

after her that the other three kids and I didn't see either of them all afternoon. I suddenly realized that for a couple of years we had never been able to be a complete family because one of us was always somewhere in the distance trying to stop Jenny from hurting herself or others. Two days later Jenny's then headteacher told us that the school could no longer cope with her, and that we'd have to find another placement.

Every parent needs a little time to recharge, how do you unwind?

Anne: Reading for comfort is something I share with the main character. My favourite book is *Pride and Prejudice*, but *The Horse and His Boy*, one of the Narnia books, comes a close second. I love doing yoga (usually in a snatched 10 minutes at the end of the evening) and going for long walks with the family in the country

In closing, if you could tell potential readers one thing about your book, what would it be?

Anne: It's about a very unsure woman acquiring confidence and strength of character in her battle to save her daughter and her family, while hopefully retaining her sense of humour.

Anne Sutcliffe lives in England with her husband, Mark, and their four children. [*A Rock and a Hard Place*](#) is her first full-length novel.

★ [The Reviews Are In](#) ***A Rock and a Hard Place***

This novel offers a candid insight into family life with a child with severe autism, and the desperation parents feel in their battle to access the right education. Anyone who has a child with special



needs will identify with the dilemmas and struggles of Hollie's family, and the personal choices that confront Lucy, the main character. And for all readers—including those who are new to the subject matter—it is a story full of suspense and revelation.

-Virginia Bovell, a founding parent and former director of TreeHouse, the national charity (U.K.) for autism education



★ [Navigating the Emotional Journey](#) **Asking for Help**

For many years, people have showered me with compliments about my strength in facing personal challenges. In truth, I often feel overwhelmed and isolated. Something happened recently to help me realize that opening the door to ask others for help may be the most effective coping strategy I can develop.

A few years ago, my family experienced an especially demanding three months. My husband had an acute gastro-intestinal problem, independent of the usual challenges of his multiple sclerosis. The assistance he required beyond his usual needs was extremely taxing for all of us. In addition, a live-in caregiver moved out, leaving a gap in evening and weekend coverage, as well as in cooking dinners. Being the only able-bodied adult in my family, a large share of the work naturally fell on my shoulders.

I began to question my ability to go on, filling caregiving gaps, cooking, working full time, and advocating for our (then) 9-year-old son with autism. Only then did I realize I must start "walking my talk," and begin to ask for help. I finally reached my limit. I knew that if I did not change my attitude about "not being a

burden to others," I would be causing a greater crisis for me and my family, both physically and emotionally.



I took the risk. One night while visiting with neighbors, I finally got the courage to ask. I let them know how hard things were, and that I was no longer able to handle everything alone. I suggested some frozen meals would go a long way toward getting us through the current crisis. After that it became easier to ask others for support. Within two weeks, five different people brought us meals. It not only helped not to have to worry about cooking, but I began to notice that the despair of feeling isolated had lifted; no longer did I feel quite so alone.

In trying to survive without “being a bother,” I ended up feeling even more isolated. Until then I hadn’t understood how mutuality rests both in asking for and in giving help.

I came to realize that I have much to gain when I strive to be more open to what others have to give. So often, people look at those of us whose children have challenges and wonder how we manage, but may do not grasp what would be helpful. In my experience, people mostly enjoy being able to give to others. Our gift to them is to say what we need. In actuality, when we tell people what we need, we are inviting them into our circle to participate more intimately in our lives.

Lisa A. Lieberman, MSW, LCSW

Lisa is a psychotherapist with over 28 years of experience, and the author of, [A Stranger Among Us: Hiring in Home Supports for a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorders or Other Neurological Differences.](#)



★ **School Daze**

Serving Students With Asperger Syndrome in Middle School

Cory, a sixth-grade middle school student with Asperger Syndrome, was in trouble again. He refused to go to gym class because the unit was basketball and he was terrible at basketball. He felt humiliated that he was always picked last. When his special education teacher — a teacher with expertise in behavior disorders — gave him the choice of going to gym or the time-out room, Cory yelled loudly that he was not going to either place! Later when the assistant principal gave him the choice of gym or time-out, Cory kicked him and was subsequently assisted to the time-out room by several adults. Unfortunately, this was not an unusual occurrence in the school.



Many school districts are finding it difficult to meet the needs of the growing population of students identified with Asperger Syndrome. With the onset of puberty, increasing awareness that they are somehow different from their peers and a demanding curriculum, middle school students with Asperger Syndrome frequently fall apart. Their grades plunge, anxiety increases and organization becomes nonexistent.

Teachers and other professionals often blame children as well as their families for not trying harder and doing better. Frustrated families blame the schools for not providing adequate services, including modifications and accommodations. Unfortunately, once this cycle begins, the needs of the child become lost in the “blame game.”