

STORIES OF HOPE



BRIAN'S
AUTISM JOURNEY

HAPPINESS IS BUILT ON EXPRESSION.

A rainbow of peppers, vegetables, and Ethiopian spices make Brian's favorite dish special – his mother's pasta.



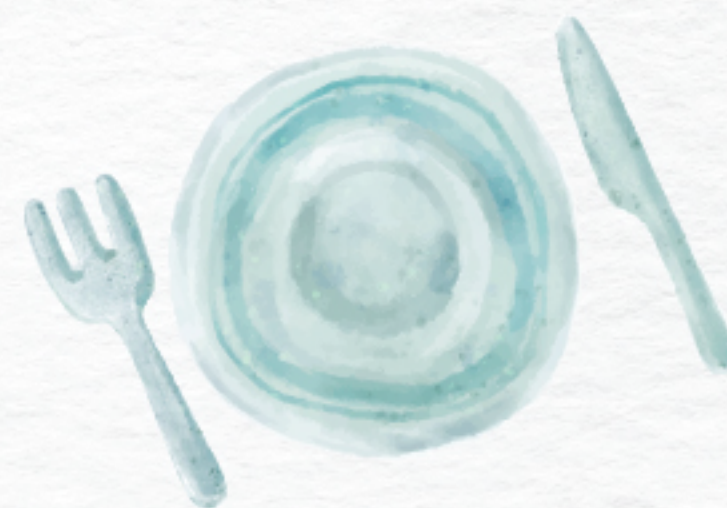
Every day, Brian and his two sisters eat at least one serving out of colorful, traditionally patterned bowls.



Even before ABA therapy, it was obvious that Brian loved his mom's recipe. Yet a look at an empty bowl didn't always translate to what he really wanted: a second helping.



To improve his communication skills, Brian began meeting with Helen, an ABA therapist who understood how important it was for Brian to express himself clearly.



As Brian's mom cooked dinner, Helen would place uncooked pasta or a bowl of sauce on the table. Before eating, Brian would try verbalizing what these things were.

For example, when saying "pasta," he started by sounding out the letter "p," and gradually worked his way up to saying the whole word.



When Brian struggled or made a mistake, Helen would offer hints or suggestions to help him get to the right answer. When he was successful, Helen would offer him praise or a small reward. As Brian became more expressive, Helen guided him less and less.



Through trial and error, Brian made progress. It was clear that the hard work was paying off.

"I taught Brian to say, 'pasta and sauce,'" said Helen. "This simple command allowed him to communicate precisely what he wanted, revealing a new world of possibilities. He could now ask for his favorite dish by name and enjoy it whenever he wanted."



Brian's newfound communication skills have led to other successes.

“Learning to request his needs has taught Brian a valuable lesson – using words can open up new doors and opportunities.”



Now, he can ask someone to move from his favorite seat or say ‘outside, please’ when he wants someone to play outside,” said Helen.



Brian continues to receive ABA therapy after school and is improving his communication skills. As his vocabulary expands, so does his ability to express his wants, needs, and feelings to his family and classmates.



Regardless of how much Brian changes, his love for his mother's pasta and sauce will always remain the same!

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We want to dedicate this Story of Hope to our staff, the hard-working parents who put everything into helping create a brighter future for their children, and the children like Brian, who continue to discover more about the world and themselves daily.



While all the stories in this book are true, names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the people involved.



Illustrations by Annabelle Meszynski