

My greatest joy and my greatest heart ache:
Parents' own words on how having a child in
the autism spectrum has affected their lives
and their families' lives.

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“My greatest joy and my greatest heart ache:” Parents’
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Abstract

Parents of children in the autism spectrum wrote an open-ended answer via an online questionnaire to the question, “How has your child in the autism spectrum affected your life and your family's life?” ($N = 493$). Using a qualitative content analysis, 15 negative themes and 9 positive themes were identified. Themes are subsumed into five clusters: Stress; Child's behavior; Parents’ personal well being, work, and marital relationship; Impact on the whole family; and Social isolation. The mix of negative and positive themes is interpreted as a dialectical viewpoint of finding positive meaning to life even while acknowledging the stress and difficulties of having a child with autism.



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Keywords

Parent; Family; Qualitative method; Themes; Online questionnaire

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