

Growing up in china, my transition to America wasn't easy. The environment vastly differ from Sao Wu, my home town, and the fact my culture stuck with me didn't make it better. I knew little english, and was often teased and ostracized by other children. Looking back I often think, why? What did I do to be teased and laughed at? I eventually came to the conclusion that I was simply too different, too out of the norms to be easily accepted by my peers. My lifestyle and culture contracted theirs, and the difference in language further disassociated me from the others. Similarly, I think the same follows for children with autism and developmental disabilities.

Often times, there seems to be a boundary of what the world accepts. Society likes to set trends. Trends for things that are acceptable, and things that are not. Like an elastic band, you can try to stretch these boundaries, some may stand out a bit, and for the most part it's acceptable. But take it too far, the pressure builds for it to snap back to place of what it considers normality, often causing a painful impact. Children with Autism are commonly considered to be "out of the boundary", and suffers the impact that comes with the need for what's "normal". Adults, being mature as they are expected to be, learn ways to adapt and get long. However, children especially at a young age are unable to grasp the concept, and instead they will poke and prod at things they don't understand. Even with higher functioning children with autism, it's the little things that may set other children off. People suffering in from autism have difficulties socializing, making them awkward around their peers.

Many autistic children, lacking understanding of social cues, are unable to differentiate bullying and teasing with friendly chatter, and may further encourage the bullies by joining in what they think is good fun. It pains me that children, including some who don't know any

better, are being treated the same way rather than receiving the proper attention and care they deserve. When faced with these differences, some may fear and avoid the unusual variable, some may become aggressors. But what children don't understand is that you can't segregate simply because someone differs from you. I strongly believe that through educating our children further, by teaching them about autism and learning its symptoms can help them grow more accepting to those who have these conditions. After all, to accept, you have to understand. Start at an early age where children tend to be more moldable, help them grow into knowledgeable individuals who rather help, than avoid and abuse those who are in need of their support. “千里之行，始於足下”， or “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” Is a famous saying by the Chinese philosopher Laozi (老子), a quote my uncle told me back in my childhood in China at times where I felt discouraged. It expresses how great things can come from humble beginnings, alike how every journey starts with small steps. This may just be that one step more forward that we need to take in creating a better world for not just children with autism, but all children alike.