

# 5<sup>th</sup> European Autism Congress

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### The Parents' Role in the Progress of Autistic Children

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Israel

The education and health systems have a set amount of tools they provide in order to help children with autism acquire skills and progress. You have the usual – speech therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral interventions. The amount and level of services differs between countries and even districts within the states. Students who receive these services go through drills to acquire the desired skills during the school day. Some are lucky to receive more therapy and activities after school, but most don't.

However, most of the kids' time is spent at home, with the family, and there are endless opportunities for spontaneous teachable moments, as well as deliberate teaching, while the children are at home. The reason most parents do not engage in teaching is because we don't believe we can. The system tells us that the experts know best. That you need professionals. That the kids work so hard during the day that when they come home they need a break.

I beg to differ. Our kids long to engage. They crave learning. Most of the people around them do not understand that. Also, the system teaches our kids in a level that is way below their level so they get bored and insulted and often they do not cooperate. The system interprets that as bad behavior, or they assume the kids do not understand, and then begins a vicious cycle where the kids are taught the same thing for a very long time, sometimes for years.

As soon as you assume competence and teach the children in a way that they can cooperate and reciprocate, the miracles start to happen. I have seen it with my own eyes and done it with my own two hands. We the parents need courage, we need to believe in ourselves and in our children, and when we do and follow through these kids can manifest their potential and get very far. In my presentation I will take the audience step by step through my journey from hopelessness and fear to confidence and success. And show them how every parent can do this too.

#### Biography

Shirley Blaier-Stein is an author, attorney and activist for the rights of children and people with autism. After publishing her first book, *Autism Mom, New Ways of Thinking*, she was invited to speak at the United Nations on International Autism Awareness Day. She has since then been invited to the UN again, and has appeared on TV and radio in the United States and Israel. Shirley speaks often before parents and autism professionals and educators, and is considered a "reality changer", and "very inspiring".

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