

## Unlocking Potential Beyond Diagnosis

*A Mother's belief is always powerful and transcends any diagnosis*

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### Introduction

Sirisha is the founder of Spell Your Voice and a certified special needs practitioner. She has extensive experience in training and teaching individuals with special needs, particularly those facing challenges with traditional communication methods. Sirisha's philosophy revolves around recognizing potential beyond a diagnosis, driven by her unwavering belief that a mother's intuition and love can transcend any medical or developmental labels.

This belief became the cornerstone of her journey with her son, Sahit, who was diagnosed with autism at 14 months old. Sirisha's mission to unlock Sahit's potential revealed extraordinary insights into how an autistic individual can connect with the universe in profound ways. Her dedication and determination transformed her son's challenges into opportunities for growth and connection.

### Sahit's Early Years

Sahit was born on December 29, 2006, through a normal delivery with no complications. However, by the time he was one month old, signs of food allergies began to surface. Being her first child, Sirisha followed the recommended vaccination schedule and monitored his development closely. The first year seemed smooth, apart from the allergies, but by 10 months, Sahit's behavior began to change.

He became hyperactive, and Sirisha noticed minimal eye contact, which raised concerns. By 11 months, it became apparent that he was withdrawing into his own world. His sleep was disrupted, he experienced severe diaper rashes, and respiratory issues appeared during colds and coughs. Concerned, the family consulted their pediatrician, who referred them to a diagnostic center in Baltimore, MD.

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<sup>1</sup> Sirisha, also known as Siri, is dedicated to empowering families with special children, helping them unlock their hidden potential. She possesses extensive experience in training and teaching special individuals, utilizing diverse modalities. Additionally, she is a certified RPM (Rapid Prompting Method) practitioner since 2018, indicating her expertise in a specific approach to teaching and communicating with individuals who may have challenges in traditional communication methods. See [www.spellyourvoice.com](http://www.spellyourvoice.com) and contact: [spellurvoice@gmail.com](mailto:spellurvoice@gmail.com)

At the center, the psychologists diagnosed Sahit with autism and painted a grim picture of his future. They predicted he would never understand emotions, process language, or cognitively develop beyond the level of a two-year-old, even as an adult. These words were a heavy blow, leaving the family emotionally and physically overwhelmed. Sirisha had never even heard of autism before this moment, and the diagnosis marked the beginning of a challenging and emotional journey.

## **The Emotional Impact and Initial Steps**

The diagnosis brought a wave of denial and uncertainty. Like many parents, Sirisha hoped Sahit was simply delayed and would catch up with time. Family members tried to reassure her by recounting stories of relatives who had spoken late or developed differently. However, Sirisha realized that time alone would not heal the challenges her son faced—action was necessary.

As Sahit's development regressed further, additional issues like asthma and milk allergies compounded the situation. Emotionally, the family struggled to process the diagnosis while grappling with practical questions about how to support Sahit. It was clear they needed to take a proactive approach.

## **A New Approach to Parenting**

Sirisha's journey with Sahit taught her the importance of addressing challenges head-on. Instead of waiting for improvement, she dedicated herself to understanding and supporting her son. She spent 5-6 hours daily in one-on-one interaction with Sahit, without technology, focusing entirely on his needs and potential. This intense effort began to yield results, showing the power of parental involvement in a child's development.

Sahit's challenges often involved basic needs. For example, teaching him to wear a jacket required creative and tactile methods. Instead of forcing the jacket on him, Sirisha took him outside to feel the cold and let him realize the need for warmth. This hands-on, sensory-based approach became a foundation for helping Sahit learn and adapt.

## **Unlocking Potential Beyond Diagnosis**

The family's journey emphasized presumed competence—believing that Sahit had untapped potential despite his diagnosis. They shifted their mindset, understanding that Sahit required a unique approach to learning and development. By becoming his primary therapist, Sirisha worked tirelessly to address his speech, motor skills, and emotional needs.

Sahit lost his speech around 13 months but gradually regained it by age five, albeit without clarity. A later diagnosis of apraxia added to the challenges, but Sirisha's dedication as his speech and occupational therapist paid off.

Slowly, Sahit began to make progress, defying the initial prognosis.

