

between the two, the book says so. Where the tactics overlap, the book says that too. The parent of an ADHD child and the parent of an autistic child are not the same parent, but they are often sitting on the same kitchen floor at 6:47 a.m.

PART ONE: THE REFUSAL

Chapter 1 — The Night Everything Changed (And the AI That Didn't Help)

6:47 a.m.

The light through the blinds is gray and thin. The coffee maker is half-filled and cold because you turned it on forty minutes ago and then the screaming started and you never went back.

Your child is on the kitchen floor. Shoes off. Socks twisted. The left sock is wet because he stepped in something you have not identified yet. His hands are over his ears, and the sound coming out of him is not a tantrum. It is not a bid for attention. It is the sound of a nervous system with no exit.

You have not slept. Not real sleep. The kind where your body actually powers down. You slept the way you always sleep now: in ninety-minute fragments, one ear open, waiting for the next sound.

The phone is in your hand. You do not remember picking it up. You type: autism meltdown morning what do I do. The answer appears in less than two seconds.

Stay calm and be consistent.

That is the whole answer. That is what the machine gave you.

You read it again. Stay calm. As if calm is a switch. As if you have not been swallowing your own nervous system for three hours. Be consistent. As if consistency is a character trait and not a logistical achievement that requires sleep, backup, a predictable environment, and a nervous system that is not currently running on fumes and fear.

The answer is not wrong in the way a math error is wrong. It is wrong in the way a greeting card is wrong when someone has died. It is technically composed of words that belong in the same room as the problem, but it has no contact with the floor.

Here is what the answer does not know:

It does not know that your child has been awake since 3:12 a.m. It does not know that the seam of the new sock is a sensory knife. It does not know that the school called yesterday about the "behavior plan" and used the word compliance four times. It does not know that you have not eaten a full meal in two days. It does not know that your partner is already at work because someone has to keep the insurance, and the insurance is the only thing standing between you and a \$400 occupational therapy bill.

It does not know that you have been consistent. You have been consistent for years. You have been consistent until your consistency wore grooves in the floor. And the meltdown still came at 6:47 a.m., because consistency is not a cure for a sensory system that is being assaulted by the seam of a sock.

The answer is insulting because it locates the problem in you. It says: the reason this is hard is that you are not calm enough, not consistent enough. It turns a structural failure — no sleep, no respite, no accessible intervention, no one on the floor with you — into a personal failure of demeanor.