

# Chapter 1

## Riley's Story

You have a child diagnosed with autism. The traditional approaches haven't been satisfactory for you. Now what?

Sometimes in life we choose to expand our awareness of a subject, as you are doing by reading this book, and sometimes situations occur that expand our awareness unexpectedly, as if by fate. I fall into category number two. I never intended to become a writer or to have such a strong interest in autism. I barely wanted to become a speech-language pathologist. I have worked as one for twenty-two years, and in retrospect it has been a perfect fit. The combination of working with small children and my interest in the power of words kept the field of speech-language pathology interesting to me for several years. I had a well-rounded professional experience working in clinics, hospitals, schools, and in private practice. I worked with literally thousands of children with a variety of “delays” and “disorders,” and I almost always ended up adoring each of them. Early on I had a strong sense that there was always something deeper associated with their inability to communicate and that was what brought them to me. There was a “something more” to them, and I loved watching that reveal itself to me as our time together progressed. That was especially true for the children who were nonverbal. I frequently wondered what it is about a connection that is beyond words that makes it so powerful. Those were the children who seemed to move me from the inside out.

My own personal experience as a child taught me that there was so much more to me than the adults in my world could see. And thus in my mind as I grew older, I knew there was much more to every child than most could see. I also knew that children were always communicating regardless of whether or not they were

speaking.

It seemed that many of the children that I worked with suffered not only from difficulty with communication skills but also from a feeling of insecurity or a lack of trust. It became obvious to me that it was most important to gain a sense of trust and connection with the child, and the communication just came easier.

It also seemed apparent to me from early on that the best practice was to focus on what the child can do versus what they cannot do. By focusing on the “can dos,” the hard-to-do things became much easier for them, and so they progressed well. By building a relationship first, focusing on what they can do rather than what they can’t, and letting the steps reveal themselves to me, I was able to reach these children, and their ability to communicate flowed quickly and easily.

My training as a speech-language pathologist gave me a hierarchy of thought, a game plan of where to go and how to get there. Although that professional understanding was helpful, I always had a nagging feeling in the back of my mind that what I was doing with the children was less important than how I was being with them. Maybe it was a combination of both, but the fact was that on the rare occasion where I could not connect with a child, the child made very little progress.

Autism was rare when I started work as a speech pathologist in the late eighties. For the first ten years of my practice, I may have seen only one or two children diagnosed with autism. In the eighties, typically only one child in a family would be diagnosed with autism. Now it is not uncommon to see a family with several children who have been diagnosed with this “condition.” In 1986, there was no formal training in autism within my master’s program.

My lack of concrete information about the topic was later to serve me as one of my greatest assets in truly experiencing the full scope of autism, but in the beginning all I could see were the

outward behaviors and how they were impeding my client's ability to learn. I saw the running and the screaming, the tantrums and the ritualistic behavior. I saw downright defiance at worst and a general lack of participation at best. I had to let my first client diagnosed with autism go. As a speech-language pathologist, I didn't think there was anything that I could do for her. My way of connecting to my other children did not work with her. I had such a hard time seeing beyond everything that seemed to be getting in the way of her progress. The behaviors seemed to be front and center all the time, which made it very difficult to see anything else. Thank goodness that limited perception was not destined to last forever.

As my career in speech pathology unfolded, I began to take an interest in metaphysics, an awareness of our being, which is beyond physical. This is the part of us that does not show up on an MRI or EKG. I am talking here about the subtle levels of the body or the energy field. It is the part that cannot be seen, touched, smelled, or tasted through the physical realm but can be experienced with the senses as we move beyond the physical. It is the part of us that starts out as energy, becomes thought, enters awareness, and then creates something in the physical world. As children, we are naturally more connected to this aspect of ourselves. We hear it in the wise statements that our two-year-olds make and in the precise descriptions that our five-year-olds give the kindergarten teacher about what is really going on at home.

