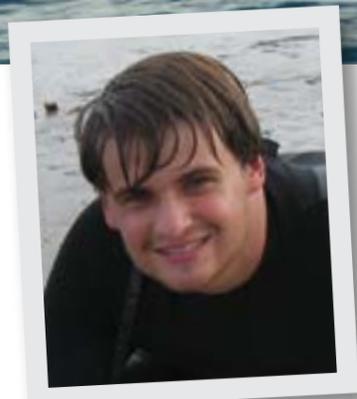


Ryan's story



Ryan Hinds, 26, says he has 'recovered' from autism, but not been 'cured' of it. His mother wrote a book about Ryan's journey from diagnosis at age four to being an aerospace engineer with a love of surfing, but here he shares his own story of personal growth



My mom wrote a book about my recovery from autism. How many kids have a mother who writes a book about every detail of their childhood? This is when I stand up, raise my hand and uncomfortably whisper, "I do". Her book is called *I Know You're In There*.

My mom asked me to read the book before it was published to see if I was okay with the things she wrote about me. That was hard to do. I learned about events I didn't remember and things that were just embarrassing. I know I shouldn't be concerned about the weird things I did back then, because I was ill. I would rather

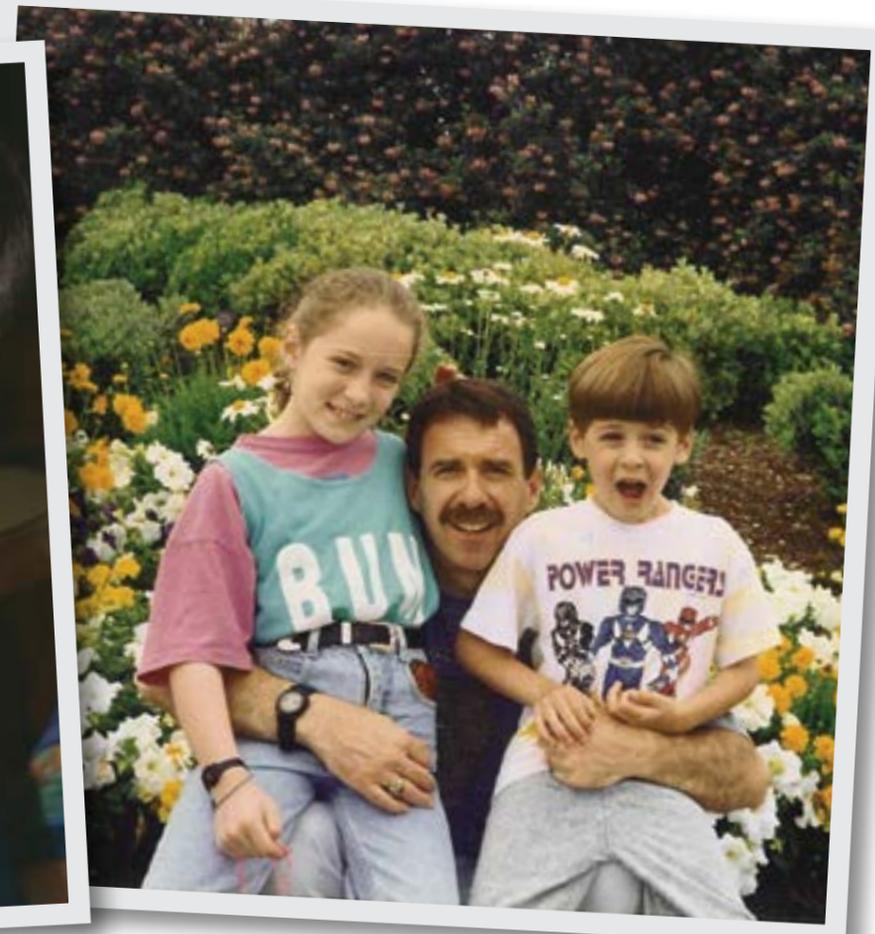
continue on with my life. I want to forget what's past. Still, I can't do that. It is too important to let others know that those debilitating effects autism can have on people and their families is treatable.

It's because of my family that I'm okay and have a pretty typical

“I am still the same person I was, only now I'm happy and can enjoy life”

life. When I look at my life now, it's hard to think of it being any other way. I work as an engineer at a major aerospace company. My favourite things to do are go surfing with friends and walk dogs at the animal shelter. I also like to find new recipes to serve when my friends come to my apartment to have dinner and discuss politics. Recently, I vacationed in Bali with one of my best friends from college. I plan to go surfing in Panama in a few months with another friend. I totally enjoy life!

