



Autism: From Tragedy to Triumph

Carol Johnson, Julia Crowder

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“In this book Julia Crowder describes her efforts in the treatment and education of her son, Drew, who was once diagnosed with Autism. Julia describes, as only a mother can, the fears and confusions parents feel when told that there is something seriously wrong with their young child. In all likelihood, their problem is so severe that it cannot be corrected with available treatments, but they should anticipate and be prepared for the child's life long institutionalization. Julia began her search for an effective treatment in spite of her many disadvantages: she was poor, she was on the verge of divorce, she had responsibility for two other children, and she lived in Los Angeles, where she had no family, and was essentially alone. In 1975, when Julia contacted our clinic, very little was known about how to help children like Drew, and we could not even provide an estimate of what the chances were for improvements with the treatment we were able to offer. Finally, off and on during treatment, Julia would express guilt and lay much blame upon herself for Drew having failed to develop. Somehow or other, she felt that she must have done something wrong, otherwise Drew would not have the problems he now evidenced. Bettelheim's destructive theory about parental causation was well known. Today, there is no support for his position. Julia had the strength to face all these problems she was rich in a way that would never make her poor. As a parent therapist for her child, she learned a great deal about how to teach Drew a quite complex task. She had to help administer and supervise a group of student therapists, she had to help pick the right kind of school for her son and establish a constructive relationship with his teachers, and so on. On top of that, Julia went on to college, entered the school of special education and later obtained certification as a speech therapist.” Dr. O. Ivar Lovaas

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