During my own childhood, I had always possessed a sixth sense about people. One time, when I was six years old, my mother had her friends over to play bridge. I said to my mother, "How come Mr. So-and-so (the husband of one of my mother's guests) is playing around with a woman who is not Mrs. So-and-so?" My mother was naturally horrified and asked where I got such a strange idea. She did not know it at the time, but the scenario turned out to be true. I have had similar intuitive experiences— thoughts, moments, or even dreams that I could not explain— throughout my childhood and into my adult life. As a child, I used to play a game with myself where I would look at someone and try to feel what

they might be feeling or experiencing, only to find out later on that on several occasions my sense of them and their reality were one and the same. I always told myself, "I'll file that away as an experience I don't understand now but hope to later on." I know that, as a caregiver of a child diagnosed with autism, you undoubtedly have had many of those moments that are hard to explain, deeply touching, and confusing all at the same time

In the mid 1990s, I became close to a woman named Ann who was attending a school that was training her to heal through recognizing and working with the body's energy system. I know this may sound a little "Left Coast," but more and more people are coming to believe that what we see isn't all there is. Highly credible writers like Deepak Chopra, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, and Caroline Myss have put their substantial credibility and authority behind the idea that we can be harmed or healed by the way we relate to our energy. Even traditional medicine has begun to recognize that there's often more to healing than "take two pills and call me in the morning." More than a decade ago, Bill Moyers' TV series and book *Healing and the Mind* brought home to America the idea that you weren't necessarily kooky just because you were willing to open your mind to alternative ideas about illness and healing.

These days it seems as though a growing number of people are willing to look at life from a more spiritual standpoint. Many are noticing synchronicities in their lives, thinking about the deeper meaning of things, and generally acknowledging that what we can see is only the tip of the iceberg. Back in 1999, though, if I had talked about an awareness of energy within the speech pathology community, they would have thought that I had lost it. But my friend in energy training understood. I could talk to her about it. And that's when Riley came into my life.

I was working in a small town in Maine as a pediatric speech pathologist, and I received a call to meet a new client, a four year-old boy, at a daycare center operating in a private home. It was a big house with a large play area downstairs and a couple of

bedrooms downstairs as well, and it was in one of those rooms that I was to have my first session with Riley. The daycare provider was a man, which was somewhat unusual. His name was Stephen, and he had developed a real bond with Riley. It was obvious that he truly cared about the boy. When I saw Riley for the first time, I saw an irrepressibly cute child with brown hair cut almost in a bowl-type haircut and warm, but distant, eyes. He was repeating a phrase over and over as he marched back and forth on the linoleum: "It's the millennium! It's 1999!"

I watched Riley, and all of a sudden he came right up to me. Parents of children diagnosed with autism know that this is not typical. I didn't know that at the time, though, because I had little experience with such children. He looked me right in the eye and asked quizzically, "Master?"

I was taken aback, and I looked at him thinking, "Who's the master here? Him or me?"

There was just something about the way he looked at me. He spoke clearly, enunciating perfectly the word "master." That's just strange, I thought. At the same time, I felt awkward yet comfortable when Riley looked at me. It may sound crazy, but it felt as though he was looking right into me, right into my soul. I had that other-worldly sensation that he saw a part of me that I hadn't even seen myself.

I later learned that it can take many sessions to gain eye contact with an autistic child. Much of the traditional approach toward autism at the time was geared toward forcing eye contact, which, when you think about it, is ridiculous. Riley certainly didn't need to be forced. He just looked right at me, with all the knowing in the world radiating through those eyes.

Stephen told us we could use one of the back bedrooms downstairs so that we would not be distracted by the other children in the daycare center. Riley did not want to be in that room. I sat in front of the door and watched him, fascinated, with no

idea of what to say to him. At first he was very upset to be stuck in the room, but once he realized that he wasn't going anywhere until we had a chance to get to know each other, he calmed down completely. And that's when I had the moment that changed my life. I looked at him and noticed an image floating above his body. I now understand that what I was seeing is defined as a light body. Although I had never seen anything like this before, it wasn't eerie or terrifying. Instead, I felt a deep curiosity for an experience that was beyond what I had consciously known before. I wasn't scared, but I remember thinking, "Oh my God, what is this? Why am I seeing what I'm seeing?"

We sat in the room together, and I gave him space while I tried to understand what was happening. I needed to calm down because I was so surprised and a little overwhelmed by what I was experiencing. He, on the other hand, seemed perfectly calm. By focusing on my breathing, I was able to relax. I asked myself why his energy body or his light body would be outside of him, seemingly disconnected from his physical form.

