



My Brother Has Autism

By Melody Igafo-Te'o

(with a little help from Mom)

Illustrated by Michael Igafo-Te'o

My Brother Has Autism

Written by Melody Igafo-Te'o and Jackie Igafo-Te'o

Illustrated by Michael Igafo-Te'o



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Acknowledgements

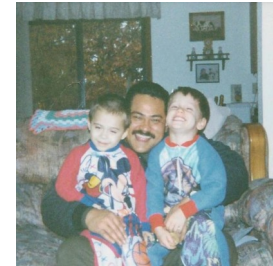
First and foremost, I would like to thank our **family** and **friends** for always accepting us for who we are and never judging us for who we are not.

On behalf of **Melody**, I would like to thank the **Hamlin Family** for giving her friendship, love, laughter, and a place of respite when life gets rough; **Peter Martin** and the **entire team at United Front Design** for discovering her book and for seeing the importance of the message inside; and **Ron Pomerantz** and the **entire Disney Channel Creative Team** for making it all possible and for giving her a voice bigger than the great outdoors.

On behalf of **Michael**, I would like to thank **Melissa Baumgardner** who opened her heart years ago to a little boy that few people understood and for providing him with unconditional love and friendship; **Tricia Luker** and **Calvin Luker** for being his tireless warriors in education; **Deb Canja** for fighting the “big battle” even though we knew it was hopeless; **Sally Burton-Hoyle** for advocating during the early years; and **United Front Design** and **Disney Channel** for using his original artwork so that the world could discover his talent.

I would also like to thank my husband, **Billy Igafo-Te'o**, and my son, **Sebastian Igafo-Te'o**, for being patient and loving during the time we spent working on these projects; **William Brown** and **Beverly Brown** for being the most amazing, supportive parents and grandparents a kid could ever want; **Deb Canja**, **Carol Barrett**, **Amy Winans**, **Pete Wright** and **Pam Wright** for taking me under their wings and allowing me to do what I love, while being home to care for my children and handle all of the “stuff” that comes up along the way; **Dohn Hoyle** and **Sally Burton-Hoyle** for their tireless efforts in making Michigan a better place for our loved ones with autism and other disabilities; and last but not least, **Partners in Policymaking** for teaching me to use all of my inner angst in a positive, productive way to advocate for change.

