



This is one of my favourite stories about my son I hope you enjoy it.

My son is dx with ASD, up until he started kinder I thought he was just an extremely active & very bright little boy, maybe claustrophobic & hyperactive but perfectly normal I thought.

His first day at kinder was traumatic for both of us & on his second week the kinder teacher asked me to come in & requested that we get him assessed by a pediatrician. What I wondered was she suggesting was wrong with my son!?

At first the pediatrician suggested ADHD but refused to diagnose, the following 6 months I would often be called in to see the kinder teacher, she was pleading with me to get a diagnosis so we could get help in class for my son who obviously was struggling. Eventually we saw a psychologist who diagnosed my son, & then I took that to the pediatrician & begged him to do the cars test & diagnose my son so we could get the help he needed. Finally on Christmas Eve 2007 the dx was official!

The kinder teacher says she still has nightmares about what happened to my son, we were both too young & inexperienced to know how to fill in the applications & get my son any help. With the dx we were able to apply for an aid in class who was great with my son & he was able to spend large amounts of time outside on the swing with his aid to look after him, & no one needed to worry that he would escape or hurt one of the other children or staff when trapped inside!

That year I decided to go home from Australia to England & visit my parents, my son was 4 & my daughter was 18 months. I have done this trip quite regularly on my own over the years & I did it with my son at 10 months & 22 months just the 2 of us. But most people were concerned about me travelling alone with 2 small children, especially one dx with ASD. At early intervention they suggested packing lots of sensory toys & snacks for distraction, & having a busy day with lots of exercise the day before the flight.

Finally the big day arrived, at the airport it was a struggle to get him to stay put so we could check in, but then he noticed the bags being weighed & disappearing on the conveyor belt & that kept him amused until we were processed! We had something to eat & played on all the slot machines, we walked around the terminal & looked at all the planes out the window, we rode the escalators & finally we got on the plane. On the plane the TV in the back of the seat was a big hit, exploring & checking out all the other kids on the plane was something else to do. The hosties were very good & gave my son extra treats when he was doing laps while everyone else slept! The most difficult thing was actually when my son needed to toilet & we all had to go, the doors were impossible for him to open by himself, the sucking toilet was terrifying for him. But we made it to KL half way :) The kids were happy, we had hours to wait so we explored everything, we rode the flat escalators, we looked at all the shops, we went to the toilet quite a few times, we had to change my sons shirt as he chewed to front of it until it was soaked. I was exhausted by the time we got back on the plane but still smiling as were the kids. On the final leg we used a lot of the sensory toys, the slinkys & the multi coloured finger lights were a big hit, we channel surfed the TV's & 2 hours out of London the kids finally fell asleep! Ahh a



sigh of relief, but the kids had been awake for 22 hours on the plane & all day the day before. I couldn't wake my son up until we had landed (the 24 hours travelling were over, we had survived).

The problem started when I asked him to put his jacket on & then we could get off the plane & go see Gma & G"pa, my son was confused & excited & the hosties wanted everyone to get off the plane, somehow the jacket didn't get put on & the melt down started! We were the last off the plane, my daughter was dozy & wanted to be carried, my son was cracking it & wanted to get back on the plane. We all collapsed in a pile on the gang plank & my son made desperate efforts to get back on the plane, of course they wouldn't let him. If only I had understood at that moment that he just wanted to put his jacket on in the plane as I had asked him to do, it would have probably gone smoothly again. But I didn't understand & neither did anyone else!

We spent the next 3/4 hour in the walkway/ gang plank between the plane & the terminal & my son was hysterical, it was awful & I had no idea what to do, we didn't have the pram & I was trying to carry our hand luggage, my 18month old daughter & a totally hysterical 4 yr old. Finally a member of the airport staff came to our rescue, she was wonderful she carried my screaming son through the walkway & up the ramp to the terminal, she didn't mind that he freaked out at her Muslim head scarf, she smiled & was kind. She arranged for a buggy to take us to the passport hall, she was understanding when my son asked to stop at the toilet, & we had to change his clothes because he didn't quite make it. She escorted us through the staff passport line & took us right to our bags in the baggage collection hall. She handed us over to the taxi driver who would take us on the last leg of our journey, I couldn't thank her enough & if my son hadn't had a melt down I think the trip through the terminal would probably have taken even longer as we wouldn't have had her to help us. I am lucky to have met more helpful people on my journey with my son than people who stare or make comments about my parenting! The trip home was a great success & we all really enjoyed it, Heathrow was a nightmare on the way home & my son coped by picking up every tiny scrap of silver paper he found on the floor, but we made it & on the plane on the way home a male hostie had been on our flight into London, he remembered us & just laughed about what had happened he said it is the incidents like ours that keep his job interesting!

Here is to making life interesting for everyone & all the kind people that do smile & help out :)

Rachel