

Title: Family Perspectives: Lisette & Manny (Spanish)

Family: Lisette (mom) and Manny (12 years old)

Manny is [laughs]... He's like a 7 year old in a 12 year old body. He could be very mature for certain things, but he's also a baby in other things. Manny likes Spongebob. He likes video games. He likes PacMan. He likes legos. His favorite place in the world to go is Orlando because they have theme parks and he loves theme parks.

When I was pregnant with Manny I took a class so I ended up doing fieldwork at school with children with different disabilities. I was a little bit familiar with autism. When Manny was 16-18 months I started seeing a lot of the behaviors that I learned in the class in Manny. As a parent I didn't want to admit it. It was very hard. Manny was the little one. I already had two girls and they developed typical, normally, and Manny was a bit different.

I went to his pediatrician and I expose my concern to her and she told me "Don't worry. Boys are late. Mine talked late. Everything is fine." But I still had like an urge inside that was telling me that something was not normal.

Manny had some words, he did have words and he was developing somewhat normally but he regressed. Not a lot of eye contact, just a bit. The little words he had like "water", "mama", "papa" those words he lost them completely. It's like a light that starts dimming. His last word was in May and he was diagnosed with autism in July, so for those two months it was complete silence.

When I went back to the doctor. As soon as he saw Manny, he told me, "Do you see what I see?" And I told him, I could see a little bit of autism. I told him "yes, that's my concern, that's what I see." So we took it from there. He gave me the referral for Early intervention. He gave me phone numbers and I started moving and finding help.

Early intervention was very important for Manny. I could say it was heaven. I got lucky he was diagnosed in July and by August Manny already started with services.

The question that we all had always was like "When will he be able to talk? When will he be able to point or when will he be able to do something?" Every time Manny did something new we all celebrated.

I'm very thankful for Early Intervention because thanks to the services it opens a lot of doors for us. He received services that he needed plus we met a lot of people who are significant in our lives today. It's like a lifelong relationship that I have with them.

Every time I have a friend or I meet someone that they're telling me that their children has some kind of delays and they're not sure of something I always tell them "Call Early Intervention. Do it as soon as you can. It's the best."

Our biggest hope is that Manny lives a happy life. That he's somewhat independent. That he may...he may not acquire a college degree, but that he's good at something. That he's able to work. That he is able to socialize with other people. He likes to party. He likes to dance. All of this he likes and we want to see him doing all of that and we want to see him happy.