**[Start of transcript]**

**Interviewer:** Okay. We are recording. And I will be asking you questions about your perspective about your child’s transition to adulthood in relation to his sensory sensitivities and sensory interests. And we’ll be doing something called a semi-structured interview which means I have some questions here, but I’ll also be adapting my questions to follow our conversation to actually make sure it fits for what we’re talking about.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any questions so far?

**Interviewee:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Awesome. Also, if there are any questions that you don’t want to answer, they make you uncomfortable, you don’t have to. We want to make this a positive experience.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Could you please start off by telling me about your son’s sensory sensitivities and sensory interests?

**Interviewee:** Well, he has always been having issues with the loud sounds.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** With the textures. He’s always, like, since he was a little boy eating kind of the same kind of foods. He likes the same kind of clothes. If we change that, he’ll start, like, having problems, tantrums or things like that. Saying that he don’t feel comfortable, he’s in rash, he feel, like, itchy or something like that. I mean, the clothes.

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** With the food, it’s difficult to introduce him, like, to a new food because he usually eating kind of the same thing.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. What does he usually eat?

**Interviewee:** He likes, like, popcorn chicken, he likes tacos, but a certain kind of tacos. He likes some kind of quesadilla from Taco Bell.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And I have been trying to mimic that at home but it’s not the same. He knows that it’s not from Taco Bell, so it’s not the same.

**Interviewer:** [Crosstalk] Yeah.

**Interviewee:** [Inaudible – 0:01:51].

**Interviewer:** [Crosstalk] What type of tacos? Oh, sorry, go ahead.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, so, there’s… Almost all of his food has to have lemon and chili powder.

**Interviewer:** Mm! Interesting. And what type of tacos? You mentioned he only likes certain tacos. Are those ones with chili and lemon or, like, different meats…?

**Interviewee:** It’s usually ground meat and it has to be in a flour tortilla, it has to have sour cream, lemon, and chili powder.

**Interviewer:** Mm! And what about the specific clothes that he likes? What types of clothes does he like?

**Interviewee:** He usually picks, like, the…kind of like 100 percent cotton shirts. It is typical of him to change that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And he has, like, a wide…not a wide range of colors. He probably has between navy blue, gray, and black.

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** He always kind of pick that kind of colors in all his clothes.

**Interviewer:** Is that just for his shirts or also for, like, his pants or, like, jackets? **[0:03:00]**

**Interviewee:** No, for the shirts.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** The jackets are black.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Do his pants also have to be cotton or can they be a different material?

**Interviewee:** Until he was 15, he was using only that kind of pants with elastic band.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** You know, no zippers, no buttons [inaudible – 0:03:18].

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, then he was doing ABA, so he started learning how to unbutton and unzip, so he started using the regular jeans.

**Interviewer:** Mm. Okay, awesome. And do you know if it’s, like, the texture that he prefers with his clothes or if it’s, like, some other quality?

**Interviewee:** With his clothes, it has to be the colors correct, and if it is, like, a---with a printing or something, it has to be something that he likes. That he really likes.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** Like, right now he’s all into the Office thing, the Office show [inaudible – 0:03:55] thing. The Office or Dunder Mifflin or stuff like that [inaudible – 0:03:57].

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, he likes colors with things saying [inaudible – 0:04:01] or things like that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Gotcha. Okay. Awesome. And then, you talked about loud noises. What types of noises does he dislike?

**Interviewee:** When he goes into a public restroom, you know how loud it is when you flush it?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** He don’t like that.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** He don’t like to dry his hands because it’s super loud.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, he don’t dry his hands with the machine.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And some… Like, certain kinds of noises that we can’t perceive but he says, “*Oh, there’s some noise*!” Like someone moving his fingers on the table, someone moving---a little kid moving a car on the floor and making that little noise. It is like the…kind of uncomfortable for him.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. That makes sense. And so, what types of things does he do, or do you do, to help him manage these sensory sensitivities or sensory preferences?

**Interviewee:** He is generally using his headphones. He’s generally with the headphones. And listening to music. And it’s kind of to help him to block those sounds he don’t like [inaudible – 0:05:19].

**Interviewer:** Yeah. What type of---

**Interviewee:** [Crosstalk] Before he--- When he was little, he was using [inaudible – 0:05:25] headphones.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. And when he does listen to music, what types of music does he listen to?

**Interviewee:** He usually likes… Well, he had a lot of musical things that he likes. He likes country music. We live in Texas so it’s a stereotype here that we all like country music.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** He loves country music, but he also listens to rock bands kind of like…and pop bands.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** Like Ed Sheeran and all that kind of stuff that teens like right now. **[0:06:00]**

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Totally. And then, in terms of, like, his food or his clothes, how do---how does he manage that? Or how do you help him manage that?

**Interviewee:** Before, when he was little, I was the one who was picking his clothes for him and buying everything for him. Now that he’s older, he’s 17, he’ll go with me to the store and he’s usually the one who’s picking his clothes.