Some people think we should just accept autism. And that if a child is treated, it changes who



that kid is. I am still the same person I was, only now I'm happy and can enjoy life. It is hard to understand that children are not receiving proper medical treatment because some people think we should only celebrate autism. When doctors believe the medical issues associated with autism are just part of a "developmental disorder" children are not treated for the same medical conditions as other kids. Is that really okay?

Surfing in Bali

It is hard for anyone to imagine what their life would look like under different circumstances, but I'm pretty sure it wouldn't involve surfing in Bali or Panama. My life could have been very different if my family had accepted how my life was and if my parents had listened to the 'experts' when I was first diagnosed.

It is because my family never gave up on me that I live the life I do. When the doctors said there is no recovery from autism, there

Remarkable change: Ryan as he is now, (opposite page), and how he used to be around the time he was diagnosed (above left) and with his father and sister before he had been taught how to smile (above right)

“When doctors believe the medical issues associated with autism are just part of a 'developmental disorder', children are not treated for the same medical conditions as other kids. Is that really okay?”

was no cure and there was no hope, my family still didn't give up. Because, like the title of the book, they knew I was in there.

Can autism be cured? I can only speak for me, and I'm not cured. What bothers me most about once being on the spectrum is that I'm still dependent on medications to make my immune system work properly. If I forget to take the meds I start to feel weird. I need these medications to feel 'normal'. That's why I say I'm recovered and not cured. It's kind of like the diabetic who needs insulin to be okay.

While I want to provide hope and encouragement to others, I still have mixed feelings about

telling our story. I don't want anyone to realize I am the same person who was once in the third percentile for speech when I entered kindergarten and had to be taught how to smile.

Strange noises

I'm uncomfortable sharing that I used to make strange noises, bit my sister, and played with faucets instead of toys. And who needs to know that I used to carry around a portable radio all day long and plugged it into every outlet in our house over and over again?

It is awkward that my dad was forced to stop at Jerry's hardware store before we went anywhere without my mom. That's where my >>



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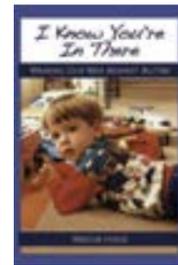
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View the journey through Hinds' sight



Ryan's parents, Marcia and Frank Hinds, drew on medical, behavioural and educational interventions to help Ryan make his outstanding progress. They corrected an underlying immune dysfunction, used intensive Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) and made full use of their steely determination to ensure that professionals met their son's needs.

Marcia Hinds has more than 15 years' experience as an educational and behavioural consultant, with a BA in psychology and sociology from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). Ironically, as undergraduates Marcia and her husband Frank worked in

the UCLA Young Autism Project under Dr Ivar Lovass, who is considered to be one of the fathers of ABA. Thirteen years later they drew on their training in ABA in order to help Ryan.

Marcia wrote *I Know You're In There* about her family's inspirational journey in facing up to the challenges of transforming Ryan's life. However, Marcia thinks it is important for everyone to know that equal effort doesn't guarantee equal outcome, as she believes that other families have worked as hard as the Hinds did without the same results.

Marcia runs a website, www.iknowyoureinthere.com. By clicking on the site's media tab viewers can read interviews and watch videos. Other sections of the site contain further autism-related information.

I Know You're In There can be



Marcia Hinds: it was because of her tenacity, Ryan says, that he 'got better'

previewed and ordered on Marcia's site, and is also available from Amazon, the iTunes store, barnesandnoble.com, smashwords.com and kobo.com. For any questions, Marcia can be contacted at marcia@iknowyoureinthere.com



All together: Ryan with his mother, father and sister on a family trip to New Orleans

friends, the extension cords and plugs, lived. Stopping there first prevented the ginormous meltdowns I'm told I used to have when he just wanted a guy's night out.

Anyone who has read my mom's book knows she is a little stubborn and can be quite obsessive when on one of her missions. This is not a criticism,

just a fact. I'm not bothered by this personality trait. It was because of her tenacity and perseverance that I got better. But I worry that she is putting our family out there in her attempt to help others. Mostly, I don't want anyone to question the things my mom wrote in her book. Some will say I never really had autism or

“Some will say I never really had autism or that I was only mildly affected. I wish that were true”

that I was only mildly affected. I wish that were true.

Still, as much as I care about my mom and think what she is trying to accomplish is important, I do tire of hearing her talk non-stop about autism to anyone who will listen. My family taught me, when I still had autism, I shouldn't talk about the same subject over and over again. Maybe I need to get a little ABA behavioural therapy for her.

Autism is treatable

Seriously, I understand why my mother does this. Marcia just wants the same life I now have for every individual who struggles with autism. She wants every family in the A-club to know autism is treatable and recovery is possible. What she is doing is important, in addition to being somewhat annoying. Our story had a happy ending, but how many parents are still told there is no hope for their children's futures? And how many kids will not get better as a result?

IMAGES COURTESY OF RYAN HINDS