

Katrina And Autism

We began to work with Katrina on understanding her own autism, and a few days later, she produced the next two related stories. Her teacher and I had shared some of the information about Temple Grandin, an animal scientist who has autism, and the Sesame Street pieces that describe Julia, a Muppet with autism. They both appear here. Although some of the information is inaccurate, it is clear that she is trying to understand the range of communication abilities in people with autism. She was much more willing to discuss Julia's and Temple Grandin's autism than her own. I love the quote from the autistic man at the community center..."He impressed himself by expressing how he felt."

Hi ho, Kermit the Frog here, and hey, where's my wife Katrina Manalo? I know she's around here somewhere, maybe my computer can give me the answer. I researched all my videos about my Sesame Street moments. When I got to the Sesame Street News Flash section, I saw 81 videos of myself on Sesame Street News. I saw Don Music, Dr. Nobel Prize, characters from social history, and characters from storybooks, but no Katrina.

"Perhaps she's on television working on some news flash." I thought. So I went over to the TV in the living room and turned it on. Sesame Street News was starting and look, there's my wife Katrina. I wonder what news flash she's reporting today? I sat down on our leather sofa and watched the news.

"We take you now to Katrina Manalo for another fast breaking news story." said the Sesame Street Newscaster's voice on TV.

"Hi ho, Katrina Manalo here at Sesame Street News. And I'm speaking to you from the community center where we interview people who had autism. People who had autism have trouble communicating with each other. Let's take a look at some people who communicate shall we?" Katrina's voice reported on the TV.

"Pardon me ma'm, Katrina Manalo from Sesame Street News here with a question for you. Why do you have autism?" she interview my friend Julia. Julia is nonverbal which means she doesn't talk a lot. She showed Katrina how to bounce around and tag at the same time, that's called boing tag. Katrina bounced around the community center and tagged Julia.

"You see that folks, Julia is nonverbal, but she communicates by using her body." Katrina reported as another person came in the community center.

"Excuse me sir, I'm Katrina Manalo from Sesame Street News, do you by any chance have autism?" she asked.

"Of course young lady, I have autism, but I'm verbal. That means I can communicate properly and talk a lot." said the man.

"Can you show us how you communicate with other people?" Katrina asked.

"Sure, when I express my feelings, I show empathy." said the man and showed my wife on TV. He told Katrina that he's nervous about his first day at the community center.

"Well, if you're nervous about something, just give it a try, I'm sure you'll like it here." Katrina told the man.

"You're right young lady, I'll give the community center a try." the man began to smile. He explored the whole community center from the fitness room, to the gym, to the rock climbing wall. He tried running on the treadmill, riding the exercise bike, and walking on the elliptical. He tried playing basketball, football, tennis, baseball, and soccer with Katrina and Julia. When he tried the rock climbing wall, he felt a little nervous at first. Katrina and Julia helped him by being brave and strong. When the man reached the top of the wall, he got a free ride down, and so did Katrina and Julia.

"You see that ladies and gentlemen, the man has faced his biggest fear at the community center. He impressed himself by expressing how he felt." Katrina reported. I gave an around of applause for my wife doing a great news flash.

"Thank you for showing us your autism sir, and you too Julia. This is Katrina Manalo from Sesame Street News, and I'm returning you to your studio." Katrina reported as the news ended, and the TV turned off.

"My wife did her first news report, yeah!!" I cheered and waved my arms in the air as if I were in the Muppet Show again. When Katrina got home from the community center, I greeted her and asked her how she did at her first news flash.

"Oh husband, this news flash has gone pretty well. I played boing tag with Julia, and I helped a man overcome his fear of the community center. We walked on the treadmill, played soccer, we even got a free ride down the rock climbing wall." Katrina explained everything.

"I'm very proud of you for doing your best report wife. You're my favorite co-reporter." I gave her a big hug. Next time, Katrina will take me to the community center and she'll teach me all the things people do there. Like maybe boing tag, or ride the exercise bike, or maybe climb the rock climbing wall. But for now, this is Kermit the Frog, Katrina's husband reporter returning to your studio too.