**Interviewer:** Mm. Yeah. So, it seems like he kind of…he decides. Like, he picks what he wants, and you don’t make him wear things he---

**Interviewee:** I don’t deciding that for him. He’s always the one. Like, last week, we went to buy a short because he wanted a short pants, so we went to the store. And we were supposed to just buy one. He wanted, like, a kind of cotton short with elastic band – he found that one, but he also found another one and he liked the color. It was really dark green.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And then he brings me a shirt – a gray one. He already have a lot of gray shirts, and I say, “*Oh, you need another one*?” [Inaudible – 0:06:56]. “*Because I like it, Mom*.” So, he but that one too.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] Awesome. And then what about with his diet? You mentioned that you try to mimic the things at Taco Bell.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Do you do anything else to help him?

**Interviewee:** Well, he… When he felt…usually asking me… He had a Diet at Whataburger. We had the Whataburger thing in Texas.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** So, he had a diet at the Whataburger. When we go to the Whataburger, he always asks for the same meal.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** Everything is the same. It’s a double burger, just plain, no veggies, just mustard and mayo, and with cheese. One cheese. One [inaudible – 0:07:33]. Just one. And then, he likes Chick-Fil-A too and he always asks for the same meal at Chick-Fil-A too. Their chicken sandwich, no veggies, just with mayonnaise, and a Coke.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Awesome. And has he ever received, like, particular therapies or interventions to help him with his sensory sensitivities or sensory interests?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. H took, like, one year of ABA.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And that helped him because there was a lot of things that he didn’t like, like, sweater because, “*It itch, Mom, I don’t like it*…” So, now he’s been, like, more comfortable with that.

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** They help him to cope with the loud noise thing, but with…when he goes to the restroom or stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. How did they help him with the noises?

**Interviewee:** They have to take him to the areas and show him that it’s not going to hurt him, it is fine, people need to do it because you go to the restroom, you need to flush it. So, that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And they also make, like, a big graphic with pictures, so that he has one in the restroom here.

**Interviewer:** Mm! That’s great. Do you think that’s helped him be more comfortable around the loud noises?

**Interviewee:** Kind of, yeah. But it is kind of like, if it’s a new noise **[0:09:00]** or something like that or something that he didn’t know about it, he needs to be…like, get an explanation, what’s going on, what’s going to happen and all that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm. No, that makes sense, absolutely. And the, how would you say his sensitivities have changed over time? Like, were they more intense when he was younger? Are they better and more manageable now?

**Interviewee:** I think that it’s better now. When he was younger, it was so difficult with him.

**Interviewer:** He was difficult? Sorry?

**Interviewee:** It was difficult with him. Even going to the store, it was, like, kind of difficult when we go to certain places like HEB or Walmart. When he was little --- six, seven years old --- it was so difficult with the lights, with all the songs, with the people… He didn’t like all these places because there was a lot of people and so he didn’t like going to stores when he was little.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Yeah, so, now he’s, like, more comfortable out in, like, big, busy places now.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. I think that since he’s not a teen and he sees all the other teens doing things like going to the mall, going to the movies and stuff like that, he wants to do that too.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. And do you think this change that you just talked about is related to any independence that he’s gained over time?

**Interviewee:** Yes. He gained a lot of independence. Actually, the ABA therapy helped him a lot because he wasn’t able to take a shower by himself. He was 12 already and 13 and 14 and he didn’t go to take a shower by himself; I had to help him.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** He didn’t went to the restroom and clean himself so we’d have to help him – me or my mom. So, then he went to ABA, he started doing all that kind of stuff by himself, and it was like he probably had [inaudible – 0:10:44] around him so he’s now, like, “*I’m capable of these things, so I’m gonna do it*.” He wasn’t able to button the pants or zip his pants or… I have to buy always, like, [inaudible – 0:10:56] shoes for him because he didn’t know how to tie his shoes.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** Now he knows how to do it and he’s more independent.

**Interviewer:** That’s awesome. That’s so great to hear. And his independence, do you think, helped him kind of cope with these things he disliked as well?

**Interviewee:** Well, yeah. I think he was getting a lot of independence and he was growing so much, so it’s kind of more easy to him right now that he’s independent. And he’s planning now, “*I want to go to college, Mom, because I know how to do things*.”

**Interviewer:** That’s great. That’s so great. When he isn’t able to have the things he likes…like, when he maybe isn’t able to wear the clothes he’s picking out or he isn’t able to have the particular foods that he likes, does that cause or increase anxiety for him?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. When I’m not able to give him the thing when he asks me for it. When he was younger, he’d throw me tantrums, like, crying and everything. And he was, like, **[0:12:00]** just throwing tantrums. Right now, like, two days ago he asked me, “*Mom, can you buy me Dunkin’ Donuts*?” And I told him yes. And I was not home; he was home, he texts me, “*Mom, can you buy me Dunkin’ Donuts*?” I forget the donuts that day. I came back home, it was late, and then he was like, “*Where are my donuts, Mom*?” And I said, “*Max, I forget it. I’m sorry*.” So, he didn’t throw a tantrum. So, he just asked me, “*can you bring me Dunkin’ Donuts tomorrow*?” And I say yes. So, yesterday I went to the grocery store, I was doing grocery shopping, and then he texts me, “*Mom, can you bring me Dunkin’ Donuts*?” And I say yes. So, I bring him yesterday his Dunkin’ Donuts. He ate them [inaudible – 0:12:39]. So, he was happy. But he didn’t throw a tantrum the day before because I didn’t give it to him.

