

# STORIES OF HOPE



## NAOMI'S AUTISM JOURNEY

## FROM NONVERBAL TO VERBAL

Naomi's mother was very concerned. At three years old, she was unable to talk, make eye contact, or participate in activities that other kids her age were enjoying.

After visiting a psychologist, Naomi was officially diagnosed with Autism.

In 2019, Naomi began receiving home-based ABA therapy from Applied ABC. Her first BCBA wanted to help, but only spoke English which created a strong language barrier.



This made communication very difficult. Shortly after, Evie, who is fluent in both English and Spanish, began working closely with Naomi.



“She made sounds but was not able to form any functional words,” said Evie. “She would try to communicate by doing things with her hands, twirling, or even spinning. There was just no reciprocal language at all.”

Naomi seemed to be very much in Naomi's own world.”

Evie also noticed Naomi would have frequent tantrums and engage in minor aggressions like pulling hair.





Evie started therapy by breaking down communication skills and activities into bite-sized pieces. In time, Evie discovered that Naomi had learned something that could make therapy sessions more effective: Reading.

"She was drawn to music, and often tried communicating through the rhythm of a song," said Evie.



"She was hyper-aware of the alphabet and the way that letters sound. I didn't believe it at first, but we noticed that when we would show her picture cards without a written label on the bottom that she would be lost. When they were there, she fully understood what was going on."

ABC



That proved it; Naomi was reading!



XYZ



Naomi today is a very different person from when she started ABA therapy.

“Her listening skills, impeccable. Maladaptive behaviors, pretty much zero. And now, when someone greets her, she simply replies” said Evie. “She is also engaging in spontaneous skills and parallel play with peers. It’s also great that her interests have grown a lot; she plays the piano now and absolutely loves it.”

James, Naomi’s current RBT, works with her directly and sees the incredible amount of progress she makes during each therapy session. “She’s wonderful, she’s smart, and I love how she just gets down to business. Just the other day, I was teaching her how to open a treasure chest and pick out a toy from it. I worked with her every day, repeated all the steps, and then one day she just opened the chest on her own. It was incredible; I’m so proud of her.”

Although Naomi has made incredible strides, communication will always be something to work on.

“There are so many nuances in the way we communicate. The foundational stuff is just a start. Even as adults, we’re still learning to communicate in a world where everyone communicates differently,” said Evie.

Naomi’s success with communication made her feel confident enough to take on her next challenge: keeping her felt cap on throughout her graduation ceremony.

Naomi’s mom and Evie couldn’t suppress their smiles as Naomi posed for a picture in her graduation cap. Naomi was the only student who was able to keep her cap on throughout the event. “It’s the little things like this that people don’t realize can impact families,” said Evie. “This might seem just like an everyday thing, but it was a major milestone.”


Naomi’s journey, it’s just incredible.”





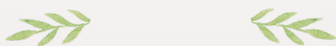
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 We want to dedicate this Story of Hope to our staff, the hard-working parents who put everything into helping create a brighter future for their children, and the children like Naomi, who continue to discover more about the world and themselves daily.



While all the stories in this book are true, names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the people involved.



Illustrations by Annabelle Meszynski