Jackie Igafo-Te'o, December 2009





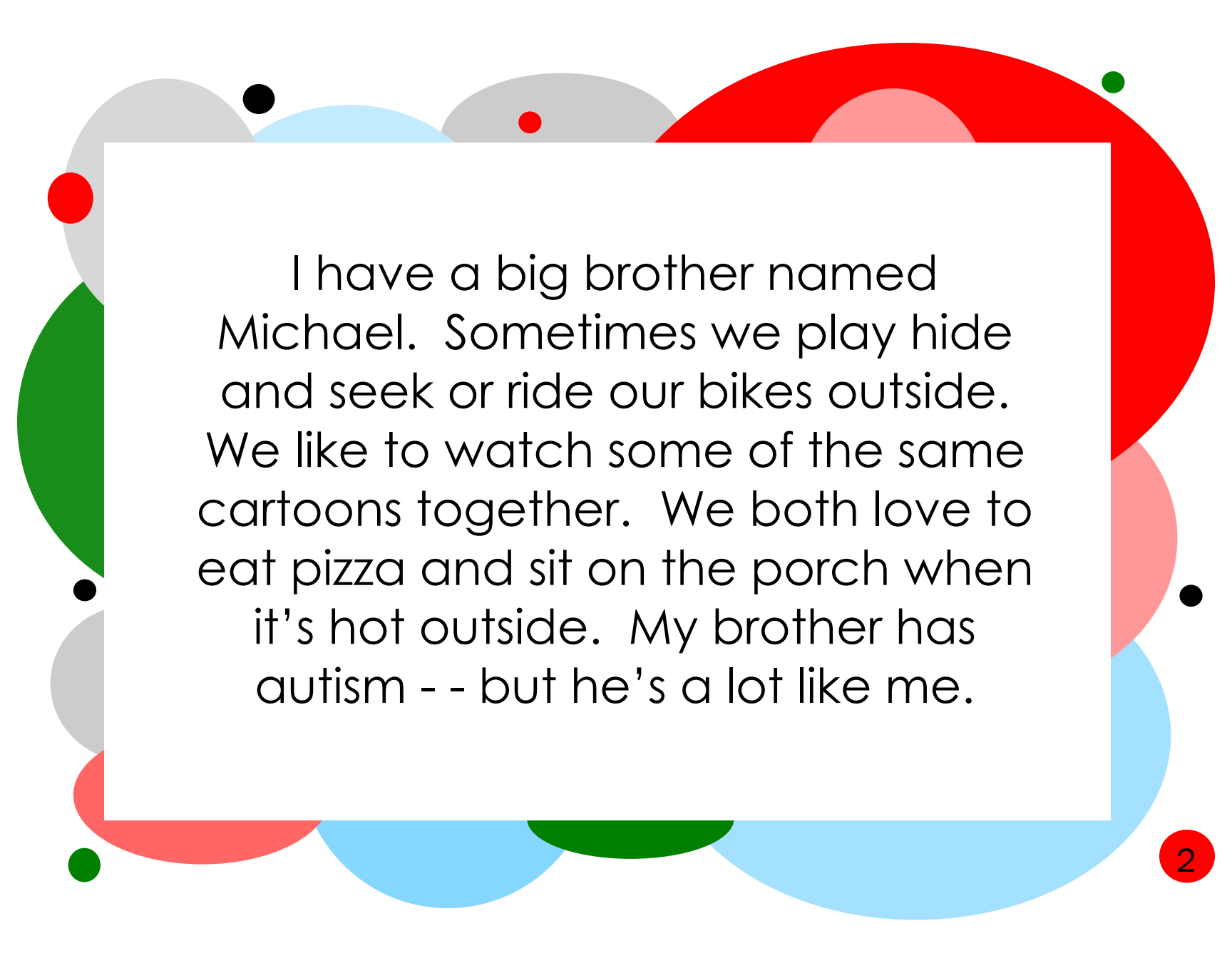
Dedication

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.

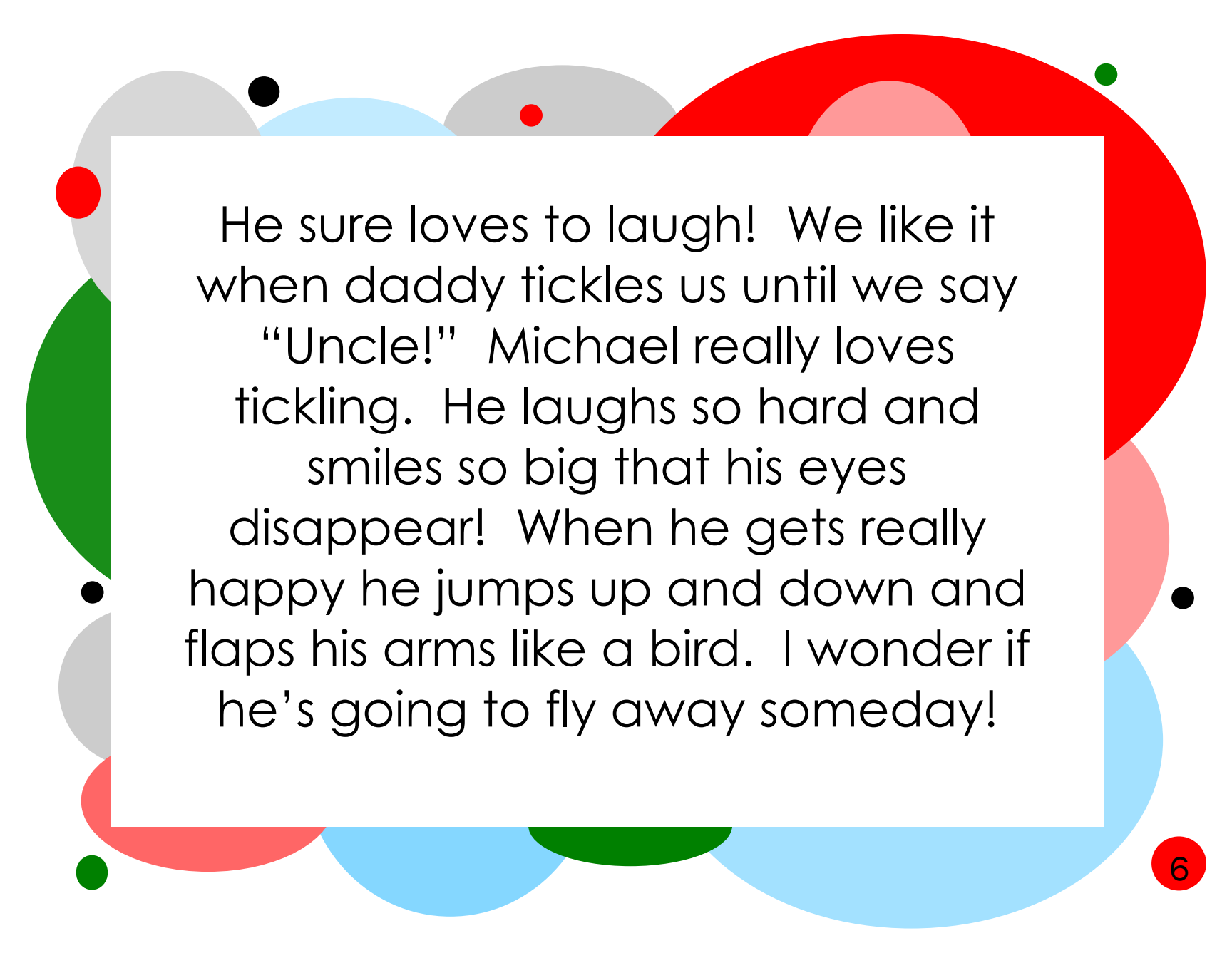
My brother gets upset sometimes and we're not sure why. He cries and mommy tries to make him feel better but he just keeps crying. It makes me sad.