**Interviewer:** Mm. That’s awesome. So, it sounds like he can kind of manage it better a little bit now.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. because before, he was like, “*I want a Whataburger*!” And it has to be, like, right now. “*I want a Whataburger right now*.”

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And now, he’s kind of like, “*I want a Whataburger*,” and now he understands, “*okay, Max, I can’t take you right now – you need to wait*.” And he says, “*Okay, but are you’re taking me*?” “*Yes, Max, I’m taking you, but you need to wait*.”

**Interviewer:** Mm. That’s awesome. That’s so, so, so great. So, it sounds like he’s able to, like, defer those feelings a little bit. How else does he manage that anxiety? Do you know?

**Interviewee:** I think… The thing is, here at home, he’s the oldest and he has three younger…two sisters, one brother. And it’s kind of annoying to him to have two sisters and one brother because they are [inaudible – 0:13:39].

**Interviewer:** That’s a lot.

**Interviewee:** So, when the little one born, he feel, like, the little one was stealing his place.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** It’s because he was always the little one. So, he always had a lot of issues with the little one and fighting with her and trying to… I don’t know, to… He would tell---he’s always telling her, “*My mom doesn’t love you*.”

**Interviewer:** Oh!

**Interviewee:** “*She only loves me*.” And then, “*You are not the baby, I’m the baby*.” So, he kind of…right now, it is more…he tolerates her.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** He’s not fighting anymore with her.

**Interviewer:** That’s a good improvement. [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** Yes. [Laughs.]

**Interviewer:** When he was younger and he had these tantrums, what did these tantrums look like? Was it--- Could you describe them?

**Interviewee:** Well, yeah, he cried, he throw things… When we went to the store…we went to stores and he’d kind of sit on the floor crying and, “*I want this, I want this*!”

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** And things like that. So, right now, he don’t do it anymore.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. What do you think changed this behavior from before when he had tantrums to now when he doesn’t have tantrums?

**Interviewee:** I think because he’s older now and he’s kind of, like, embarrassed to things like that.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] Yeah!

**Interviewee:** Because he’s 17 and he’s super tall, so it’s kind of like, **[0:15:00]** “*I’m probably not going to look pretty doing that*.” [Laughs.]

**Interviewer:** Yeah, absolutely. And then, thinking towards the future, what are your goals or hopes in terms of his sensory sensitivities and, like, sensory preferences?

**Interviewee:** Well, like, I think we need to work on the food thing because he wants to go to college and he wants to go in a college [inaudible – 0:15:26] college station and it’s, like, kind of five hours from here.

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** So, I’m not going to be there with him, so he needs how to eat the things he has on hand. He’s not like, “*Oh, my mom is here, she can buy me chicken, buy me Whataburger every day*,” or something like that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely, for sure. And now, shifting gears a little bit to a new topic. Thinking about the community, how…as your son has grown up and aged, how has your community reacted to his sensory sensitivities and sensory preferences?

**Interviewee:** Like, I don’t think the community here plays very important role because we have to adapt to the place we live, instead the people adapt to him and to his needs. It’s difficult here because I think there’s a lot of misunderstanding about special needs, about autism…

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And so, we have to adapt. I have to work with him to adapt to the situations of school and our daily life here because he needs to learn how to move in the community instead of the community moving with him.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Could you provide an example?

**Interviewee:** Yeah. Now he’s in high school, he’s a junior. But when he was in middle school, it was a very difficult time for him. He’d literally tell me, “*I don’t want to go to school, it’s a hell for me. I don’t want to go back*.”

**Interviewer:**  Oh…

**Interviewee:** The people was mean. The kids were mean. Even the teacher was kind of mean because when he was in elementary, he was on the regular class and he had [inaudible – 0:17:18]. When he go into middle school, they placed him into the special ed classroom and he was the only one with high-function. So, all the other ones didn’t talk or wheelchairs and stuff like that, and he was like, “*Mom, I don’t want to be like that. I don’t want to be there because they don’t let me go*---” They even seclude them from the other, like… It’s the big cafeteria and everyone is eating, and they are, like, in a secluded place.

**Interviewer:** Aw.

**Interviewee:** So, [inaudible – 0:17:45] go to sit with the other kids. But there was kids from the elementary, his friends, and now he was, like, totally apart. And he was, like, used drawing and coloring **[0:18:00]** and stuff like that and now, like, “*You cannot be doing this, Max*.” And he was like, “*It’s because [inaudible – 0:18:05], I don’t do anything else*.” And now he’s in high school, it’s like a totally different world for him. He has friends. He is [inaudible – 0:18:17] the special unit but half of the time. The other half, he can have regular classes. [Inaudible – 0:18:23]. He also was in journalism. So, he was doing super great in that classes. So, it’s a new world for him and he wants…he’s, like, super happy with that.