## **The Journey Through Apraxia and Beyond**

Then came the prognosis and diagnosis of apraxia, where the clarity of speech would not be present. Sirisha worked tirelessly to help Sahit articulate letters and words. She became his speech therapist, his occupational therapist, and his full-time guide, learning ways to help him improve articulation and focusing intensely on his ability to speak.

Sahit's journey of being nonverbal and having limited speech impacted reliable communication until he was nine years old. His speech was primarily about wants and needs, often repeating words because he had not learned to speak reliably. He would copy what he heard rather than comprehending it fully.

Through tactile and sensory approaches, Sirisha and her family helped Sahit achieve basic communication for wants, needs, and potty training. Their motto was, "Give your strength, find a way to heal, and time will support, too."

When Sahit was nine, he began using physical force to communicate, as his distress levels grew. There was much he wanted to say, but his speech only allowed for basic wants, needs, and repetitive OCD-driven words. Teaching children to convey their emotions and thoughts is vital, but the question remained: how?

The family progressed stage by stage—first understanding Sahit, then exploring ways to help him connect to the world. While his basic needs were met, that was not enough. Communication is essential for humans, and expressing emotions through physical distress is not ideal. The challenge became teaching Sahit to convey his emotions and thoughts effectively.

## **A Rounded Approach to Healing**

Sirisha and her husband adopted a holistic approach to help Sahit. They focused on clean food as medicine, alternative therapies, and activities, like learning to ride a bike, hoverboard, or skateboard. Their goal was to train Sahit's brain and body while healing him from within.

While these methods helped, there was still a barrier: limited speech was not enough. The key question for many parents became, "How do we teach reliable expression when speech isn't enough?" Often, children with autism repeat or memorize words without genuine comprehension. The family sought a way to connect speech to comprehension.

## **Unlocking Sahit's Voice**

A spiritual connection guided Sirisha and her husband throughout their journey. Rooted in their Indian heritage, they believed in a higher power that would provide clarity and energy because their will was strong.

Their unwavering determination led them to unlock Sahit's hidden voice.

The key lay in reliable motor movements, such as pointing and spelling, which unlocked Sahit's inner voice. Eating, drinking, and following directions are motor movements, and the family realized that while speech and language are different, Sahit had language within him.

Then, a spark of hope flickered in Austin. Another mother, who had trained her non-verbal son to communicate by pointing and spelling out his thoughts, inspired Sahit's family to teach him the same method.

They taught him to use letter boards and keyboards to express himself.

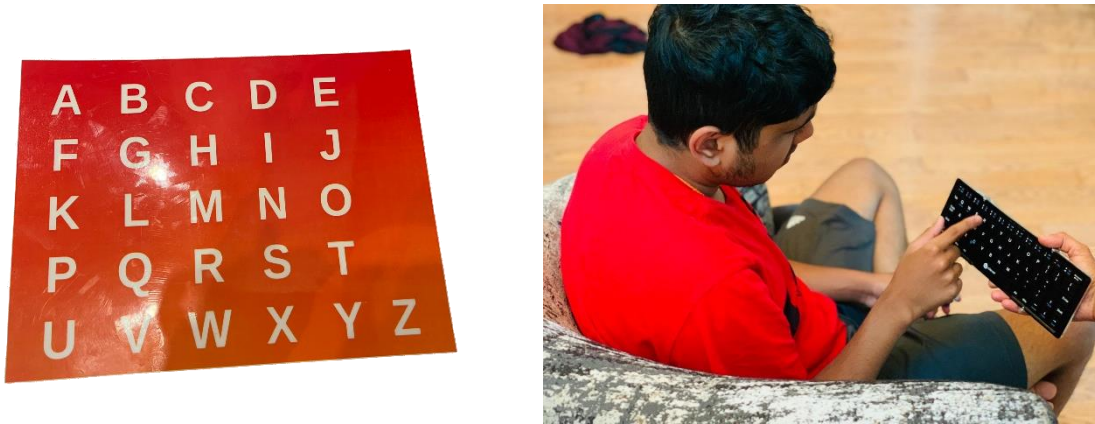


Figure 1. An example of a letter board with the 26 letters of the English alphabet, which Sahit uses to spell words and express himself (left), and a picture of Sahit communicating through the use of a letter keyboard (right).