Sometimes he gets so happy that we all can't help but be happy, too.

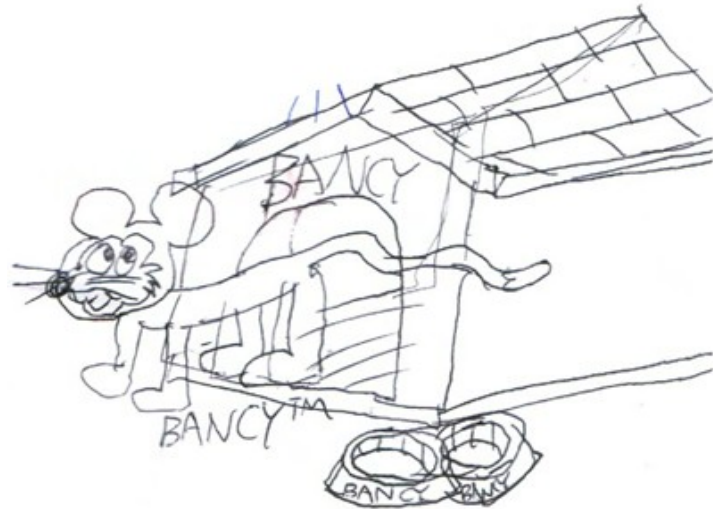






He sure loves to laugh! We like it when daddy tickles us until we say “Uncle!” Michael really loves tickling. He laughs so hard and smiles so big that his eyes disappear! When he gets really happy he jumps up and down and flaps his arms like a bird. I wonder if he’s going to fly away someday!

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."

