



## One of Us: A Family's Life with Autism

*Mark Osteen*

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In 1991, Mark Osteen and his wife, Leslie, were struggling to understand why their son, Cameron, was so different from other kids. At age one, Cam had little interest in toys and was surprisingly fixated on books. He didn't make baby sounds; he ignored other children. As he grew older, he failed to grasp language, remaining unresponsive even when his parents called his name. When Cam started having screaming anxiety attacks, Mark and Leslie began to grasp that Cam was developmentally delayed. But when Leslie raised the possibility of an autism diagnosis, Mark balked. *Autism is so rare*, he thought. *Might as well worry about being struck by lightning.*

Since that time, awareness of autism has grown monumentally. Autism has received extensive coverage in the news media, and it has become a popular subject for film, television, and literature, but the disorder is frequently portrayed and perceived as a set of eccentricities that can be corrected with proper treatment. In reality, autism permanently wrecks many children's chances for typical lives. Plenty of recent bestsellers have described the hardships of autism, but those memoirs usually focus on the recovery of people who overcome some or all of the challenges of the disorder. And while that plot is uplifting, it's rare in real life, as few autistic children fully recover. The territory of severe autism—of the child who is debilitated by the condition, who will never be cured—has been largely neglected. *One of Us: A Family's Life with Autism* tells that story.

In this book, Mark Osteen chronicles the experience of raising Cam, whose autism causes him aggression, insomnia, compulsions, and physical sickness. In a powerful, deeply personal narrative, Osteen recounts the struggles he and his wife endured in diagnosing, treating, and understanding Cam's disability, following the family through the years of medical difficulties and emotional wrangling. *One of Us* thrusts the reader into the life of a child who exists in his own world and describes the immense hardships faced by those who love and care for him. Leslie and Mark's marriage is sorely tested by their son's condition, and the book follows their progress from denial to acceptance while they fight to save their own relationship.

By embracing the little victories of their life with Cam and by learning to love him as he is, Mark takes the reader down a road just as gratifying, and perhaps more moving, than one to recovery. *One of Us* is not a book about a child who overcomes autism. Instead, it's the story of a different but equally rare sort of victory—the triumph of love over tremendous adversity.

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