**Interviewer:** That’s awesome.

**Interviewee:** But yeah, the community needs more education here.

**Interviewer:** Mm. Absolutely. Thank you for sharing that. Would you say that was similar when he was younger? The community was, like, equally as unknowledgeable? Like, were they also not really accepting or accommodating of him when he was younger?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, because a lot of people tell me, “*Oh, he’s so spoiled*!” And there’s a lot of people that still tell me, “*Oh, it’s because you have him so spoiled – he needs to grow up, he needs to man up*,” or things like that. And so, it’s kind of difficult for a lot of people to understand that he has a disability and [*inaudible – 0:19:23*], like, another disability that you can see, like wheelchairs and stuff like that. So, he has a disability and there’s things that he can’t do, and there’s people telling me, “*Oh, it’s because you don’t get after him or you don’t spank him or he’s spoiled, don’t spoil him like that*.”

**Interviewer:** Mm. Mmhmm. Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. Were there sort---are there certain parts of the community that are more accepting? Are there parts that are less accepting?

**Interviewee:** Well, we are part of three different groups. One is called [inaudible 0 0:19:57]. It’s a group where kids with autism will have, like, events or walks or… They have this group called [inaudible – 0:20:08]. It’s for teens 17 and up, because when you have a kid with autism here in Texas, I don’t know about other places, but they always focus on the little ones; they never focus on the older ones.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** So, they have a group. They have, like, [inaudible – 0:20:26] meeting and they go to one…they have the meeting, and then next week, they go to do something fun like go to the movies, all of them together. Like, 20 kids, boys and girls. They go to bowling and stuff like that. Since the COVID-19 is so bad here in Texas, we don’t have the group anymore.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** Because it’s super bad here.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I’m sure. Those two communities, like, I’m assuming they were pretty accommodating and accepting and, like, understood where he---who he was.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, because we are---**[0:21:00]** we’re all moms with single…kids with autism since little kids to adult kids. And there’s another community called Capable Kids. Capable Kids is sports for all the disabilities.

**Interviewer:** Hm. That’s awesome.

**Interviewee:** So, they can play all kinds of sports and there’s a lot of disabilities. They even have an event where they teach them how to surf and stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** That’s awesome! That’s so great that you found those.

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Now, again, like, thinking towards the future, what are your hopes or worries in terms of how his community will react in the future? Specifically in regards to his sensory sensitivities and sensory interests.

**Interviewee:** I don’t know. Well, I change the community for him. I can change the place he’s going to be when he goes to college. And I’m kind of scared of him going. I want---I wish he’d stay here in Texas. Well, here close by, but he wants to go to [inaudible – 0:22:07] and they had a very good program for kids with special needs. But I’m sure that he probably want to go to parties, he want to go to campus activities, and I know that they’re not going to change the---all these places for him. They’re not going to adapt for him because they’re college students, so, they’re not going to change anything for him. He needs to be careful when he’s walking and stuff like that because he don’t…sometimes he don’t realize what’s going on around. He’s, like, he has his earphones, he has his music. So, I’m afraid of him walking through---towards a car or crossing the street or something like that, because the community don’t know that he is a student with autism or a person with autism. He don’t have a shirt or something saying, “*oh, I have autism*!”

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** “Watch out!” Or something like that.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] Yeah, absolutely. It’s hard when people go off to, like, the big world like that. [Laughs.] So, now shifting gears, in the, like, transition to adulthood, where do you see your child?

**Interviewee:** For me, he has grown a lot. He has been doing a lot of stuff that I never thought he was going to be able to do. When he was little, the doctor tell me, “*Once the child learn how to talk, don’t expect that he can learn how to write or to read*.” I know he’s still behind in the reading. He can read at a four-grade level. He’s very good with machines, with computers. He can type a lot. He loves to do that. But he has very poor writing. It has been **[0:24:00]** getting better with the time because before he didn’t know to do it and now he…now, when he start, he was writing his name in papers, he was writing out just his name. Now, he knows how to be in between the lines and stuff like that. So, he has been doing good.

**Interviewer:** Awesome.

**Interviewee:** But I know he had a lot of more work to do.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** I know it’s going to be difficult for him because it’s a big world outside and Mommy is not going to be there to protect him, so…

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** Yes, I’m worried, but I know that he’s growing, and I know when he sets something in his mind, he [inaudible – 0:24:38].

**Interviewer:** That’s great.

**Interviewee:** He works to do it.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. In terms of independent skills, what are things that he can do by himself and what are things he needs help with?

**Interviewee:** He can do, like, all the things like dressing, picking his clothes, taking a shower, getting dressed by himself… Everything, that he can do it. He helps me clean up the house, with throwing the trash, and I don’t have to ask him, “*Max, go out and throw the trash*.” He just sees the bag full, he just close the bag and go throw it in the trash. He is able to, like, if he takes a shower, he takes off his clothes, he put it on the laundry machine. But he’s not that able to make food yet. He don’t know how to work a stove. So, he likes---or, he knows how to use the microwave, he knows how to use the toaster, he knows how to do something in the blender, but he don’t know how to use the microwave. I mean, the stove. He don’t know how to cook, he don’t know how to work with fire.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** He can make a sandwich. I know that he needs to learn more things about the cooking. He needs to learn more about, like, the work at the house, because he takes his clothes and puts it away but he don’t know how to work the washing machine.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Gotcha.

