

# PFA Tips

## A Letter to My Daughter

When you were born, just sixteen months after your brother, I had no idea that you were going to be asked to lead anything but the typical sibling life. Almost ten years later, I reflect back and try to see the world through your eyes. I want you to know how remarkable I think you are, despite my feelings of guilt that I didn't do all of the right things for you. ***I wish someone had told me...***

How little attention I would give you while I tried to handle daily crises of tantrums, elopement, and treatment trials.

How hard it would be for you to have a brother who is wired differently.

That if I went to the store alone with you two, that your brother would run away, forcing me to leave you at age 3 all alone in the store.

To spend more time pointing out how amazing your brother's insights are, and that there are no limits to his creativity and problem solving.

You would become a certified social skills instructor by the age of five.

To spend more time working to prevent you from having to take on a "Mommy role" at times.

That you would need someone explaining Autism to you just as much as your brother needed to understand his own neurological differences.

You would learn by his example, the value of persistence and undistracted focus.

That I needed to be more aware of the times I unfairly blamed you in sibling disputes because you were the one who wasn't neurologically different.

That you too would be deeply impacted by the unkind glare and comments from strangers.

That you would naturally see the "normal" in your brother.

Despite the challenges you would be presented at such an early age, you would be blessed with a pure joy and happiness that would outshine all else.

That many research studies would be done examining the impact of Autism on siblings, but not until you were beyond what I believe were your most critical development years.

That you too would benefit from the help of a therapist rather than assuming only your brother needed that specialized attention.

Unlike so many adults, you would never ask if your brother's Autism will one day go away. For you, it was never something he "had", but rather a natural part of who he is.

That I needed to spend time drawing out your feelings that you were too ashamed to express to me.

To spend more time teaching you that what makes each and every one of us DIFFERENT also makes us EXCEPTIONAL.



That you would be born with an inner strength I could only dream to have.

You would become the best friend your brother could have ever hoped for. And I pray that you feel the same way about him.

That enrolling you in your own recreational activities was every bit as important as your brother's therapies and appointments.

That you needed to be comforted every bit as much as your brother needed to be calmed down during his most aggressive moments.

That your wonderment of the world and thirst to learn would help your brother excel at his natural ability to teach others.

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**A Letter to My Daughter** – cont.

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That you wouldn't just play together, you would create masterpieces together in art, cooking, and movies, each contributing your own unique talents to the project before you.

You would develop a level of compassion and tolerance that may go well above that experienced by siblings of neurotypical children.

To spend more time writing down or videotaping the special moments between the two of you so that they aren't one day lost memories.

## Additional Resources

Parent Tips: Siblings

<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/home/parent-tips-siblings/>

Autism's effect on the "normal siblings"

<http://www.autismsupportnetwork.com/news/autisms-effect-normal-siblings-09277321>

Autism's Invisible Victims: The Siblings

<http://ideas.time.com/2012/11/30/autisms-invisible-victims-the-siblings/>

Effect of Autism on Siblings

<https://www.autism.org/autism-siblings/>

Sibling Perspectives: Some Guidelines for Parents

<http://www.autism-help.org/family-autism-siblings.htm>

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