

## She Knows Herself Very Well

by Karen K. Lowry, RN, MSN

### IMAGINE HAVING A THIRD GRADER

who is struggling academically. You have her tested by the child study team, which finds that she does not have a learning disability. *But why is she struggling?* you ask. The school professionals act as if they have not a clue. They put a 504 plan in place and hope for the best. Part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a 504 plan serves to prevent discrimination as a result of a mental or physical disability. It basically levels the playing field for children who have any difficulties that could affect their success in school. However, you need to know the areas of difficulties in order to put accommodations in place. In my daughter's case, based on the lack of a diagnosis, it was truly a band-aid and not an effective intervention.

My youngest son, a year old at the time, was diagnosed with ADHD years later, at age six. He is now thirteen years old, and I have had quite a journey advocating for his needs. During this time, I began to realize that many of my daughter's struggles may have been related to ADHD. Finally, when she was twenty years old, she was diagnosed with ADHD. Once treated with medication, she called me with excitement: "Mom, I have never been able to sit through a class and then come home and study!" With everything I know now as a result of my son's diagnosis, I have felt so bad that I was not there for her in her younger years when she needed me to uncover the reasons for her impairments. Unfortunately, neither was the school, although at the time of her elementary school journey, ADHD had certainly been well researched.

My daughter knows herself very well. I find it fascinating to talk with her to understand what she knows about herself.

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### Friendships

Friends in high school and college have accused her of being flaky and of being an airhead. She has admitted that she has, as a result, lost friendships. But of course, these were people never willing to understand.

I hear stories about some of her difficulties with her roommates. For instance, cleaning the apartment on a certain day and time with the other roommates is far too organized. Plus, operating in a group does not work for her. She will do it when she has decided that distraction (or lack of distraction) will allow!

Her oppositional defiance and distraction at times contribute to difficulties in

maintaining healthy relationships. If I try to help her with others' point of view, then I am not tolerated either. So I smile.

### Time management

Often we meet at a favorite restaurant for special family dinners. Such meals are never begun on time. It is always a joke that we need to tell our daughter that our meeting time is half an hour before it actually is so that she can come on time. Time management is always a struggle. She can't and won't ever really commit to when she will return home, because she knows that her distraction may affect that commitment. It's okay... I smile.

It's frustrating to think that she will miss appointments. When she was young, I was in charge. Now I have to depend on her to get there on time. I call her and text her to remind her. She gets there, but never on time. The other day she rushed off to a doctor appointment that she said was scheduled at

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1 PM. She texted me at 1:30, laughing that it turned out that her appointment was really at 2 PM. She texted back that she was actually early now and could fill out forms like normal people. I smiled.

### **Organization**

I know it shouldn't bother me, but I really detest it when a bedroom in my house looks like a tornado hit. It seems to always hit in my daughter's room. It seems like she has gotten worse since she entered college. I am thinking that it's because she has so many things going on that what is in her head is reflected in her living space. I used to become completely stressed out about this. When she says it's not a mess and that she knows where everything is, and that she will flip out if anything is moved, I smile. I clean when she leaves. But then it doesn't seem like her room.

She did get her driving license on her birthday. Her "Cinderella" license (curfew) at seventeen could have been transferred into a regular license at eighteen. But this took until she was twenty-one years old. She had so much to consider in order to accomplish this: six forms of ID. It was not worthy of focus at the time, I guess. But the good news is that she continues to be accident-free. I always smile!

She has learned to accommodate for her dis-

organization. She has several planners and lists to keep her on track.

### **Gifts**

I always try to remember that my daughter is a beautiful person who possesses so many gifts. She has talent in music, both

in playing guitar and writing songs. She can always empathize with her younger brother as he struggles with adolescence and ADHD. She works hard and can hyperfocus on what is needed to be successful. I admire her and love her with all my heart. **A**