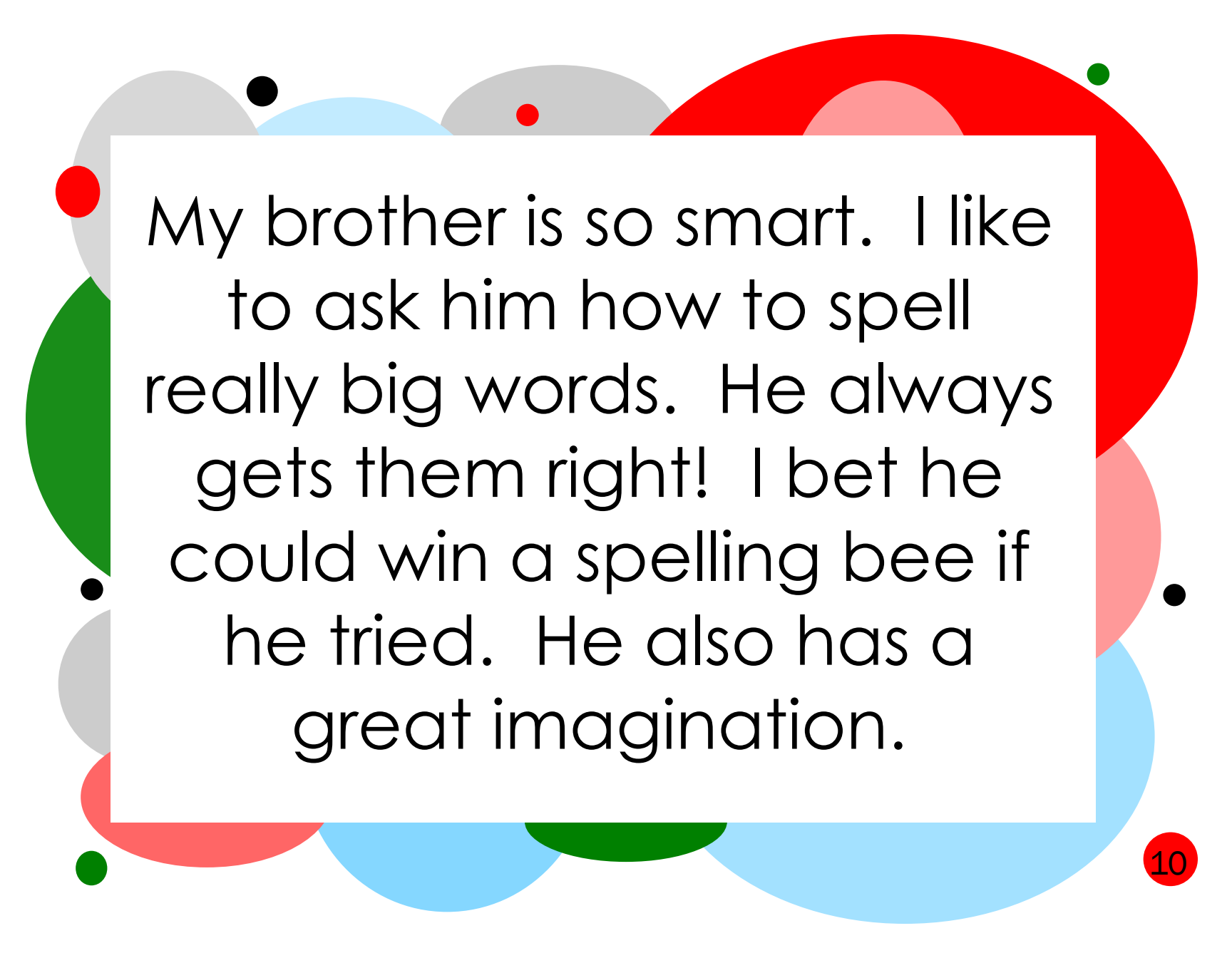


Sometimes I feel sad that he breaks things and doesn't listen to mommy and daddy a lot. I bet he's trying though. He's probably doing the best that he can. Sometimes I think that maybe he can't hear us! But then I remember that he always hears the song that comes on before his favorite show on tv. When it comes on he runs upstairs faster than lightening!



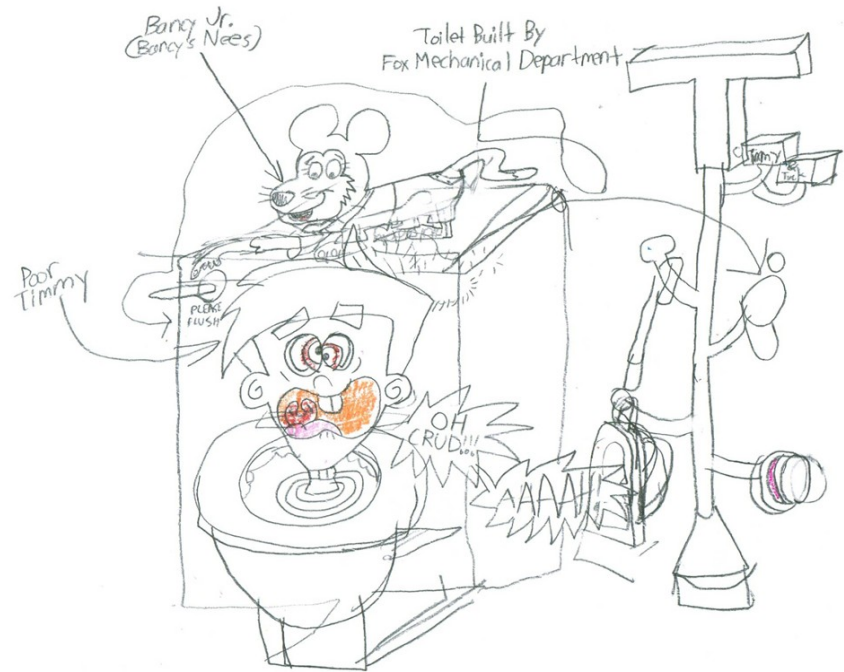
He also likes to pretend that my cat is a skunk!
Peee Ewww!

