



## Sharing Your Struggle with Family and Friends

**The following excerpt from the book *Overcoming Autism*, by Lynn Kern Koegel, Ph.D. and Claire LaZebnik, offers suggestions for how to tell people and explains why, for some people, it can make life easier for you and your friends.**

You should, you know. Tell people. You don't have to walk up to strangers on the street or anything, but confide in the people who love you. That was one thing we did right: we told our families and our friends right away. First we called them, and then we copied a good comprehensive article someone wrote about autism and annotated it with specifics about Andrew, and we mailed it out to everyone we knew. (You could do the same things with sections from this book, by the way.) None of our good friends pulled away from us because our kid had autism. Just the opposite – our friends and families rallied around us in amazing ways and have continued to cheer Andrew's progress on year after year. In all honesty, telling people what we were going through only made our lives easier. Before then, we worried that Andrew's occasionally aberrant behavior was off-putting. But once he had a formal diagnosis, everyone cut us a lot of slack, and instead of wondering what the hell was wrong with us as parents, most people we knew admitted to a newfound respect for us for dealing with so much.

Real friends don't love you more for being successful or less for having problems. If anything, it works the opposite way – we're all so busy that sometimes we forget to stay in touch with friends when everything's fine for them, but we rush forward when they need us. Now is the time to take advantage of that. Talk your friends' ears off, complain, bitch and moan to them. You're dealing with a huge challenge, take advantage of every minor plus it has to offer.

**Some families have downloaded this Autism Speaks 100 Day Kit and sent it to their family members and close friends to provide more information about autism and what their family may be going through. The kit can be downloaded at [autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit](https://autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit).**