

Like many other parents I grew up with expectations around parenting so when I had my daughter I was a relatively strict but loving parent (well that was my take on it). By the time she was 5 she had never had a tantrum or meltdown and was so unbelievably well behaved that I thought I was doing a really good job. Other parents would comment on what a good little girl she was. She was intelligent, compliant and everyone loved her.

When she started school things went askew. She began having meltdowns immediately after school which over time increased in their intensity. She started interrupting, demanding, annoying her little sister, screaming at home, being defiant and bordering on violent. I in return tried to parent her with consequences, discipline, etc because that's what I knew, that's what society expected and what I'd been told to do and when these didn't work, I yelled like many other parents do. Over time we found autism and she was diagnosed. I of course researched this obsessively trying to gain as much information as I could. However, everything we tried, everything we were told by specialists didn't help in fact she grew more demanding, defiant and angry.

Later we found PDA and again I researched this but this time it was different. These strategies seemed to work, however there was an obstacle and it was me. I had to let go of my preconceived parenting ideas, society's expectations and most things I'd been told about autism. It was hard not to control my daughter. I say control because in general that's what parents do even if they think otherwise. Children have a different perspective to parents, they see parents telling them what to do, don't do this and that, to behave, etc so they act like other children, conform, to fit into how society 'wants' to see children. So, even though I thought otherwise, I continued to push myself and I stopped telling my daughter to shower, to brush her teeth, to comb her hair, to do school work, even to go to school. I let things go completely trying to reduce demands on her. After a rocky start, things improved and she developed the independence and control that she needed.

She's 16 now and our family has a very close relationship. We had a chat recently and she reminded me how horrible I was as a mother when she was younger, that I was very controlling. She said she understood that I wasn't aware of what she needed back then and after receiving the diagnosis of autism I was given bad advice so she doesn't blame me, but she still finds it difficult emotionally to get over her younger years. I'm so thankful I found PDA and the information allowed me to understand my daughter and rebuild a relationship with her. I find it sad to think of how many PDA children are misunderstood and they are struggling to be heard, to find their place in the world.

I think the most important thing that allowed us to move forward was validating her point of view even if I thought it was wrong or it was different to my view. She recently told me that I was a horrible mother when she was younger and yes it upset me but she had a point, that was her perspective so I accepted that.