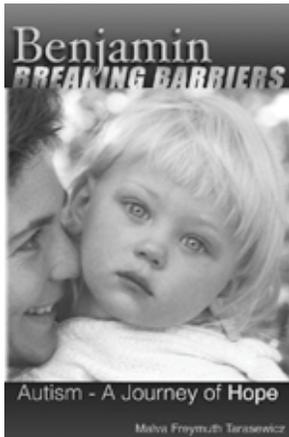


## Benjamin Breaking Barriers

by Malva Tarasewicz (Integrated Musician's Press, 2014)



Malva Tarasewicz, like so many parents of autistic children, had the heart-breaking experience of seeing her fifteen-month-old child quickly retreat into a world of his own. Up to this time, Benjamin openly sought her cuddles and affection and was even beginning to name things in his environment. In *Benjamin Breaking Barriers* Malva tells us about her own

path of realization and Benjamin's reawakening to the world around him as she transitions from shock and remorse to hopeful conviction. We read how Malva gradually seeks out the therapies that help her son and, more importantly, how these interventions contribute to Benjamin's "baby steps" back to connection with the world into which he has incarnated. The descriptions of the significance of these therapies for Benjamin are full of helpful insights for the educator.

The subtitle, *Autism—A Journey of Hope* is an apt

way to describe Malva's incredible journey from the despair of the first realizations of her child's diagnosis of autism to the step-by-step path of unconditional loving connection to which she decided to commit. She quickly realized that she needed to stay engaged with her child during his waking hours. Failure to do so meant that Benjamin would retreat into his own world of twirling, flapping and inward isolation.

For teachers and parents, this book reinforces the importance of being in the present with children, investing in "right relationship" with them. Then, out of the soul-spiritual substance that is built up in this activity, we may trust in that which comes to us as indications from the periphery. *Benjamin Breaking Barriers* is a must-read for teachers and parents working with children with extra needs. It is an inspiring, engaging and uplifting story of how love, perseverance, and devotion to other human beings can make a difference to their lives.

At publication time, Benjamin was eighteen. In Malva's own words, "This is the story of how, with ongoing help, Benjamin has grown from being a lost and silent toddler to being a bright, social young adult who loves his friends and gives inspiring educational presentations, in spite of the fact that he still has to deal with autism challenges on a daily basis."

I would definitely recommend that teachers and caregivers read this book. In it, there are so many indications that can positively affect our practices.

—Ruth Ker



*Benjamin, age eighteen, with his mother Malva.*