

# Our Life in a Nutty Shell IV

## Living with Autism and Loving it!

*Presenters*

*Andrew, Carolyn, Alexander and Nicholas Gammicchia*

This will be the fourth year the Gammicchia Family will be presenting. This year will however be unique in that they will feature a video that will encompass the early years of the family living with ASD. There will also be specific sections addressing certain topics that the Gammicchias have been asked questions about over the years and feel will assist families who may be focusing on each of these areas. The session will end with the audience being able to ask the family panel about what living with autism has been like for them.



### **The Initial Journey**

- Finding our way
- Hearing the “worst”?
- Seeking assistance
- Finding support
- Assisting our son in getting well
- Thinking about the future
- The BIG MOVE
- Educational placements
- Financial needs
- Emotional support



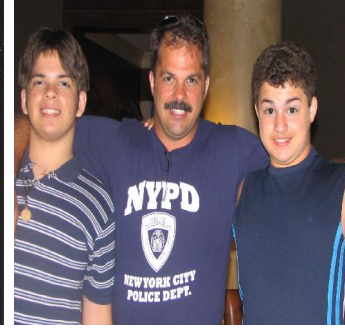


## The Intervention Index

- What was “*wrong*”?
- What was “*right*”?
- What could we afford?
- What could we not afford and what would the consequences be?
- The guilt
- The acceptance
- The relief

## Adolescence & Intervention

- Starting all over
- Circling the wagons
- “Acquiring” ASD as a family?
- Regrouping
- Pulling it together
- Keeping the team thriving
- Individuals resurfacing
- The what, when, why?
- RDI and a rediscovery
- Are we done yet?
- What does adulthood hold?
- An ongoing process



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## Family Dynamics

- A child with ASD ~ an orbiting family
- Marriage
- Relationships
- Isolation
- Realization
- Losing Individuality
- Shifting priorities
- Energy uploads

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## A Mom's Mission

- Two toddlers ~ a huge decision
- A central focus
- A lioness attitude
- Spinning the plates
- Regaining balance
- Refocusing on wellness

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## A Dad's Diligence

- A lost allstar (NOPE!) gaining a SUPERSTAR
- Fun isn't a four letter word
- Strength in numbers
- Keeping the faith
- Immortality
- A Papa Bear attitude





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## Sibling Support

- A equal start
- Hovering on the outside
- A bite
- Self imposed separation
- Making the grade A+
- A burden or inspiration
- Embarrassed but not ashamed
- A two way street
- The biggest life influence
- The worry – off to college
- What about the future?

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## A Self-Determined Teen

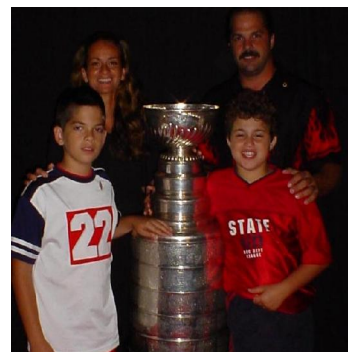
- A time for choices
- Seeking peers
- What disability?
- I can and I will
- You're fired!
- Transition to junior high
- I said "no", I'm sorry
- The perfect storm 23 vs 2
- My "son" Thomas
- The "assignment"
- Transition to high school
- Going to college

**Are we having FUN yet? Life is like a roller coaster ride!  
Roller coasters can be scary, thrilling, and most importantly  
sensory integration therapy.**

This presentation will take you along for a ride that you will not forget. You may laugh, cry, be inspired, and feel empathy. You will not leave unchanged and will see what it has been like for a family on a journey that has been one they feel is worth sharing. The Gammicchias have always said they are not experts and still learn as a family daily. However it is their hope that they can provide hope to others, show that living with autism can be challenging, but the triumphs are so, so much more worth any and all effort. Please join them for what they feel will be a session that will change the way you think about autism.

**Letting Loose!**

- Define success differently
- Being nonjudgmental
- Providing explanations, but never excuses
- Being culpable
- Allowing mistakes, but learning from them
- Forgiving
- Forgetting
- Enjoying the tidbits
- Finding the smallest joys
- Establishing short to do lists
- Share the wealth
- Protect the spirit

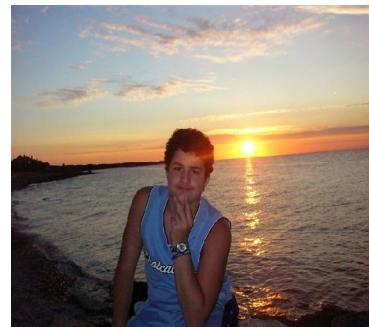
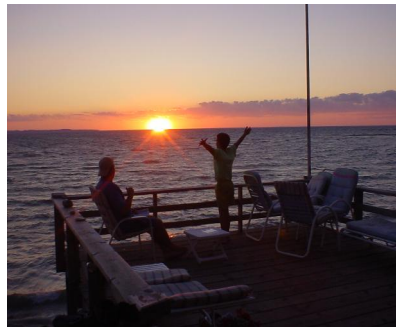


# THE FUTURE



## Plan, Plan, & Plan

- Natural circle of support
- Micro-board
- Micro-enterprise
- Self-advocacy
- Secondary education
- Independent living
- Family
- Friends
- Career
- Alternatives to Guardianship
- Living forever
- Establishing a safe & healthy lifestyle



*Please join us if you can!*