Riley continued to walk around the room, making his repetitive statements—"It's the millennium! It's 1999!" I just let him move around the room. I didn't want him to feel controlled or afraid. Finally he sat down, and I went over to him. I later learned that it's not always easy to have physical contact with autistic children—they don't like to be touched by new people. I had no idea, so I touched his ankle just to connect to him, and as I did so, I was aware that I was doing something to the energy field above him.

What exactly was I seeing? It was a cloudy, nearly transparent mass of pale yellow light that was an exact outline of Riley's physical body. It floated above him and to his right side, and it had a "tail" that dangled from the right foot of his light body to the area of his heart in his physical body. I had never seen anything like that before in my life. After I left, I wondered if I really saw something or simply imagined it.

The minute I got home, I called my friend Ann, who was a student of Barbara Brennan's School of Healing. This school taught its students the nuances of the different layers of the human energy field and how chaos in any of these layers could cause disease in the physical body. I figured that if anyone would know what I had seen, she would be the one.

"I have an energy question for you," I said, and then, too excited to let her get a word in edgewise, I described my entire meeting with Riley and the strange light I had seen.

"It was just sort of hanging there, and it didn't move except for this tail-like thing that hung down from his foot." "

His physical foot?" Ann asked.

"No, no, the foot on the body floating above him."

"Oh," she said, and then she suggested that I turn to a particular chapter of Barbara Brennan's book *Hands of Light* to see if that matched what I was seeing. This book was a guide to healing through the human energy field, and Barbara herself was one of the pioneers in energy awareness.

"It's right on," I exclaimed.

"You realize," Ann said carefully, "that what you saw was Riley's light body."

I tried to absorb this information. "But why was his light body hanging above him like that?"

"Because his light body is not inhabiting his physical body,"

Ann said, excited for me.

Now I understood what Riley was trying to tell me—not in words, because he was nonverbal except for his spontaneous utterances about the millennium and 1999, but in another way. I had received his message to me all at once as a kind of “knowing.” At that moment I was not sure if that knowing was a form of telepathy or what, but in those moments of interaction with him, I was fully present and open to this incredible new experience. Riley “informed” me that he was in two different places at the same time. He could not occupy his physical body with his light body. His physical body was having one experience, and his light body was having another. The two weren’t working as one. I realize now that he was asking me if I could help make that happen. And I further realize that I had agreed to do so, but with no idea of what I would be doing.

I had never before had an experience that could be defined as telepathic, and yet I knew this experience was real. In that moment I had no concern for what was happening or for my response, and I somehow simply knew that I had the skills to act on Riley’s request.

Over the next few sessions, I did make some attempts to engage Riley in “appropriate” therapeutic techniques. But frankly, I wasn’t sure that showing him pictures and asking him to match objects to them was actually helpful. He seemed frustrated by every activity that I thought he should try. Frequently, he would just flat out refuse, unless I signaled to him that I would indeed help him bring his light body into his physical form. In Riley’s presence, I had the unusual experience of feeling that I was just following his direction. He knew what he needed. Again, who was the real master here, him or me?

In our first few sessions, I was so enthralled with the process that was unfolding that I never questioned the method. It seemed fine. Riley wasn’t “asking” me to do anything that I felt was wrong or would hurt him in any way. He was asking me to gently bring his light body into his physical form. I know this has to sound odd, or

perhaps even unbelievable, to anyone who has not spent time experiencing or reading about these sorts of things. If you are the parent of an autistic child, though, you surely sense that your child's energy vibrates, if you will, at a different frequency than other people's. That's just how they are: they feel different. You've also no doubt experienced your own frustration and the frustration of your child with some of the traditional approaches to autism. Even if it does seem hard or impossible to believe that these children are imploring us to recognize that healing (the integration or blending of their higher vibration into their physical form), can come through this kind of work, we can still work on finding new solutions by trying to understand them on all the levels at which they function.