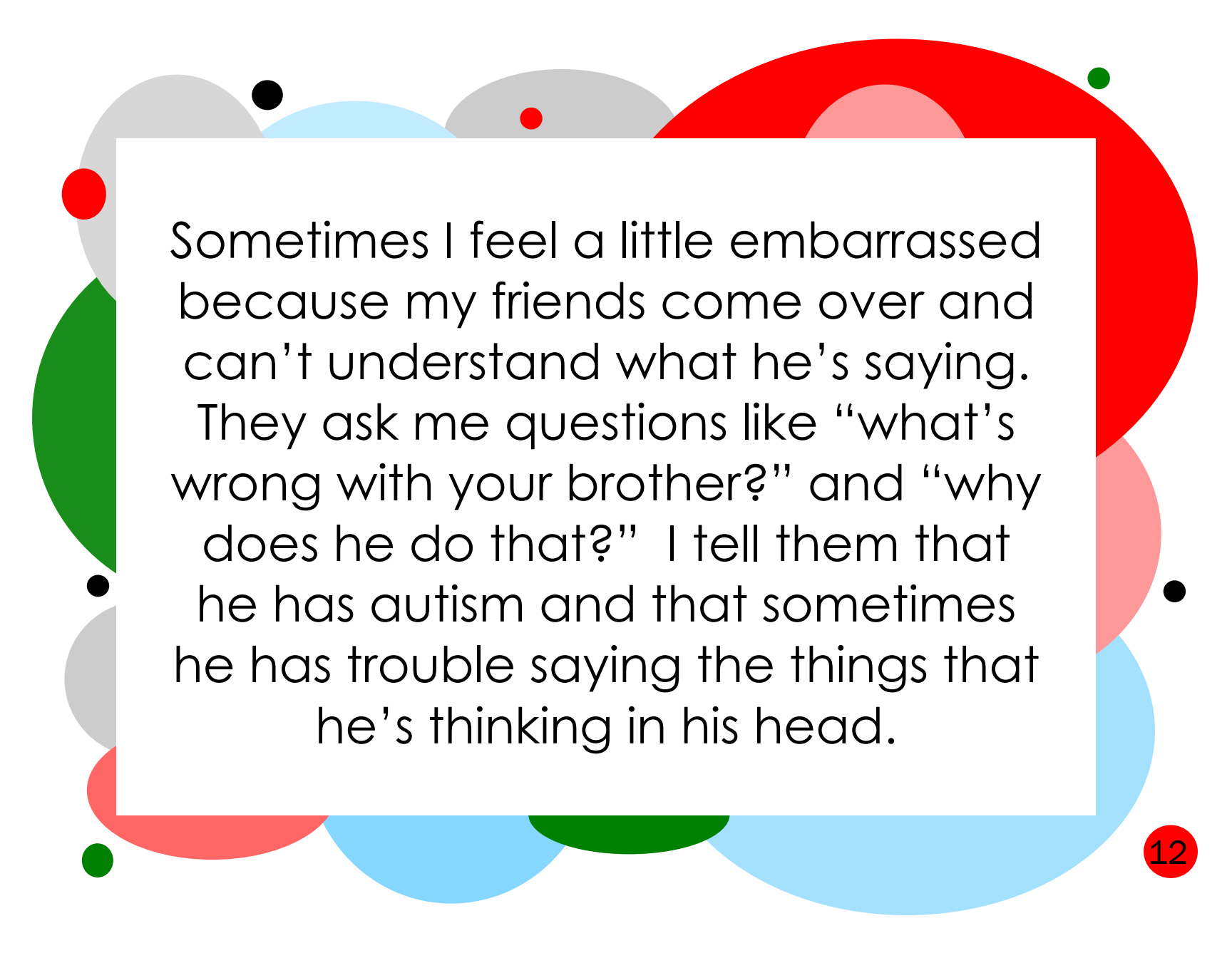




My brother is so smart. I like to ask him how to spell really big words. He always gets them right! I bet he could win a spelling bee if he tried. He also has a great imagination.

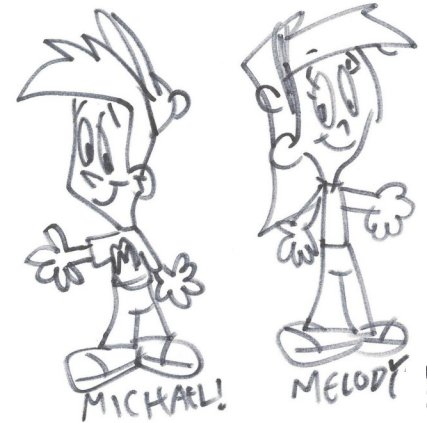
He draws things that make me laugh all of the time like the picture of his stuffed cat mouse flushing his friend Timmy down the toilet. Funny!

