

The Movement of Imperfection: A Celebration of Human Differences

by Mark Katz, PhD

Parents, educators, healthcare providers and well informed consumers are finding creative ways to address the needs and daily challenges of those who struggle with AD/HD. In each issue of Attention, we highlight one innovative program, model, or practice and pass on appropriate contacts so you can implement similar efforts in your community. Appearance in this column, however, does not imply endorsement by CHADD.

DO YOU BELIEVE that our true beauty lies less in how well we can read or pay attention, and more about who we are on the inside? And that there are a lot of very important human qualities not captured in a grade on a school report card—qualities like courage, resilience, creativity, energy, and loyalty?

If so, then Gina Terrasi Gallagher and Patty Terrasi Konjoian (AKA the Shut Up Sisters) invite you to join the Movement of Imperfection. It's a movement that helps "imperfect parents" of "imperfect children" learn to see their children's differences in a new light. In a broader sense, it's really a movement that helps all of us learn to see differences in a new light.

Laughing our way to sanity

Blessed with each other and "the ability to find humor in almost anything," Gina and Patty use laughter to bring home their message. "Of all the coping techniques we've employed, we've found laughter to be one of the most effective," they say. "We are not alone in feeling this way. As many parents of special needs kids often say, we have two choices—to laugh or cry. We prefer laughter. It doesn't create puffy eyes, and offers some serious health benefits."

"Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid"

Gina and Patty's journey began soon after their daughters' difficulties were given names (Asperger syndrome and bipolar disorder, respectively). Frightened, confused, and feeling alone, they didn't know where to turn for help. School

Gina Terrasi Gallagher
and Patty Terrasi Konjoian -
AKA the Shut Up Sisters.



For those interested in joining their *Movement of Imperfection*, Gina and Patty have a few suggestions:

Submit a story. To submit stories about you and your amazing "imperfect" child visit shutupabout.com.

Show your imperfect pride by bragging about your imperfect child.

Watch our silly YouTube productions.

Visit YouTube.com and type in "Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid!"

Become a Facebook fan. Visit facebook.com, and type in *Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid*.

Follow us on Twitter. Visit twitter.com.

Read our imperfect blog for your weekly dose of humor and more stories of imperfection.

Find the blog at shutupabout.com.

And you could also hire us to speak (and help us get out of the house).

To inquire about hiring the *Shut Up Sisters* for your event, email info@shutupabout.com.



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meetings felt like it was “us” versus “them.” Professionals would speak in a foreign language, using terms they couldn’t understand.

After reading books about their children’s disabilities, they would be even more depressed. Everyone seemed focused on what their children couldn’t do rather than what they could do. Then came the last straw: Having to listen to friends talk on and on about their high-achieving, “perfect” children.

Fed up, the sisters decided to create a movement, imploring people “to come out of their messy closets and embrace “imperfection.” A book—*Shut Up About Your Perfect Kid!*—soon followed, then a business, Shut Up Industries, Inc. And then the sisters began the Movement of Imperfection.

Learning to see differences in a new light

If you’re a child with learning or other differences who feels accepted and valued at school, then there’s a good chance your classmates see beyond your challenges and recognize your qualities. The same is true if you’re an adult with learning or other differences who feels accepted and valued at work. If so, there’s a good chance that your colleagues see beyond your differences and recognize the important contribution you make.

In their funny and irreverent way, this is what Gina and Patty are trying to help all of us achieve. If we learn to see beyond our imperfections and the imperfections of others, we can see our true qualities and all that we and others have to offer. Researchers in the field of human resilience find that our ability to see life’s challenges in a new light is a key ingredient in overcoming a range of childhood adversities. Gina and Patty are providing countless children, families, and adults a way to see challenges in a new light. ●

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