

A cluster of pink hearts of various sizes in the top left corner and a pink envelope with a red heart on it and a blue wing in the top right corner.

Accepting the SPECTRUM

February 2026 Newsletter

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COLLABORATIVE
ABA SERVICES, LLC

Welcome to February! This month is Black History Month - a time to recognize, celebrate, and reflect on the achievements, resilience, and lasting contributions of Black individuals and communities throughout history. At Collaborative ABA Services, LLC, we believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential to the compassionate, individualized care we provide every day. This month offers an opportunity to strengthen our commitment to inclusive care and service-delivery in ABA.



Did you know...?

Only 20.12% of RBT's, 5.85% of BCBAs, and 6.12% of BCaBAs



identify as black.

What is BABA?

BABA (Black Applied Behavior Analysts) is dedicated to increasing access to the field of ABA, providing resources for culturally competent care, and supporting minority professionals in mental and behavioral health.

BABA strives to:

- Bridge the gap in service delivery with the Black community
- Support mentorship and scholarships for underrepresented professionals
- Provide culturally responsive care across the board for ABA therapy.

Ways to Increase Awareness and Participation:

Research and learn!

Actively seek out, read, and share books, podcasts, and articles by Black authors, thinkers, and journalists.

Visit babainfo.org to learn more.



BABA

Support Black-Owned Businesses!

Intentionally buy from Black-owned restaurants, bookstores, and other retailers.



Explore Culture!

Familiarize yourself with customs, traditions, or activities that may be different from your own.

Continue the Celebration Year-Round!

Initiatives to celebrate Black practitioners in ABA goes well beyond the 28 days of February. Make learning and celebrating Black history a consistent practice.

AGENCY NEWS

Please welcome Quavon (Q), RBT and BCBA Student!

Meet Quavon (Q)! Quavon graduated with his Master's in ABA from Western Connecticut State University in May of 2025.

In addition, he attained a Bachelor's in Psychology with a concentration in mental health from Southern Connecticut State University in May 2023. He's joining the company as a Registered Behavior Technician and BCBA student! Quavon has been working in the field of ABA for 6+ years and has experience working within a wide variety of age groups and settings.

Quavon prides himself on the strong relationships and long lasting impacts he's had on various clients as he fully dedicates himself to each person he works with. He looks forward to expanding his knowledge and skillset within the field to continue making meaningful differences to families in need. Outside of work Quavon enjoys playing basketball with friends, being a pet parent, listening to music, and hanging with friends.



Introducing...

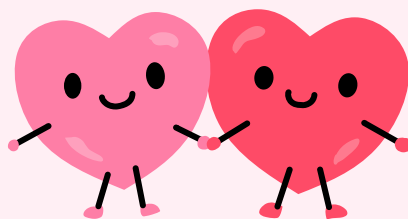
COLLABYWAIT



COLLABWAIT

Clarity, Support, and Real Updates
— All in One Place

CollabWait is a new software launched by Collaborative ABA Services, LLC that helps navigate services with confidence by showing waitlist positions, agency availability, and important updates in real-time. Agencies and families can learn more about CollabWait at www.collabwait.com



COLLAB MERCH

Don't forget to check out our unique line of Collaborative ABA Services merchandise!



Check out our products at:
<https://collaborativeabastore.com/>

Lisa's Coaching Center

What the Teen Years Have Taught Me So Far

Last year, my son turned 18.

He crossed into adulthood in September. Still 18 — but on the adult side of the equation. And with that has come transition. A lot of it.

We're having conversations about what the near future looks like. And when I say "we," I mean me and his team. Because that's how this works. Autism parenting at this stage is collaborative whether you like it or not.

As part of that process, I've been looking back. Really looking back.

What worked.

What didn't.

What I learned from essentially four full years of acuity.

If you don't know our story, here's the short version.

When my son turned 13, we went into a free fall.

Up until that point, he was in sixth grade in a general education classroom. A couple pull-outs for speech and reading. Birthday parties. After-school skiing. He genuinely liked school.

Then middle school approached.

His anxiety started to increase. And when COVID shut everything down midway through sixth grade, that increase exploded.

In the months that followed, his anxiety skyrocketed. OCD made a very loud entrance. Teenage hormones showed up right on time.

And we went from well-functioning to barely functioning.

Within less than two weeks of starting seventh grade, we had our first 911 call. Then back-to-back ER visits. Then more 911 calls. Inpatient hospitalizations. Partial programs in several states. New doctors. New diagnoses. More medication changes than I can count. Out-of-district placements.

Endless IEP meetings.

There were moments when I truly believed I had lost my child.

Between the hormones, the anxiety, the OCD, the trauma — I didn't know if there was a way back.