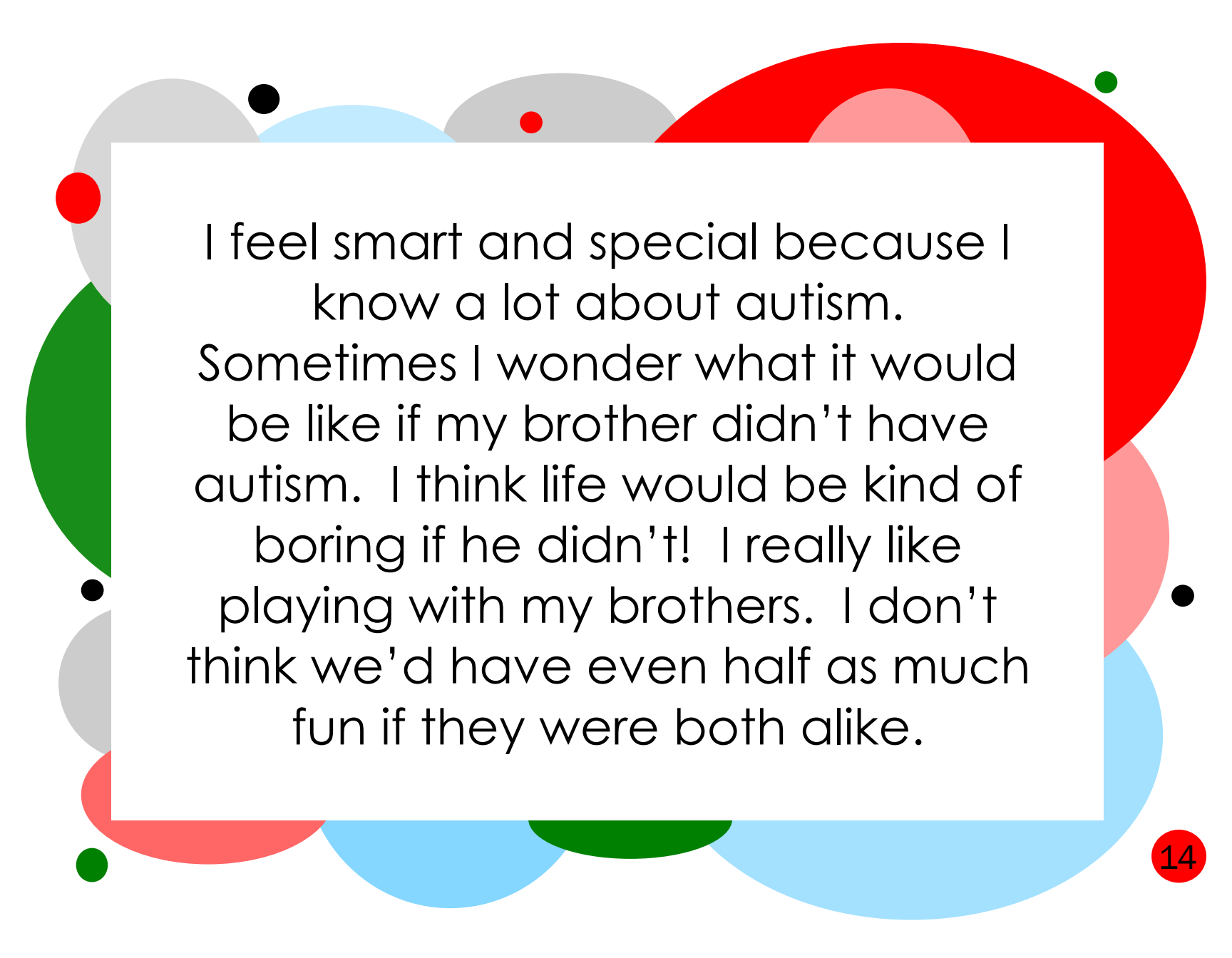




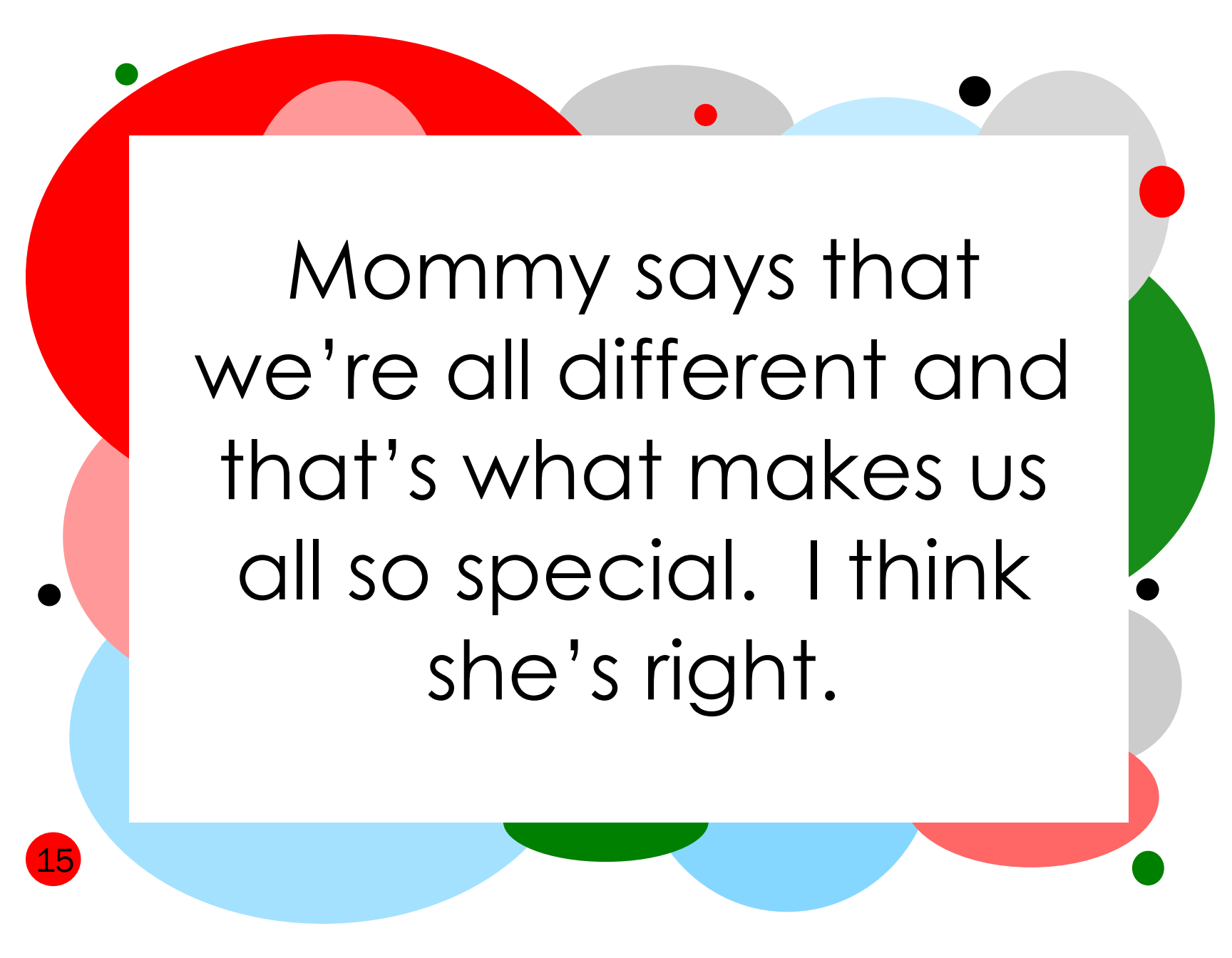
Sometimes I feel a little embarrassed because my friends come over and can't understand what he's saying. They ask me questions like "what's wrong with your brother?" and "why does he do