To go a step further, Riley also asked me to "patch" the energetic leaks that were occurring in his body. Back then, children with autism could not hold their energy in physical form and therefore would leak energy, especially in the lower extremities and in the joints of the body. (I'll explain this in greater detail in later chapters, and I'll also explain why this is no longer the case.) It was clear just by looking at Riley that his body was like a porous container for his energy. I remember questioning if this is why children diagnosed with autism move around so much, flap their arms, or repeat words and phrases over and over again. Did they just not know what to do with the energy their bodies contain, or was it that the energy of the light body and that of the physical body were just not a match? As our sessions went forward, Riley would instruct me to put energy "band-aids" on his knees and elbows. I did so by placing my hands on his knees and then seeing the patch through my mind's eye. I watched this patching as if it were a movie playing in front of me. I could see a patch go on and in some cases watch another energy leak occur somewhere else in the body, usually at the joints and sometimes on the palms of the hands or the arches of the feet.

What did Riley's parents think of all this? To be honest, I did not share with them the energy work that was going on. At the

time, I didn't really have words to explain it, and it likely would have been too weird for them to understand. They liked the results we were getting. Riley was calmer, less prone to the repetitive physical and verbal behaviors that mark autistic children, and generally happier. Their attitude was, whatever you're doing, keep on doing it.

Riley and I continued our work together. He next taught me that the high-vibrational frequency that is autism responds nicely to music and color. He was nonverbal but very telepathic, as are many of these children if we only have the ability to understand them. I found myself dreaming about him, and I realized that he was seeking to communicate with me through my dreams. He would occasionally come to me in the sleep state to give me an idea. One morning I awoke with the feeling that I should bring in colored scarves for our session and put them over him. When I did this, I was amazed. Riley liked it, and I could see the color pouring into Riley's energy field, being used where it was needed. Every color vibrates at its own frequency, and colors have been used for millennia in Eastern healing disciplines related to the body's energy. I also noticed that when we were engulfed in color, Riley would make direct, sustained eye contact with me. I had the strong sense that he was retaining information that I was giving him verbally.

Over the next few sessions, I continued to bring in scarves of various colors. Riley would choose which color scarf he needed. I could see the imprint of the color in his energy field. His body and consciousness seemed to respond to the color on multiple levels.

We continued to work on integrating his light body into his physical body. One morning, months along in our work, Riley seemed very content. He appeared to be more present than usual. I could see his presence when he looked into my eyes. When I placed my hand on his left foot, the energy came all the way in. I could see it connect with the earth. When I touched the right foot, Riley spoke

his first verbal appropriate phrase to me in the entire course of our work together. “Ow! That hurts!” he exclaimed.

I immediately withdrew my hand and let the energy move back to his right ankle. The left stayed “grounded” and the right floated. With his awareness, Riley told me that it was not yet time for him to be fully in his body.

We had a few more sessions after that, and I asked him if I should tell his parents about our experiences. He told me, “They’re not ready yet.” Shortly after that, I stopped seeing him in therapy sessions. The commute to his town was long, and our work together seemed to come to a natural close, yet I continued to experience the repercussions of our initial meetings for several months after those sessions.

My reason for telling you about my work with Riley is to extend an invitation to you to look at the treatment of autism in an entirely new way, one that does not necessarily rely on forcing a result through pharmaceuticals, behavioral readjustment, or any of the other means by which autism has traditionally been treated. It may or may not seem credible that I have the ability to work with the energy of an autistic child as I’m describing in these pages. But surely you would agree with me that the difference in the energy of an autistic child and that of other children is palpable. If so, doesn’t it make sense that working with the energy of an autistic child might offer a new and potentially exciting and successful way to understand and experience autism? If nothing else, it begs the question “What am I missing when I look at my child?”

I know this is a lot to ask you to accept at face value. Typically when I meet parents, they have the opportunity to look into my eyes and gauge my sincerity, something that’s obviously not possible given the limitations of a book. You are most welcome to visit my Web site, [www.suzymiller.com](http://www.suzymiller.com), where you can see me and make up your own mind. You can see there that I look remarkably normal and do not have antennas.

Not long after I started seeing Riley, I began to build an office in my home so that I could see speech pathology clients there. As it happened, I never saw a single speech client there. By the time the space was ready, I had a fulltime healing practice with a specialty in autistic children, although all kinds of people came through those doors. I had not done any marketing or advertising. It was all from word of mouth, starting when I quietly confided in a few people and they began bringing their children to see me. Next I began sessions for parents. At one point whenever I went to the grocery store, people were seeking me out for answers and opinions. Yikes! Eventually I developed the awareness that I did not have to be physically present with a person to assist them, and that presented many new possibilities.

