



## Autism Resources

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# Welcome to Holland

by Emily Perl Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting. After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go.

Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."



But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away...because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.





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## Local Resources

- Talk to parents
  - Child's parents
  - Other parents
  - Parents have been working with (and probably struggling with) this child at least 5 years longer than you have.
  - Be kind: parents did not choose to have a child with special needs.
- Call Barb Stanton at SEHSC, 701-298-4439. She serves many children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
- Ask an adult with ASD. (call SEHSC for times and locations)
- Support and respite care for the family members.
  - Parents need to know their efforts are worthwhile.
  - Siblings need support too – it's not easy to have a sibling who's different.
  - Respite care available through Path Family Support, or through Department of Human Services. Parents should discuss with their psychologist/psychiatrist or case manager.

## Regional Resources

- Parent Training and information center – PathFinder. 800-245-5840
- Staff training for recognizing and working with ASD children, contact Red River Asperger Network at 701-205-6570
- Regional support groups are available and listed at [www.AutismND.org](http://www.AutismND.org) (click on meetings)
  - Minot, Wahpeton, Moorhead, Hendrum, Fargo, Grand Forks, Bismarck.
  - Start one in your area, and let us help you promote it!
    - Handy flyers available on our site.
- Department of Human Services, visit <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc> to find the location serving your area. Cass county (ND) is Southeast Human Services, call 701-298-4500. Clay County residents should call 218-299-5200.

## Statewide Resources

- Advocacy groups:
  - Protection and Advocacy, for North Dakota, [www.ndpanda.org](http://www.ndpanda.org)
  - Pacer Center, [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)
  - Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living. [www.freedomrc.org](http://www.freedomrc.org)
- State Departments of public instruction
  - <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/>
  - <http://education.state.mn.us/mde>



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## Internet Resources

- Be careful where you look.
- Start from a reputable site, if possible.
- Look for sites ending in .gov, .us, .org.
- Blogs are not the best source for factual information.
- Tony Attwood, early researcher on Asperger Syndrome:  
<http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/>
- [www.AutismSupportNetwork.com](http://www.AutismSupportNetwork.com)
- [www.AutismND.org](http://www.AutismND.org) and [www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org)
- [www.aspergersyndrome.org](http://www.aspergersyndrome.org)
- <http://education.state.mn.us/mde>
- <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/>
- [www.Autism-Society.org](http://www.Autism-Society.org)
- [www.AutismSource.org](http://www.AutismSource.org)
- [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism)

For more information on autism spectrum disorders, please visit our website at [www.AutismND.org](http://www.AutismND.org).