



# Each Day I Like It Better: Autism, ECT, and the Treatment of Our Most Impaired Children

By Amy S. F. Lutz

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## **Each Day I Like It Better: Autism, ECT, and the Treatment of Our Most Impaired Children** By Amy S. F. Lutz

In the fall of 2009, Amy Lutz and her husband, Andy, struggled with one of the worst decisions parents could possibly face: whether they could safely keep their autistic ten-year-old son, Jonah, at home any longer. Multiple medication trials, a long procession of behavior modification strategies, and even an almost year-long hospitalization had all failed to control his violent rages. Desperate to stop the attacks that endangered family members, caregivers, and even Jonah himself, Amy and Andy decided to try the controversial procedure of electroconvulsive therapy or ECT. Over the last three years, Jonah has received 136 treatments. His aggression has greatly diminished, and for the first time Jonah, now fourteen, is moving to a less restricted school.

*Each Day I Like It Better* recounts the journeys of Jonah and seven other children and their families (interviewed by the author) in their quests for appropriate educational placements and therapeutic interventions. The author describes their varied, but mostly successful, experiences with ECT.

A survey of research on pediatric ECT is incorporated into the narrative, and a foreword by child psychiatrist Dirk Dhossche and ECT researcher and practitioner Charles Kellner explains how ECT works, the side effects patients may experience, and its current use in the treatment of autism, catatonia, and violent behavior in children.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Amy Lutz shines a bright spotlight on the needs of the most severely affected children with autism, a group that has long suffered in the dark. These kids, whose lives are challenged by self-injurious behaviors and aggressive outbursts that drastically limit their ability to interact in the world, should have access to all evidence-based interventions that science indicates can improve their lives, including ECT."

--**Alison Singer**, President, Autism Science Foundation

"In addition to being one of the most moving accounts imaginable of the love and devotion that parents of these challenging but splendid children bring forth, the book is also one of the best informed: Amy Lutz is thoroughly familiar with the scientific literature, and applies it to her own, stricken world to great effect. I myself was at times close to tears in opening this book, and I think other readers may be as well."

--**Edward Shorter**, University of Toronto, co-author of *Shock Therapy: A History of Electroconvulsive Treatment in Mental Illness*

"Amy Lutz takes us inside the mysterious world of autism and provides a heart-wrenching chronicle of what it is like to love a child with almost overwhelming needs. She gives voice to the thousands of parents who must face the almost unimaginable challenges of getting help for a child with autism, and describes the unanticipated benefits of electroconvulsive therapy. I recommend this book not just for parents of children with autism, but for anyone facing the physical and emotional rollercoaster of caring for a loved one with a devastating illness."

--**Eve Herold**, Director, Office of Communications and Public Affairs for the American Psychiatric Association

#### From the Inside Flap

The story of how a family raises a violent and self-injuring child with autism

#### About the Author

Amy S. F. Lutz's writing about autism and other issues she has encountered as the mother of five children has been featured on the websites Babble and Slate. She is one of the founders of EASI Foundation: Ending Aggression and Self-Injury in the Developmentally Disabled. Her advocacy has taken her before the FDA, the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, and the International Society for ECT and Neurostimulation.

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#### Ronda Caesar:

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**Thomas Rinaldi:**

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