Teaching Sahit to communicate was a game changer. Through pointing and spelling, he began to share his thoughts and emotions, revealing the person behind the physical body. For instance, he recalled incidents from when he was three years old, such as seeing a friend eat a crayon in school while the teachers were chatting.

These 26 letters of the English alphabet became infinite possibilities for Sahit. Letters turned into emotions and thoughts, allowing him to answer questions like, “Why are you screaming?” Sahit spelt out the letters and explained, “Impulsive screaming is a stimulating act of my brain. The scream is heard at the last circle of the loop. The nuisance starts at a deeper level, like a slinky.”

He was communicating in ways and with a clarity that was surprising and striking. Beyond what his family ever imagined him communicating at his age.

Sahit described the loop starting with a thought, smell, or heat that runs through his body. He used hobbies, like puzzles, swings, or documentaries to regulate his brain's stimulation. This insight transformed how the family understood and supported Sahit.

## **A Spiritual Awakening**

Sahit's spiritual energy was beyond imagination. Teaching him to point and spell revealed profound thoughts about life and spirituality. For example, Sahit shared his perspective on the festival of Holi and other life events, showing depth and wisdom.

Sahit explained that "the miracle we all experience every day is living this life." His words became a daily source of inspiration for Sirisha, who learned a great deal from his balanced way of thinking.

This experience really highlighted the spiritual being and identity of Sahit and allowed his family and many others to recognise that who he is, is well beyond any limitation of his physical body. It is a spiritual identity, with a higher consciousness, greater than what is normally expected of someone of Sahit's years biologically in this world, of any age in this world. His insight surpasses the human intellect alone, it is from a higher realm of existence.

Sirisha's journey with Sahit showed that 'a Mother's belief is always powerful and transcends any diagnosis and opens the door to unlocking potential beyond diagnosis' and opening the door for Sahit to communicate and express freely in this world.

What was initially a very painful and shocking diagnosis has become a spiritual blessing and inspiration to understanding life, one's greater purpose, and to loving one another without conditions.

Without such faith and belief, the ways in which Sahit could communicate in this world could have remained very limited and many would have missed the blessings of being touched by his loving spirit and wisdom.

## **Conclusion**

With life experiences and insights from Sahit, Sirisha began her practice to train students on the autism spectrum to express themselves through letters. All her students now communicate their thoughts and emotions using various modalities, redefining autism and revealing their true potential.

Sirisha's journey demonstrates that autism is not a limitation but an opportunity to teach humanity. Her students have taught her how to become a better person every single day.

## Sahit's Writings

### Sahit at 12 years old

#### Learnings from the golden goose story:

Humans are made to live life at the fullest.  
Thoughtful enough to find ways to fill the pot of life.  
The glory behind, the pot size isn't determined.  
The furious humans are in a rush to fill the pot to its fullest,  
Without realizing the size of the pot.  
This results in dissatisfied species,  
Who are the smartest on the planet !

### Sahit at 13 years old

#### Sahit's Varanasi Experience:

Summer morning in Kasi  
Enough to breathe the pure air  
Talking to myself opening the higher realms  
True mornings filled with sin free emotions  
Fortunate enough to wake up at 4 am, thankful for my jetlag.  
The Ganga is running in my veins loaded with calmness.  
Hues of glittering sunrays makes it celestial.  
Sitting on a boat to witness the glory of Varanasi  
Rising sun over Ganga, looking at the city  
Loving the loneliness inside me  
Happy, blissful state of calm warmth feeling like a mother's hug.  
Memorable summer morning at my favorite place in the world.

### Sahit at 17 years old

#### Sound of mantra:

This universe is filled with sound.  
But our earth is the only planet that is balanced with five elements.  
Sound generated by other planets reach our earth.  
The time and the position of earth impacts how it reacts to the frequency of the  
outer space.

There is a particular sound wave that sun emits, which by reaching earth generates energy field to give life on earth a chance to uplift. Our rishis and Munis have the knowledge to multiply this energy field hence segregated the auspicious time wisely. If the time of the year is near to the cycle of completing one revolution, that implies one should get ready to fast our bodies and fill with cosmic sound energy that reverberates to mount Kailash. This is our month of Kartika. The mantras slokas, stutis are the non-perishable treasure given to us in a sound form to multiply our inner energy field on this magical planet earth.