My Brother Has Autism

By Melody Igafo-Te’o
(with a little help from Mom)
Illustrated by Michael Igafo-Te’o
Acknowledgements

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Jackie Igafo-Te’o, December 2009
Dedication

This book is dedicated to all of the boys and girls who have autism and the brothers and sisters who love them.
My name is Melody.
I am eight years old.
I have a big brother named Michael. Sometimes we play hide and seek or ride our bikes outside. We like to watch some of the same cartoons together. We both love to eat pizza and sit on the porch when it’s hot outside. My brother has autism — but he’s a lot like me.
My brother gets upset sometimes and we’re not sure why. He cries and mommy tries to make him feel better but he just keeps crying. It makes me sad.

Sometimes he gets so happy that we all can’t help but be happy, too.
He sure loves to laugh! We like it when daddy tickles us until we say “Uncle!” Michael really loves tickling. He laughs so hard and smiles so big that his eyes disappear! When he gets really happy he jumps up and down and flaps his arms like a bird. I wonder if he’s going to fly away someday!
I have another big brother named Sebastian. He says that he wishes Michael would play video games with him but Michael just doesn’t like video games. He likes to watch movies over and over again or play with his stuffed doll that he calls “Bancy the Cat Mouse.”
Sometimes I feel sad that he breaks things and doesn’t listen to mommy and daddy a lot. I bet he’s trying though. He’s probably doing the best that he can. Sometimes I think that maybe he can’t hear us! But then I remember that he always hears the song that comes on before his favorite show on tv. When it comes on he runs upstairs faster than lightening!
He also likes to pretend that my cat is a skunk!
Pee Ewww!
My brother is so smart. I like to ask him how to spell really big words. He always gets them right! I bet he could win a spelling bee if he tried. He also has a great imagination.
He draws things that make me laugh all of the time like the picture of his stuffed cat mouse flushing his friend Timmy down the toilet. Funny!
Sometimes I feel a little embarrassed because my friends come over and can’t understand what he’s saying. They ask me questions like “what’s wrong with your brother?” and “why does he do that?” I tell them that he has autism and that sometimes he has trouble saying the things that he’s thinking in his head.
I tell them that he’s just like us — only smarter sometimes! Then they understand and I feel better. Sometimes we all play hide and seek upstairs — Michael loves to try to find us. It’s fun when we all play together. They like it when Michael laughs, too.
I feel smart and special because I know a lot about autism. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if my brother didn’t have autism. I think life would be kind of boring if he didn’t! I really like playing with my brothers. I don’t think we’d have even half as much fun if they were both alike.
Mommy says that we’re all different and that’s what makes us all so special. I think she’s right.
Sometimes I help my brother and sometimes he helps me.
Last night we made an ICCEE together in the kitchen. He put in the ice and I turned the crank. It was so yummy!
He likes to dress up as Mickey Mouse even when it’s not Halloween. I think it’s neat that he doesn’t care what other people think about him. It’s like he’s free to be whoever he wants to be!
My brother has autism and we’re not sure why...but that’s just fine with me. I love him just the way he is. I bet that if you met him, you’d learn to love him too!
Shown on this page are a few of Michael's drawings from 2009. Most other drawings in this book are from 2005 and 2007. The first drawing in the book (pg 1) was done by Melody in 2005.
Autism is a neurological disorder that affects at least 1 in 110 children. Having autism makes it difficult for people to express their feelings, have relationships with others, and communicate the way they’d like to. In dealing with a child who has autism, sometimes parents get sidetracked and the siblings of the child get less attention. This is not the parent’s fault but it is a sad reality for families. There just isn’t enough time or hands to do everything. It is important to realize that siblings of children with autism need time and encouragement to express their individuality and feelings. Sometimes, these feelings are of sadness, but as this book relates, sometimes these feelings are of joy and pride. We need to let them know that it’s ok to have these feelings. Michael is a 15-year-old boy with autism. He has had significant struggles in school. At times, doctors have recommended institutionalization because his behaviors are so challenging. Locked inside a seemingly difficult child can be a gifted child who brings joy and inspiration to others. This book was written as a way for Melody to express her feelings about having a brother with autism. It is our hope that this book encourages others to do the same. There is hope. There is support. Don’t give up.

For more info about autism, visit autism-society.org or autismspeaks.org. For more info about disabilities and education, visit wrightslaw.com. For more info on sibling support visit siblingsupport.org. To contact the author, email igafoteo@yahoo.com.

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