that?" I tell them that he has autism and that sometimes he has trouble saying the things that he's thinking in his 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.



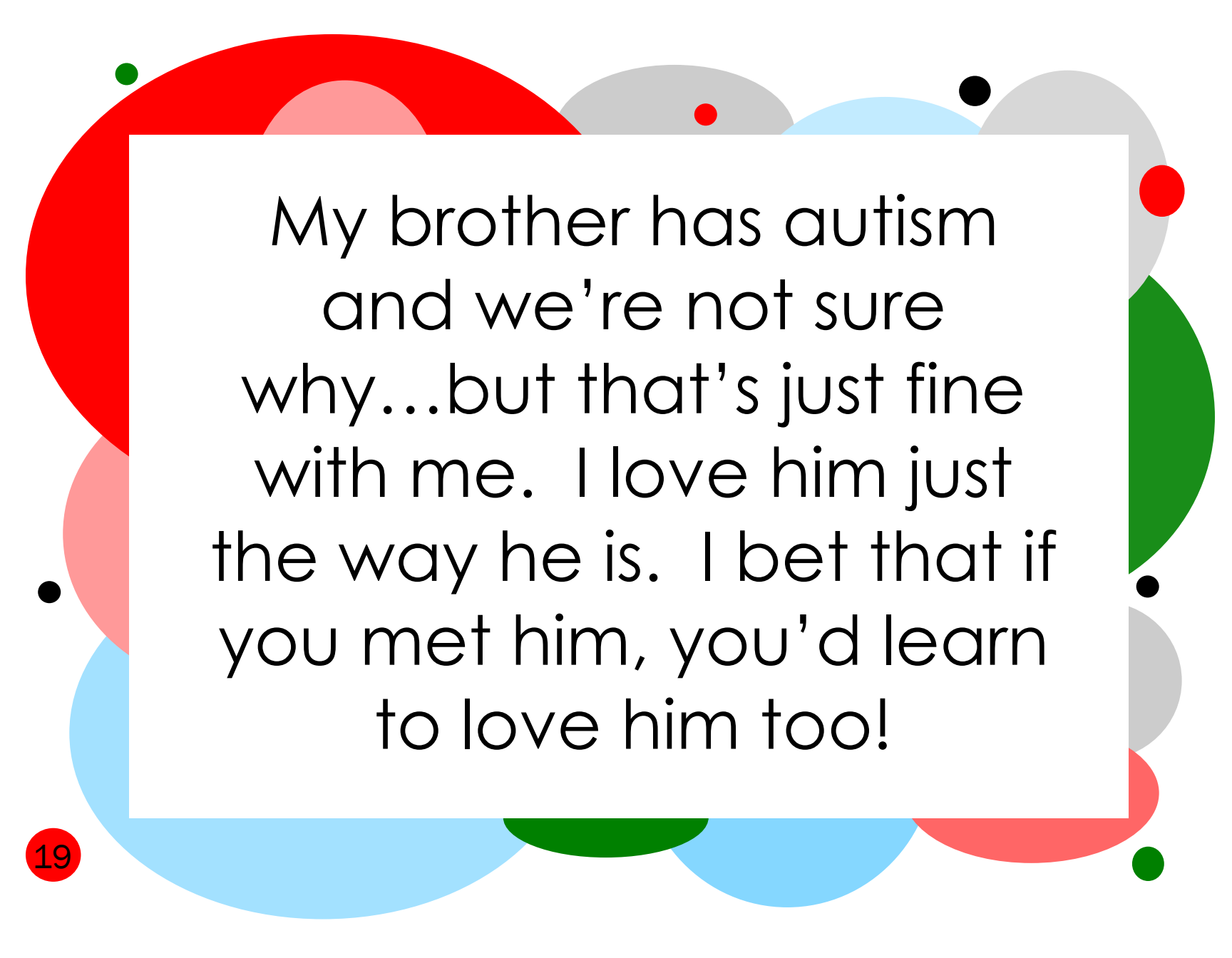
Sometimes I
help my
brother and
sometimes
he helps
me.