Now, being five years out — not on "the other side," because I don't think autism parenting works that way — but further away from those years of acute crisis, I have perspective.

There are hundreds of practical lessons I could share.

But on a macro level, three principles guided me through those years. And I am very intentional about carrying them into this next chapter.

1. Acceptance Is Not a One-Time Event

For a long time, I thought I understood acceptance.

We got the diagnosis.

We built the IEP.

We told the people who needed to know.

I didn't hide it.

I went to support groups.

I did the walks.

I thought acceptance was complete.

Then the teenage years arrived.

Autism had already required a level of precision and attention that was baked into me. Ben is my only child. I didn't know anything different. I knew our life looked different from other families, but it felt normal to me.

It was still hard. There was still anxiety. Still challenges. But I felt like I had it in hand.

That changed dramatically when anxiety, OCD, and teenage hormones arrived all at once.

Autism already felt like enough. I understood that anxiety and OCD can be part of autism. But when they moved to the front and took over, I resisted it. I felt resentful. I felt angry that things had gotten harder.

Then aggression entered the picture, and I really lost my footing.

The child I was seeing didn't match the child I knew.

At the same time, we had a brand-new middle school team who had never seen the version of Ben who was thriving. I kept saying, "You don't understand — just a few months ago, this is what he was like."

Looking back, I can see how much I was anchored to who he had been.

That resistance interfered with my decisions. I was making choices based on where I thought he should be — not where he actually was.

After his first inpatient hospitalization, the district offered several out-of-district placements. One served students with high levels of aggression.

That was a hard no for me.

At the time, his behaviors had been mostly self-injurious, with threats toward me, but not significant outward aggression yet. I was afraid placing him with aggressive peers would escalate things.

I pushed for a placement that reflected how I still saw him.

He got in.

It didn't work.

His aggression escalated. He was not suited for that environment at that time.

I remember telling a close friend, who is also a BCBA, "He doesn't belong in a school with aggressive kids."

She said, "He doesn't belong here either — because he's the one being aggressive."

That hit me hard.

It was my Breaking Bad moment. "I am the one who knocks." Except in this case, my child was the one with the behaviors.

Accepting that did not remove the grief. It made me clearer.

Clearer in meetings.

Clearer in decisions.

Less attached to who he had been.
More grounded in who he was.
Acceptance became less about “why” and more about “and now this too.”

2. Unconditional Love Gets Tested

Unconditional love sounds obvious when it's your child.

Of course you love them.

But what happens when your child becomes someone you don't recognize?

When you go from being their best buddy to their biggest trigger?

I never questioned whether I loved my son. But I did question whether the version of him I knew was gone forever.

And the question I had to answer was this:

Can I love him no matter what?

Even if I don't like how he's behaving.

Even if he doesn't like me.

Even if this is permanent.

The answer was yes.

Not a sentimental yes.

Not a performative yes.

A grounded, embodied yes.

That decision was stabilizing.

I wasn't waiting to see how things turned out in order to decide whether I would love him. I knew I could love this child no matter what.

That love guided my decisions — even when he wasn't a fan.

It became my North Star during a time when very little felt steady.

3. Holding Hope Is an Act of Courage

Holding hope means accepting what is right now and still believing in something better — even when there is no evidence yet.

There were long stretches when nothing worked.

We tried everything we were told to try. Programs. Doctors. Medications. I moved to another state and lived in a hotel for three months to get specialized OCD treatment.

Things that helped other families didn't help us.

Holding hope took effort.

I know parents who are afraid to hope because they are afraid of being disappointed again.

Holding hope requires vulnerability. You are putting your heart on the line.

I remember a case manager during one of my son's most acute periods saying something like,

“But for a miracle...”

She cared deeply about my son. She was stating facts.

And I remember thinking, I believe in miracles.

I didn't know how. I didn't know when. There was no evidence. But I decided to believe.

And my son came back.

He is himself again — and in many ways, even stronger.
I know there will be more challenges. Autism does not disappear at 18.
But I also know what rock bottom feels like. And I know that light can still exist there.
When you put these three together — acceptance, unconditional love, and holding hope
— you see what autism parents do every day.
We get knocked down.
And we get back up.
No matter where you are in your journey — whether your story looks like mine or
completely different — this life will push you to your edges.
There is growth there.
But it is also hard.
And it can be lonely.
You do not need to be in crisis to reach for support.
That is why I built my coaching program. To be the resource I wish I had during those
years.
If you are stretched thin — or simply tired of carrying it alone — you can schedule a
consultation call. It is a conversation. We look at where you are and what support would
actually move the needle.
You do not have to wait until things fall apart.
You can build capacity now.



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