

PROUD ASPY MOM · JULY 2026

Adulting is Hard



Adulting is hard for everyone. From the moment we turn 18 — and in some cases before — we are faced with a multitude of responsibilities and choices.

> *Do I further my education or do I get a job?*
>
> *If I further my education, how do I pay for it? Where will I live, and how will I balance work and school?*
>
> *If I do not go to school and I work, will I make a livable wage to replace the support I received from my family? How will I make enough to pay my car insurance, rent, FOOD, healthcare — and will I have enough at the end of the month to do anything for myself?*
>
> *How do I save for a rainy day? Do I even know what financial options there are?*
>
> *And most importantly, when I get in trouble, will anyone help me?*

We all face these issues and so many more over the span of our lives. I think about what persons with disabilities have to face as they make the same decisions, or as loved ones guide them.

That is where I am right now. While I have already done this for an older child, now an adult, it is a much different evaluation. It is my hope this July issue provides perspective and insight.

Caregivers Matter

I define the term caregiver broadly. To me, it is a person — regardless of relationship — who understands their fiduciary or human responsibility to another person, and in many cases puts their needs before their own. We have so many ways that we care for others. Parents care for children, children care for

parents, spouses and significant others care for each other. Community cares for the people who rely on them. Neighbors fill the gaps. Our family is the beneficiary of so many people who cared enough to ensure we remained whole. In many ways, our family opened the door to support because we were transparent about our journey.

As an advocate now practicing law again, I have been asked repeatedly: **How do you know if a person has autism?** I wish there were an easy answer, and I had a clearer response, but I don't — because it truly depends. In our case, I was blessed to have a mother who was a nurse and aunts who were educators to guide and provide their professional opinions. But as a parent, you have instinct that you cannot explain.

> *Your child may appear to have hearing issues and at the same time can HEAR everything you say.*
>
> *Your child may exhibit BRILLIANCE, and you think that you are dealing with the next genius.*
>
> *Your child may have SENSORY issues that you just cannot understand.*
>
> *Your child might be withdrawn or just play differently than others.*

Caregivers play the crucial role of observation. They often see what no one else is looking for. That is how you know. As we approach the school year, I thought it was important to research clear videos on early intervention and understanding autism. Our family is far along in our journey, but I do remember what it felt like in the beginning, and how I had far more questions than the answers I received. Technology has allowed us to have more information at our fingertips, but it's

up to us to utilize those resources and ask when we need help understanding them.

READ: CAREGIVERS & FAMILIES — JOHNS HOPKINS

I do not know about you, but Sesame Street never gets old. It evolves and still educates on so many levels. Their character Abby is light and informative. Check her out!

> *"Learn what autism is and how to celebrate and support the amazing in all children."*
>
> SESAME STREET AUTISM RESOURCES ›

How Do You Define Privacy?

Healthcare and the bureaucratic obstacles associated with it make me CRAZY. You go to the doctor and immediately fill out a ton of paperwork. Generally you "feel" like you already spent hours checking in and updating your information, but you do it again. You also re-share your family history and your insurance information, all before seeing a doctor, nurse practitioner, or healthcare provider.

I hate to beat a dead horse, but now think about what that is like for a person who needs support navigating issues — AND what it is like for the caregiver who then has to explain what an invisible disability is, AND why they are entitled to either go into the room with their loved one or have the medical documentation provided to them after the visit.

There are many, many providers who understand this challenge, support families, and educate their team on the best way to engage with the invisible disability population. But

when you're facing a healthcare issue or a wellness check, and on top of that dealing with complex communication on all levels — well, you need support.

The best advice that I can give is **preparation**. Like any business, staff changes. And like all businesses, the front desk is the first line of communication. So how do you transition care without disruption?

> *Consider calling ahead of time and explaining the situation.*
>
> *Be frank. Healthcare providers are extremely busy, they have many patients, and they may not understand what you're trying to say.*
>
> *Provide a colorful description of what you anticipate will happen when you arrive and who will drive the appointment.*
>
> *Be mindful that in some cases you have highly functional individuals who may not welcome help. In other cases you may need an additional level of support to get through the appointment.*
>
> *If you have guardianship, power of attorney, healthcare surrogate, or other documentation, make it easier on the healthcare provider — scan it before you meet or provide it upon arrival.*

In summary, you can drive the experience for your loved one. Every medical appointment and provider is different. As we have more innovation and technology impact healthcare, we have to adapt to help our loved ones with special needs.

READ: ACCESSING HEALTHCARE AS AN AUTISTIC INDIVIDUAL

Watch Your Money

I highlighted investment tools in the past, but now that we are ADULTING it is time to revisit them. One tool that is helpful for savings and use is an **ABLE account**. The account is based on empowerment and designed for usage. It operates similar to a 529 Plan in that it has real-time benefits.

ABLE was born out of years of advocacy. Families needed a means to care for loved ones over a long period of time, and ABLE was the solution. ABLE accounts support:

> *Floridians with a severe diagnosis or disability (with onset before age 46)*
>
> *Families, guardians, and representative payees managing funds*
>
> *Professionals and service providers supporting individuals with a severe diagnosis or disability*

It is hard to balance the ongoing services for persons with disabilities. An ABLE account provides security. We all understand that! Learn more about why ABLE at ABLE United, and watch this month's video: **Florida's Disability Savings Program — ABLE United**, from The Arc of Florida.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Jordan Chloe Jackson



Our daughter Jordan Chloe Jackson is an absolute rock star! I cannot wait to see her soar. This month she hits another milestone — **HAPPIEST OF ALL BIRTHDAYS, Chloe!** I am grateful for Chloe's uniqueness, joy, creativity, individuality, brilliance, INDEPENDENCE, and commitment to character and integrity.

What I am reminded of — OFTEN — from our younger daughter is that she learned everything she needs to know about life from Chloe, and continues to learn from her. I often will hear the following:

> *Chloe is a thespian, so I am a thespian.*
>
> *Chloe is a Girl Scout, so I am a Girl Scout.*
>
> *Chloe is a cheerleader, so I am a cheerleader.*
>
> *Chloe went to college, so I am going to college.*
>
> *Chloe lives on her own, so I live on my own.*

Grateful that we have such a vivacious daughter who knows how to live OUT LOUD! Your younger sister is WATCHING YOU!

Thank You, Caregivers

Since I focused on caregivers this month, I want to take a moment to thank the special caregivers who continue to shape our lives. These individuals helped at various stages of our daughters' lives and made an incredible impact. Our family is forever grateful for your time, care, love, and support.



Caprice Edmonds

Lynn Watson

Sharon Davis

Cynthia Mettling

Hydeia Thomas

STAY CONNECTED

Keep up between issues — on the blog, in the archive, and online.

BLOG · NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE · SPEAKING · LINKEDIN · INSTAGRAM

With gratitude,

Kimberly G. Jackson

ATTORNEY · ADVOCATE · SPEAKER

K

kimberlygjackson.com

You are receiving this because you are part of the Proud Aspy Mom community.

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