

## Tapping Into the Gifts of an Autistic Child

Vallejo, CA – “September 9th, 1979,” recalls Barbara Coppo, “That’s the day when my normal baby boy suffered brain damage at 19-months-old from his D.P.T. vaccine and our world came crashing down. It has never been the same since.” Her son, Kenny, is now 29-years-old and cannot talk, be reasoned with and is helpless – unable to groom, dress, shower or wipe himself. But, she points out; there is an intellectual part of him that is genius.

Coppo chronicles her family’s journey through Kenny’s life and her endless struggles to find help and programs to suit his many challenging needs in the new book, “The Boy in the Window: A Journey Through an Unexpected Tragedy.” The last three decades have been filled with Kenny’s seizures, uncontrollable behaviors and include a court battle – settled out of court in 1987 – with the drug company she holds responsible for his condition.

“We were told by doctors and professionals to institutionalize him because of his extreme behaviors and inability to adapt socially,” reveals Coppo, who is 66 and credits daily exercise for helping her sustain the energy to care for Kenny. Coppo and her husband Ken, married 46 years, says an institution was never an option for Kenny, because his home is with them, “We love him so much in spite of his required 24/7 care.”

At the age of 17, an aide working with Kenny at school exposed him to the computer and, by pointing to the keyboard, his thoughts could finally be conveyed. “An innocent and honest boy trapped in a severely damaged brain emerged,” Coppo emotionally recalls. She also proudly announces that Kenny is a math expert. In “The Boy in the Window,” Coppo details his ability to look at an extremely difficult math problem and point to the correct answer in seconds.

“The ability and knowledge that someone like him can have is a miracle,” she continues, “but it’s a shame that it can easily be overlooked.” She credits the different aides who worked with Kenny over several years for helping to unlock his “uncanny abilities,” which can go way beyond the normal.

Coppo says that Kenny has the gifts of telepathy and E.S.P. and details in “The Boy in the Window” how they were discovered and experienced by many of his aides, “It may be hard for some people to believe, but there have been too many incidents to ignore.” E.S.P. is almost a daily occurrence, for example, Kenny has a sing-song way of making a phone sound, “huh-ha,” seconds before it rings. In addition, sometimes during the night Kenny will leap out of bed, strip off his clothes, cry out and his parents can’t get him back in bed. She further explains, “We have it documented that at the same time these episodes happen, someone he’s close to is having out of the ordinary problems.”

Coppo offers one more anecdote, “Kenny is a routine kind of guy, to put it mildly!” Everyday at 6:00pm, he and his father go for a drive, and it has to be the exact same route, going the exact same direction. “One day, they are about to enter the freeway on the same ramp they always did, but Kenny grabbed the steering wheel forcing my husband to take another road.” Upon returning home, they turned on the news, another daily habit, and a special report was covering a massive accident that happened at the exact place Kenny had steered them away from earlier.

“To this day, my husband feels Kenny saved a possible disaster from happening to the two of them,” shares Coppo. She then asks, “Is it unrealistic for an autistic child, who is betrayed by their own senses, to develop that ‘sixth sense?’ Much in the way a blind person has an enhanced sense of smell or hearing?”

Despite his extraordinary gifts, Coppo still worries about her nearly 30-year-old son, “He can read minds and solve incredibly hard math problems, but if our house is burning down, he wouldn’t have the common sense to get the heck out and would probably resist our efforts to rescue him.” Most times, she admits, he’s his own worst enemy.

“I was once told by a psychologist that I would eventually grow to resent my son from the burden of raising him,” Coppo candidly reflects. “While I cry over my worries for Kenny, the truth is I love him more each day.” Adding, “My mysterious son has taught me the true value of what is really precious in life and what is worth fighting for. I guess that makes him the best gift I could have ever gotten.”

## About the Author

Barbara Coppo, 66, has spent nearly three decades caring for her autistic son, Kenny, who is 29-years-old. As chronicled in her book, “The Boy in the Window: A Journey Through an Unexpected Tragedy,” she and her husband, Ken, of 46 years had a perfectly healthy baby boy until 19 months old, when he suffered irreversible brain damage from the D.P.T. vaccination. Kenny became autistic, started having seizures and uncontrollable behaviors. Barbara’s story is filled with love, frustration, humor and tells of the endless journey she is on to improve the quality of life of her autistic – and gifted – son, Kenny, “The Boy in the Window.” ([www.TheBoyInTheWindowBook.com](http://www.TheBoyInTheWindowBook.com))