**Interviewee:** He can do his bed. When I ask him, “*Max, do your bed*,” so he go and put everything in order. But there’s work to do with him.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. You mentioned that he has friends in high school now. Does---is he able to manage his social life to some extent?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, he has friends. He had a very good friend when he started high school. There was this kid, he [inaudible – 0:26:24] and there was this kid. Now he’s a different year so it’s going to be difficult for him.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** Because he was so close to Max. He was always taking care of him, he was always sitting with him in the lunchtime, and Max was always complaining, saying, “*Oh, Jasper never let me be in the middle of fights*.” There was a fight one day, the first fight he saw in school. “*There was a fight, Mom*!” And I was like, “*Oh my God, what happened*?” “*I don’t know because they start fighting and Jasper says, let’s go, Max, let’s go from here*.” So, he take very good care of Max.

**Interviewer:** That’s great.

**Interviewee:** And now it’s going to be difficult **[0:27:00]** because he was so close to him.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** So, this kid was super good kid with him.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** He didn’t care about him having a disability or stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** That’s awesome. That’s so great. I’m glad he was able to find a friend like that. So, you mentioned that he also, he wants to go to college.

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Does he want to live on his own one day? Does he want to get a job?

**Interviewee:** He probably wants to get a job. He was… We don’t have school here since March the 13 because of the COVID, so it has been the hell for him to be at home. He is so sociable; he likes to be in the middle of everything. If there’s an event, he wants to go. And he wanted to help him to find a job, but I told him, “*I can’t let you work, Max. there’s a lot of COVID-19 cases here, so I can’t let you have a work---a job right now*.” Last year, he’s--- Here in Texas, [inaudible – 0:27:57] have a program for students like him. So, the program is called [inaudible – 0:28:05].

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** So, last year, he had a work opportunity. He work at the Walgreens Pharmacy for six weeks.

**Interviewer:** That’s great!

**Interviewee:** In the summer through the [inaudible – 0:28:19]. So, he had, like, a job coach. He was being a stocker. He putting things in order. So, he did do that part of six weeks that he went to work, but the program finished, so, now, this year he wanted to work… First he wanted to work at the Lowes store.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** But I told him no. Then he wanted me to help him to apply for HEB and I told him, “*No, Max, you’re not going to be exposed to the COVID-19*.”

**Interviewer:** So, he was, like, he throw me a tantrum. He was crying for a couple for days telling me, “*Oh, you don’t want to help me, you don’t want me to do anything*.” So, instead of the job thing, I start teaching him how to drive. So, he’s learning now how to drive.

**Interviewer:** How to write?

**Interviewee:** To drive.

**Interviewer:** That’s great.

**Interviewee:** Drive a car.

**Interviewer:** Oh, to drive! Sorry, I didn’t hear you.

**Interviewee:** [Crosstalk] Yeah. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that’s awesome!

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That’s a great skill. [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** Yeah. He’s learning and he’s already want to go and do the test. “*I want my license, Mom, I want a car*!” And I was like, “*No, Max, you need to learn more and practice more so you can go and do the test and do the license*.”

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. When he was at the job last summer at Walgreens, was he able to learn about, like, money management and learn about money in general?

**Interviewee:** He don’t know yet about money management. He knows that if he has money, he can buy everything.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** So, when he---I take him to the bank to cash the check, he has money. So, he don’t care if it’s a one or if it’s a 20. He just know that he can buy **[0:30:00]** a Coke, he can buy a Whataburger, he can buy whatever he wants. So, “*it’s money, Mom, so I can buy whatever I want*.”

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] Gotcha.

**Interviewee:** Like, he don’t understand yet the money management. I have been working with him. So, when I start working with him going to the stores to buy things, I usually give him money and he usually would just goes and give the money to the cashier and run out of the store and didn’t pick up the change or anything. But he now learned [inaudible – 0:30:30] and there’s change. They give him the change and the ticket and everything.

**Interviewer:** Gotcha. Good. Well, that’s a great thing to lean, so he’s on his way, it sounds like. And then, do you think he’ll be able to achieve more independence in the future?

**Interviewee:** I know that he will be able to do it. I know that he wants and I know for sure that he will be able to…

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** …to do it. He’s, like, so stubborn. When he says, “*I’m going to do this*,” until he do it, he… Like, [inaudible – 0:31:03]. “*I’m okay*.”

**Interviewer:** Awesome.

**Interviewee:** But he’s not okay if he don’t do it. He needs to do the thing.

**Interviewer:** And what do you think will help him move into adulthood and gain this more independence, or this increased independence?

**Interviewee:** There are people who come here to the house and working with him. And there’s been kind of stuff like the speech therapist who work with him, like, putting him, like, in scenarios. “*Max, we’re going to have a talk, like, if you go to a pizza place*.”

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** How you order the pizza. And they have, like, 10 or 15 items. “*Okay, Max, now we’re going to the doctor. You’re going to the doctor – what are you going to tell the doctor*?” So, he’s been working with him on that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And I know that I have to do a lot of work teaching him things before he goes to college.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Do you think there are other interventions or other services that could help him in this transition?

**Interviewee:** Well, I think public school should have, like, a transition specialist and give him the service of him.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. And now, like, putting these two things together --- sensory sensitivities and this transition to adulthood --- how do they intersect for your son?

