



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST® CHURCH  
CENTRAL JAMAICA CONFERENCE

*DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MINISTRIES & COUNSELING SERVICES*

PARENTING CHILDREN WITH ***SPECIAL*** NEEDS



**November is *Parent Month!***  
\*\*\* Let's make it extra-special \*\*\*

Parenting a child considered *normal* in our society comes with various challenges, let alone parenting children with special needs. Children with special needs are those with physical limitations, autism, mental illness, or developmental delays, to name a few. Each of these challenges is unique and consists of a wide range of nuances which are not readily apparent to the natural eyes. In the first place, realizing that you have become parents of a child with special needs can, in and of itself, be devastating. The fact, though, is that many such parents become superheroes in the end. Embracing a child with special needs into your family can alter the trajectory of your marriage and that of the entire household.

Each special needs situation is different. Since *special needs* is such a broad term, parents who have children in this unique group are encouraged to seek advice from qualified professionals and organizations who will be able to provide accurate information and recommend the specialized care needed.

Often, medical issues in children can be quite troubling and require special accommodations and services. Once embraced though, this challenging yet necessary duty must be approached with dedication and must lean on the relevant education available. Parenting a child with special needs requires the acknowledgment that your task is unique, that you are not superhuman, and that you are never alone.

If you are a parent of a child with special needs, do remember that your situation is unique, though not uncommon. You must become educated in the field to recognize both the frustrations and possibilities of your child. As his or her parent, yours is the task to listen, be observant, and identify the barriers to learning and coping with daily tasks. This responsibility demands that you work with your child to determine what the impediments are and find a solution that will be acceptable to both parties. In return, your efforts will be rewarded by behavioral successes for your child and good problem-solving skills for yourself. You must stay close to the professionals who will help to broaden your knowledge as you seek to help your child maximize his or her potential.

In some cases, the child will require full-time supervision for a lifetime. Parents in this situation must accept their own limitations, realizing that they are no superhuman beings. Parents of special children will need to strategize carefully in order to not jeopardize the care of their offspring, cause ruin to the proper functioning of the family, or experience personal burnout by attempting to go on the journey considering themselves herculean.

Parents, you are never alone. Parenting children with special needs comes with special challenges. For this reason, there are governmental and non-governmental agencies which stand ready to be a part of a network that will aid you in carrying out your tedious role. Forming an alliance with other parents dealing with similar situations can also prove fruitful in yielding valuable information, much needed support, and true success under demanding conditions. Undoubtedly, your most important source of support must be God. Stay on your knees, not in complaint, but in prayers, requesting wisdom, strength, and perseverance. I implore you to echo the sentiments of Psalm 61:1, 2 - *Hear my Cry Oh God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

As a church, let us strive to be increasingly more sensitive and supportive to families and individuals parenting children with special needs. Let us at this moment hold them uppermost before the Lord in prayer.