

Lynn Rosser: Helping Other Parents Meet Life's Challenges

By Tammy Jones

It might have been tempting for one not as strong as Lynn Rosser to curl up in a corner, cry, scream, and demand to know why.

Why was her golden-haired firstborn suddenly silent after talking so early? "Ma," "good job," "right back," he'd repeat in his baby voice. Where had the happy one-year-old who loved to mimic animal noises gone? Why now was her 18-month old sullen and silent?

Classic autism, the doctor pronounced. The world would always feel too loud and too bright for Aram. So, like a turtle, he would pull into his shell, shutting out those around him. His survival and comfort would forever rest in the hands of caregivers.

Reeling from the news, a month later the Rossers suffered another blow. The boy growing in Lynn's belly was discovered to have a rare heart defect that few survived into adulthood. By his fifth birthday, Jaron would undergo three open heart surgeries plus another operation to reconstruct his circulatory system. And still, there were no guarantees.

Chris and Lynn had waited a dozen years to start their family, wanting to be sure Lynn's cancer from years earlier indeed was gone. Now, in the span of a month, their lives had changed forever in a way they'd never dreamed.

"You never think you're going to be challenged like this, you never think it'll be you," Lynn says eight years later. "But if it is you, you can do it."

It is how she and her husband are doing it that is the basis of her first book, *The Complete Caregiver*. Writing it was balm for her soul, and it is her gift to others traveling the same road, her effort to make their journey a little easier.

"I looked at those two different situations and all of the knowledge that I had to obtain," says Lynn, "and the learning curve that was involved, what I had to do to help myself manage it. There is so much you have to learn so quickly and it's in the midst of being in a crisis, it's in the midst of being exhausted, and it's really tough."

She is not, she says with a laugh, the Martha Stewart of care giving. Instead her book offers lessons she has learned along the way. *The Complete Caregiver* includes information on planning and organizing the aspects of raising a child with special needs. There also is a medical tracker and a journal, plus one section that is devoted to caring for the caregiver.

"If caregivers are able to work themselves back in their lives to some degree, that will be reflected in a happier home, a better environment for everyone," says Lynn. For her, that was writing this book and now maintaining her website (thecompletecaregiver.com) where she writes about raising her boys.

Eight-year-old Aram appears angelic with his golden curls. He is learning to point to items in a picture book to ask for what he needs. Gone is the toddler who passionately banged the piano and then turned to the camera to take a bow. Occasionally there are flashes of cognizance, like when he recently patted the toilet and haltingly spoke the word. Recounting the moment brings joy and hope to Lynn's face.

Five-year-old Jaron is filled with energy, chatter, and a tiny smidgen of mischief. Were it not for the scars on his chest, you wouldn't know the challenges he faces.

"You live in the moment," Lynn says with tears in her eyes. "And in the moment we're doing great. I'm hoping medical technology will stay ahead of him."

Lynn has also authored In the Womb of the World, a book of poems she wrote after receiving both diagnoses for her sons. Both In the Womb of the World and The Complete Caregiver are available at thecompletecaregiver.com. Tammy Jones is the morning show cohost at Mix 96.5 in Asheville.

SIDEBAR

(excerpt from *The Complete Caregiver*):

"I've found, however, on the other side of greater challenge, is a new life that carries riches and depth I would never have otherwise found (though it can be very hard to see sometimes). I've come to know that there is wonder in the complexity of life, joy in small victories, and moments of grace I might not have appreciated, or even noticed without this experience.