**Interviewee:** How do what?

**Interviewer:** How do you---so, how does his sensory sensitivities impact his transition to adulthood?

**Interviewee:** Well, I think the issue that he don’t have, like… Well, he knows how to cope now with the sounds, textures, and stuff like that. It’s helping him to grow more to mature.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, because, before that, if I had---if he hadn’t had the ABA therapy, he probably will **[0:33:00]** be, like, still the same. Me helping him to take a shower, me helping him to tie his shoes or stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, how he feels like he’s more independent, and he is. He totally is more independent.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. That’s great. What about, like, his sensitivity to sounds? Do you think that impacts his transition as well?

**Interviewee:** Well, yeah, because now he will choose… He, like… They have rallies at school. He’s able to go to the rally because he’s, like…he can cope with the sounds and the crowded places. Before that, when the girls were in the cheerleading thing, he didn’t want to go to the games or things like that because there was a lot of people, a lot of noises.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** But now that he can cope with that, he was [inaudible – 0:33:50]. So, they have to hold the flag every football game. So, he would go in and hold the flag. And then, since he was a [inaudible – 033:58], he had to run the flag before the game starts. So, if he wasn’t helping at [inaudible – 0:34:05]. So, he went all the season last year to the games.

**Interviewer:** That’s great.

**Interviewee:** And he was traveling to [inaudible – 0:34:13] from here and he was able to go on the bus with all of the students, and he went to…like, after the game, they all have dinner, so he went with them. And he also, have, like, [inaudible – 0:34:26]. So, before all that, he probably go, like, “*Mom, where are we going*?” Or, “*I don’t want to go without my mom*.” And now he’s like, “*I don’t need you, Mom! I don’t need you anymore*.” [Laughs.]

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] That’s good, though!

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What about his food preferences? How is that in relation to his transition to adulthood?

**Interviewee:** The food preferences… Well, that hasn’t changed a lot.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, he has been---always been, like, kind of the same with the same food preferences.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** I think…no, I mean, when he goes to college, I hope there’s a Taco Bell and a Whataburger close by! [Laughs.] Because there’s no…I don’t know what he’s going to have for lunch.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. And then, would you say his sensory sensitivities and sensory preferences are an obstacle, a vehicle, or both towards his independence?

**Interviewee:** I think they’re both. Sometimes they’re an obstacle because, if, like a thing that he hasn’t do before or he didn’t like, but then, it is like something to help him because he needs to learn how to cope with that and then overcome that fear or something that he don’t like and work with that, and move ahead from that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. And then, what do you anticipate as being challenging for him as he does gain more independence in regards to his sensory sensitivities and **[0:36:00]** sensory interests or preferences?

**Interviewee:** Again, what was the question?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I’ll repeat it. It’s a mouthful. [Laughs.] What do you anticipate as being challenging for your child as he does gain more independence in relation to his sensory preferences?

**Interviewee:** What is more challenging… Probably learning the new textures of things.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** That’s a more challenging thing for him. The new texture, how he feels a thing, the new flavors…that’s a difficult one.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** Another difficult one, because he’s, like, used to the same flavors. And even if there’s someone inviting him to eat something like he’s used to eat, but it not have the same flavor, it’s, like, a big issue for him.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** I can buy him a burger… Like, he loves Whataburger and Chick-Fil-A. But I can’t take a Jack in the Box burger because he don’t like it.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** I can buy him a Sonic burger, he don’t like it. Even if it is a burger, it is the meat, it is the bread, so, he don’t like it because he is used to a certain kind of flavor.

**Interviewer:** Absolutely.

**Interviewee:** He likes to--- He wants what he likes.

**Interviewer:** And will he just not eat it? Will he just refuse?

**Interviewee:** Yes. Even if he’s so hungry, he’s like, “*This is not a Whataburger, Mom! I don’t want to eat it*.”

**Interviewer:** Oh. And what do you think will help him overcome this, what you just described?

**Interviewee:** Hm… I don’t know.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** To be honest, I don’t know! [Laughs.]

**Interviewer:** No, that’s super fair. I don’t think I would know either. [Laughs.] Do you think there could be any particular interventions that could help?

**Interviewee:** I don’t know. Maybe trying with him to brand new flavors, but he’s so specific with what he likes.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. For kids like your son, do you think there are gaps in the available interventions or services?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, there’s a lot of gaps in education mostly.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And the services the school provides, because they don’t have enough personal therapies and teachers. They have one teacher per a high school for, like, students like Max with disabilities. They have one special ed unit in a high school that have, like, more than 1,800 people. So, it’s a very big high school.

**Interviewer:** Whoa! [Laughs.] **[0:39:00]**

**Interviewee:** It’s a super big high school. So, they have a lot of students and they have one special ed unit for them. And it’s kind of difficult. So, yeah, there’s a lot of gaps in education. I know there’s gaps in the insurance too because there’s a lot of stuff the insurance don’t want to cover. Like, ABA is not covered by insurance.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Interviewee:** So, it’s a very good therapy but it’s very difficult to have access because the insurance don’t cover it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Absolutely. That’s hard.

