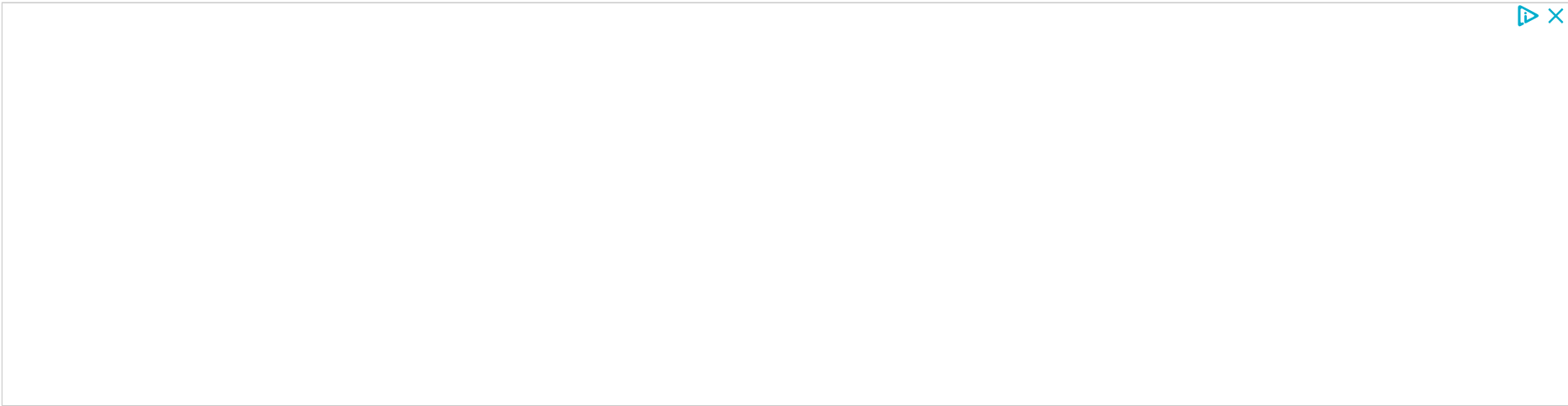




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# I Was Already Worried About My Autistic Son Starting Kindergarten — Then 2020 Happened



Emily P.G. Erickson

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answer, "I'm excited I won't die!"

\* \* \*

Last year, before we knew he was autistic, I took Owen to a mandatory kindergarten screening. Outside in Minneapolis, the oak leaves had already turned bright red. Inside the school building, I sat in a hard grey plastic chair, the kind that seemed old the day it was made. I waited there while a woman with short brown hair took Owen to the other side of a fuzzy cubicle wall. After, I sat in a different hard plastic chair to hear the results. "He won't be successful in Kindergarten," she said.

What did she mean? Owen knew more about black holes than anyone else in my life. Surely he could handle sight words and circle time. She tilted her chin, looked over her glasses, and said, "But he can't hop."

By the time the leaves dropped, I had purchased a white 3-inch binder to organize Owen's appointments: occupational

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The week we were supposed to finalize Owen’s special education plan, the trees budded green and the NBA suspended their season. We postponed our meeting.

We postponed everything. The binder stayed on the shelf, tucked between Social Skills Activities for Kids and The Ultimate Book of Space. “Early intervention is critical,” autism experts will tell you. But here we were. Without intervention of any kind.





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