Last night we
made an ICEE
together in the
kitchen. He put
in the ice and I
turned the
crank. It was so
yummy!

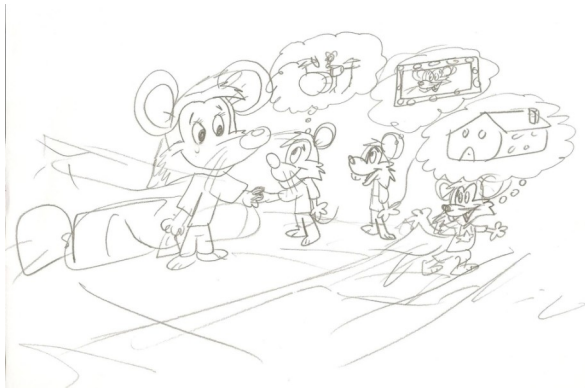


He likes to dress up as Mickey Mouse even when it's not Halloween. I think it's neat that he doesn't care what other people think about him. It's like he's free to be whoever he wants to be!

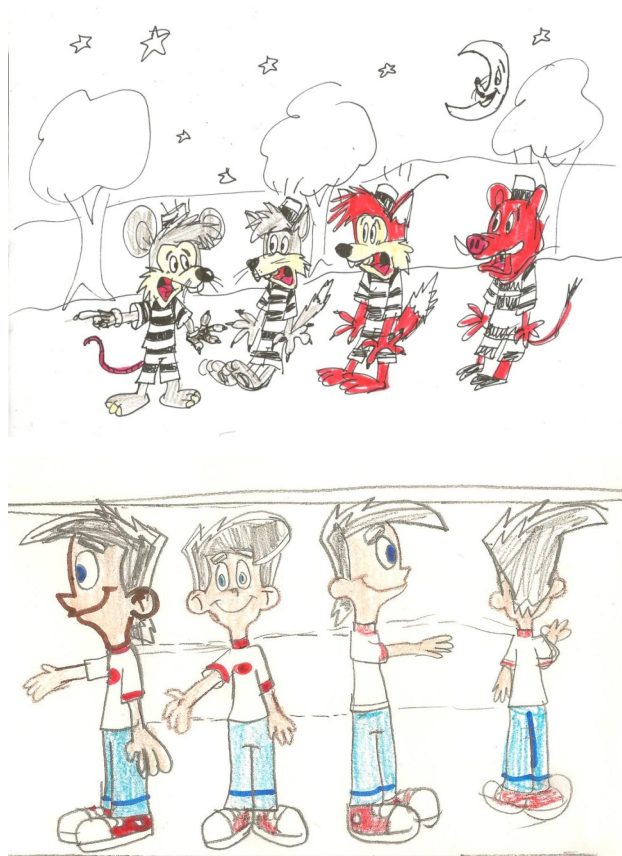




My brother has autism
and we're not sure
why...but that's just fine
with me. I love him just
the way he is. I bet that if
you met him, you'd learn
to love him too!



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.

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