**Interviewee:** And, like, I have Max in equine therapy.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** The insurance kind of covered that but they only give you one class every two months, and the class is one hour. So, I have to put him on a private equine therapy services because he really likes to do that. He really likes to work with the animals, he really likes to tour with the horses. So, that’s one of the things that I think helped him with the sensitivity issues too because he needs to pet the animals, he needs to brush them, the animal, and everything.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely.

**Interviewee:** [Inaudible – 0:40:11]. So, he was, like…he [inaudible – 0:40:16] his goat since he was a baby. Two years ago, [inaudible – 0:40:21] then he went to the county show and first time he won the seventh place and second time he won the fifth place. And he went, like…

**Interviewer:** That’s great!

**Interviewee:** And he was like, “*I want to have a banner, Mom! I want to have a banner*!” And he got his banner. Last year---this year in January, he got his banner. I got the banner, he got the [inaudible – 0:40:43] champion banner.

**Interviewer:** Oh! That’s great!

**Interviewee:** He won his big buckle and everything and he was so happy because he knew that he could do it. You work a lot with the goats – a lot.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And this year, his goat got injured, so, he was working a lot with his goat to learn a lot of new things like how to give shots, how to take care of a big wound on the goat, and everything. And he learned it because he loves that goat so much.

**Interviewer:** That’s good. That sounds like a really great learning opportunity for him.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. It definitely helped open up a wide world for him. A super big world for him. Like, he had a lot of his…had a lot of opportunities [inaudible – 0:41:30]. The teachers are very good with him. He is also part of the…like, the…his… [Inaudible – 0:41:39]. He went last year to the national convention [inaudible – 0:41:44].

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, he was one week out of home without me, only with his classmates and the teachers, and I was so worried because it was the first time he was going out, but he did super good.

**Interviewer:** That’s awesome! That’s so great to hear.

**Interviewee:** He did super good. **[0:42:00]** He forgot all his clothes in the hotel, but he did super good at the convention. [Laughs.]

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] There you go! That’s what matters. And then kind of, like, with a more holistic thought process, how has his sensory sensitivities impacted your goals, hopes, and expectations for him as he does navigate adulthood?

**Interviewee:** Well, I think that the…I think told you, the more issue with him is the very loud noises or noises that we don’t perceive but he perceives. Sometimes he don’t like certain kind of smells, like, when people using kind of perfume like the cinnamon perfume…

**Interviewer:** Hm.

**Interviewee:** Or, like, fall perfumes. He don’t like it at all.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Interviewee:** He don’t like it. He’s like, “*I’m gonna puke, Mom. I’m gonna puke*.”

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.]

**Interviewee:** So, that kind of stuff. It’s something like…I don’t know. I think that he needs to learn how to [inaudible – 0:43:12] or to deal with, because now that he’s going to be out in two years, I think it’s going to be kind of hard for him to deal with all that kind of stuff out of home.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. And moving on to, like, the final [inaudible – 0:43:31] of questions. We’re almost done. As a caregiver, as a mom, as a parent of someone with autism but also with some sensory sensitivities, what does transitioning to adulthood mean to you?

**Interviewee:** I think I should teach him how to deal with the real world, because he has been kind of living in a bubble with me here trying to protect him from everything, trying to provide everything that he wants or everything that he needs, trying to don’t expose him to anything that can be difficult to him, and stuff like that… Or make him to man up because a lot of people tell me, “*Oh, he needs to man up*!” And I’m like, “*No, I’m protecting him from the world*.” But as a caregiver, as also mom---as his mother, I’m just kind of… It’s so difficult for me. I see a lot of issues like him going out and stuff like that. [Music.] Sorry.

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] That’s fine.

**Interviewee:** So, him going out is, like, difficult to me. He went for a walk, like, two weeks ago. He told me. It was too early in the morning. “*Mom, I’m going to take a walk*.” And I got up so, so scared and I was like, “*No, you can’t go*!” And then I’m like, *“Yeah, it’s early.”* Well, it’s nearly seven in the morning. And I was like, “*No, Max, you can’t go yourself.* **[0:45:00]** *Where are you going*?” And stuff like that. And [inaudible – 0:45:02], he was going to walk around the neighborhood. And I was like, “*No, Max, you can’t go by yourself*!” So, fine. And he says, “*okay, Orlando can join me*.” Which is my other son.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** So, Orlando went with him and I was like, “*Take care of him! Don’t let him cross the street, use---be careful with him*,” and stuff like that because, yes, I was scared. I’m his mom, so I was scared. I’m afraid of the things that could happen to him. So, I don’t know what to do or how to protect him when he’s going to be out in the world.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Absolutely. Has this perspective changed for you?

**Interviewee:** The perspective… I don’t know. It’s a big world. I haven’t changed my perspective. I keep seeing the world like, it is big and it is dangerous for him.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, for sure. What do you see happening in your son’s future, though? Looking ahead.

**Interviewee:** As I told you, he have a goal, he works his ass off until he do it. So, capable of going to college. He wants to be a paramedic. I know that he can do it. I know it’s going to cost him a lot of work and a lot of…I don’t know, a lot of stigma in the people and stuff like that. But I know that he’s going to be able to do it. I’m not hoping that he do it, like, in three years, five years, but I know that he’s going to be able to do it at his own pace.