A year went by before I saw Riley again. His family moved into the town next to mine. Riley's mother and I had stayed in intermittent contact, so when she was close enough to resume therapy sessions, she called. I had informed her that I was no longer doing "straight" speech therapy, but that I would love to see Riley again. Riley and I resumed our sessions, and he continued to teach me new things. On July 10, as a birthday present to myself, I sat down in my office and did a distance session with Riley. I applied everything that he had taught me and directed it for his benefit. My birthday present came a day later, when I went to see Riley for our weekly session.

When I went to Riley's home, his mother told me that many of his autism-related behaviors had changed. He was enjoying his bath, which he had always hated. He was using more spontaneous words, sleeping better, interacting with his siblings, and he was now writing words. He came downstairs and looked me in the eyes. Then he took me by the hand, and his mother led us to his sister's room, where we could work in private. I was curious about his writing skills. I handed him a blank piece of white paper and a black marker. He was so present, making frequent eye contact, smiling, and being more social than I had ever seen him before. He used a combination of

written words to convey his powerful message to me. Before I asked him anything, he printed across the top of the page:

ERASABLE YOUR ASABLE

I asked him if he meant that we were able to erase the condition of autism.

He wrote:

ABSOWUTELY AMAZING

I began to cry, and as the tears streamed down my face, he looked at me and smiled and wrote:

WOIVE YOU

As he wrote, he said out loud, "Love you."

Then he added:

INS MOST AMAZING VANS

And he said; "It's most amazing advance."

NOW VANS MAGIC

"Now advance magic."

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Riley jump-started my awareness. The many children who followed have confirmed and refined my knowledge and ability to work with energy. The skills I developed through my work have become integrated into every aspect of my life. I no longer perceive the world as I did nearly ten years ago. In the past, when I wanted to tune my awareness to the frequency that is autism, I sat quietly and meditated. After a few moments, I would feel myself moving into that energy. These days the experience is very different. The

energy of autism no longer seems to be something that I have to go outside myself to acquire. I can appreciate that the concept may be hard to grasp, but I have a new experience of the energy of autism. I will never view the condition again as a “disorder.” I think of autism as an energetic pattern, and I have learned to connect with various aspects of it. As a result, I have been able to help thousands of children and their families. Does autism “go away” with the approach I have been given? Yes, but not in the way you may think. There are various factors that will be discussed later that play a part in the “cure.” Through this method of treatment, autistic children will not begin to look just like all the other children, because they are not here to look like all the other children. As we, their caregivers, become empowered to see beyond the limits of their physical experience into the brilliance that they offer us, new opportunities present themselves and lead you down the best possible path on their behalf.

The last time I saw Riley, I would still describe him as autistic by traditional diagnostic standards. Yet he and the children that have followed him have taught me that by making parents, educators, and therapists aware of the energy of this population, everyone can better understand, communicate with, and connect to children diagnosed with autism. I mentioned earlier in this chapter the idea that this book is an invitation to you to view the diagnosis and treatment of autism in a brand new way. The journey of raising an autistic child is one you most likely did not wish for. The parents with whom I work often feel, in the beginning, guilt over possible choices they may have made in their lives or what secrets may lie in their genetics that led to the birth of an autistic child. They are frequently ashamed of their children’s behavior and are embarrassed to go to family gatherings or even the supermarket, because they are afraid that they and their children will be objects of curiosity or even ridicule and scorn. They are frequently afraid because they do not know what is the best treatment for their children, how to give them the freedom and dignity they need, which specialist to see, what approach to take. And they fear for the future of their

children— what kind of life will they have as teenagers or adults?

If these are real questions in your mind, you are not alone. The good news is that there is an exciting new way—an effective, safe, and expansive way—to view and interact with autism. It may not be the journey you wished or expected to take, but I want to take it with you. Open your mind to the ideas that I'm sharing, however strange or impossible they may seem at first, and together we will journey to a place where your child will feel understood, loved, and healed as never before.