

# *Preface*

## *There Is Hope*

**J**n 1973 when my second son, Brandon, was born, it was unheard of for parents to speak openly about their child's medical problems. I knew there was something different about my son, but having no one to talk to, I felt isolated. Searching for answers, I went to our local library and bookstore to gather information to help me cope and better understand him.

I was looking for a sensitive book, preferably written by a mother who was candid about her feelings and experiences while raising a child who was "different." I hoped that she could explain honestly how she dealt with her impatience and distress. Unfortunately, I never found that book, and vowed if I couldn't find it, that someday I would write one.

The book you're holding is the book I needed and never found. It is the fulfillment of that vow I made more than thirty-five years ago.

Brandon has Asperger Syndrome, untreatable epilepsy and severe learning disorders. He couldn't tie his shoes until he was fifteen years old. He has been called every name in the book, weirdo, jerk, idiot, moron, spastic, etc.

I have found him locked in a shed, battered and bruised on the bottom of a pile of kids. He has been shoved, spit on, slapped, teased, taunted, and tormented.

I was desperate to protect my son, and almost lost my mind while trying to keep him safe.

Brandon couldn't make friends except in his "secret world." His underdeveloped fine and gross motor skills greatly limited his activities, and his inability to express himself kept

him longing for acceptance.

*But his limitations didn't stop him.* I wanted my son to succeed, and so did he.

As parents, we are all looking for the same thing. We want our children to be happy, and to reach their full potential. I am no different. I found in order to achieve that goal I had to begin by giving up all resistance and accept my son just as he is.

When I no longer saw Brandon as my opponent and realized we were on the same team, I felt more energized and inspired to stay the course and help him. My heart opened and I became filled with hope. I replaced my fear with courage and started to trust my decisions. I forged ahead while picturing a positive outcome. I chose to ignore all negative comments, and when the words *Brandon* and *couldn't* were used in the same sentence, I quickly replaced *couldn't* with *could*.

As I write this, Brandon is thirty-six years old, and I am overjoyed to tell you that we live in the same city, but independent of one another. I will take you step-by-step and show you how Brandon accomplished what others said was “virtually impossible”—living alone in his own apartment *successfully*.

Brandon and I have helped each other to live our lives to the fullest. I'll explain how that happened for us, and how it can happen for you and your child, too.