion. It was then that Lucas was diagnosed with moderate to severe autism.



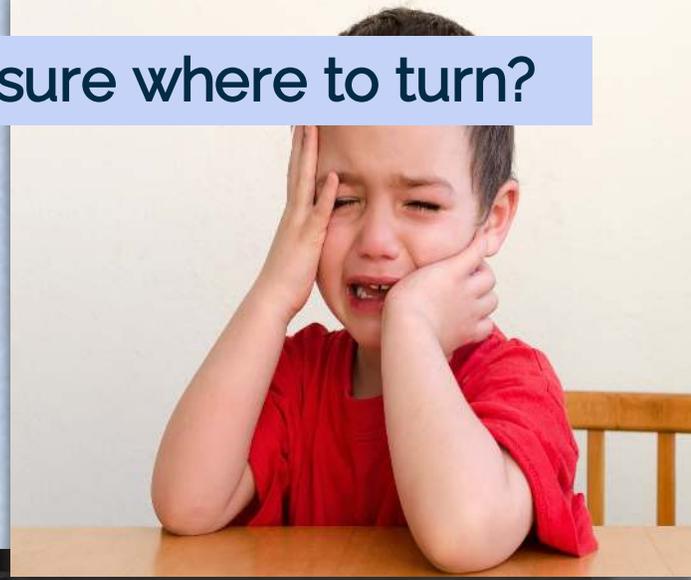
When I asked the doctor about the classic 1987 study and the book which gave me such hope, the doctor was not optimistic. He gently explained that the only times he had seen kids become indistinguishable in his long career was in kids with mild autism who started intensive treatment very early.

Many outdated parenting books that I had read before Lucas was diagnosed listed only the most severe symptoms of autism such as head banging, the inability to speak and hand flapping (which Lucas didn't have) so I was falsely reassured, but then and there, I knew I would do anything and everything I could to support Lucas.

After decades as both a parent and professional supporting children with autism and their families, I know that it isn't a one-size fits all approach. Therefore, I have created the Turn Autism Around® program because I want to meet you where you are and offer help because I KNOW you are capable of changing the trajectory of your kids' lives, with or without a diagnosis of autism.

Need additional support and not sure where to turn?
Let my team and I help you.

Learn to increase talking and decrease tantrums with this **free 10-minute digital assessment** today.



I am Dr. Mary Barbera and it is my mission to help parents and professionals around the world. My first born son, Lucas, was diagnosed with autism a day before his 3rd birthday and since then, I have become a BCBA-D, best-selling author, and online course creator. I have also created The Barbera Method™ approach so that other parents and professionals have the road map I wish I would have back when I was feeling lost in the developmental delay and autism maze.

Through my work and experiences as a mom and professional over more than two decades, I have created valuable resources and the The Barbera Method™ to help teach others to implement proven, child-friendly strategies and programming within homes and schools around the world. Participants from 6 continents and over 100 countries have taken advantage of my work, and I want to help you too!