**Interviewer:** Good!

**Interviewee:** He has been conquering a lot of goals at his pace. And I’m not in a hurry to do it, like, “*I want you to do it right now*!” I know that he has been working a lot for the things he has been doing until now.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And I know that he can do the things he wants.

**Interviewer:** That’s great.

**Interviewee:** And I know I’m going to be there too, to, like, push him to do it.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** I told him once, “*If I have to go to college with you and sit with you every single day, I’m going, Max*.” And he’s like, “*No, you’re not going, you’re staying in your house*!” [Laughs.]

**Interviewer:** [Laughs.] That’s great, though! And, so, I have one final question for you. How did his sensory sensitivities impact this perspective that you just articulated?

**Interviewee:** The…for me, I think his sensory issues or sensitivity is going to be---or impact him…hm… Kind of in a bad way. Because, like, in the future, he wants to be a paramedic. There’s a lot of textures you need to touch, there’s a lot of things you need to be in contact with. Blood, **[0:48:00]** people puking, needles…stuff like that. So, I know it’s going to be kind of hard for him and more because of the smells and stuff like that.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. No, that makes sense. So, that’s actually it for all of my questions. Would you like toad anything else?

**Interviewee:** No. No, I don’t. I mean, with Max, no, but I will… I don’t know. I don’t know how to... I can’t change the people. I can’t change the world. But I would love to have more, like…the people know more about autism. Not only autism – all the special needs. Because there’s a lot of stigma. There’s a lot of things happening, like, here around, like… I don’t know. We’re close---we live so close right with Mexico. We live in the community or in the [inaudible – 0:48:56] areas with mostly Hispanic people.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm.

**Interviewee:** And there’s a lot of stigma that these kids with special needs can’t do things and they’re, like, kind of not able to conquer things. But I know they can. There’s a lot of students with special needs that are super great doing things and everything. So, we need to break this stigma and we need to work harder as parents as a community of special needs.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely. I don’t think you’re alone in feeling like that. I’ve had a couple parents say that they feel like their community doesn’t know enough about kids like their children and they want more people to understand better. So, I don’t think you’re alone at all in that feeling.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. I think it’s my feeling and I know, like, there’s a lot of parents feeling the same.

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Absolutely.

**Interviewee:** Because they’re always, like, secluded, or, “*Oh, you’re special needs, you can’t do things*,” or, “*You can’t sit with us because you’re special needs*.”

**Interviewer:** Mmhmm. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for your time and your insight and for doing this all so quickly. I’ve never had someone who wants to do it the next day. So, I appreciate all the effort that you put forth for us.

**Interviewee:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** Of course. Do you know anyone else who might want to participate? You mentioned those groups that you belong with? Belong to?

**Interviewee:** I can share the thing, or the study.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Interviewee:** And through the group community and chat we have.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, if you don’t mind.

**Interviewee:** [Inaudible – 0:50:29] other moms that want to participate.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. we’re about halfway done, so we’re still looking for more people that we’d love to hear about their experiences as well.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** That would be really helpful. Thank you. Do you need me to send you anything or are you okay with what you have?

**Interviewee:** Probably just, like, the flyer of the information of the study, please.

**Interviewer:** Yeah! Absolutely. I can definitely do that for you. You mentioned that you saw---you found out about the study on Facebook. Do you remember which group you found---you saw it in?

**Interviewee:** There’s a **[0:51:00]** Facebook group about autism things [inaudible – 0:51:05] studies and a lot of investigations they do. So, I saw that someone shared on the Facebook page that flyer.

**Interviewer:** Awesome! Great. I’ve been trying to contact people on Facebook and I’m glad I was able to find you through that. [Laughs.] So, I’m glad it worked. [Laughs.] Before we go, do you have any, like, questions, or can I help you with anything?

**Interviewee:** No, ma’am. Thank you very much for the study.

**Interviewer:** No, thank you! After this, I’ll---very soon, I’ll send you a thank you email and that will include a gift card as compensation for your time and for generously providing your insight and effort for us.

**Interviewee:** Thank you! It is difficult to find studies about kids like Max’s age. They’re always focused on little kids.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, they tend to be. I think people now are realizing, though, that we need to understand what happens with autism as people age, so I think you’ll begin to see more studies like this.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. I told the other [inaudible – 0:52:04] study and what, like, about little kids, and I was like, “*Why you don’t do studies on older kids*?” Because, I mean, you grow and they don’t all grow [inaudible – 0:52:16] so, why they never do studies about old kids or [inaudible – 0:52:24] or stuff like that. Because it’s difficult. I know it’s so difficult.

**Interviewer:** It is, but I think people are realizing how important it is. So, I think we’re seeing a trend towards that research so hopefully we’ll have more supports eventually and we can help people throughout their lifespan of not just when they’re little and tiny.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Well, have a great day. I know you have an appointment with your son coming up soon, and good luck on your kitchen too.

**Interviewee:** Thank you!

**Interviewer:** You’re welcome.

**Interviewee:** Bye!

**Interviewer:** Bye! I’ll talk to you soon.

**Interviewee:**  Hello?

**[End of transcript]**