**[Start of transcript]**

**Interviewer:** Okay, we are recording. And I'll be asking you questions about your child's transition to adulthood in relation to his sensory sensitivities and sensory interests. And I'll be doing something called a semi-structured interview, which means I have my planned questions in my script, but I'll be adapting them to follow our conversation so it actually makes sense for us.

**Interviewee**: Okay.

**Interviewer**: Any questions?

**Interviewee**: No, I don't think so.

**Interviewer**: Okay. And if there's anything you don't want to answer, for whatever reason, that is perfectly okay. You don't have to. And if there's anything that you think about later, that's perfectly fine also, it doesn't need to be a linear conversation.

**Interviewee**: Okay.

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

**Interviewee**: He is very sensitive to loud noises and a lot of commotion. Ever since he was little, loud noises were a huge, huge issue for him. That's, I think, his biggest sensory problem. His other one is the sense of smell and/or taste. I can't cut watermelon or cantaloupe in front of them because he gags at the smell of it.

**Interviewer**: Oh, wow. So really intense?

**Interviewee**: Yeah. So that bothers him. And certain textures with food, certain tastes with food. Even though he may eat a hamburger, but ground-up hamburger, he won't even touch.

**Interviewer**: So, use a patty, like that's okay for him?

**Interviewee**: Yeah. But he won't just eat like a ground hamburger. He won't touch it. I don't know why. When he does, he will gag. Not sure why. But he will eat like fish, which I thought would have been a sensory thing. He loves fish. He'll eat fish all the time.

**Interviewer**: Okay. Yeah, that's a little bit unusual. You mentioned bold textures and certain tastes. What are things he dislikes in both categories and the things he likes in both categories?

**Interviewee**: Things he likes...he's expanding. So like now, he'll start eating...he's been eating rice. Which before, he wouldn't eat. He likes chicken. Obviously, pizza, because you know, every kid eats pizza. He still doesn't like soups. He will eat plain spaghetti but he won't put pasta sauce on it. Even though it could be the same thing that you put on pizza, he won't eat it. **[03:00]** That's the whole...he doesn't do that. Smells are, like I said, smells are really hard for him.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. What smells are hard for him? All smells?

**Interviewee**: Watermelon comes to mind. Cantaloupe comes to mind. Onions come to mind. He doesn't mind garlic. That one's okay. Sometimes, strawberries. He'll still eat them, but sometimes the smell of strawberries will bother him. Vegetables like carrots. And I don't even notice that carrots have a smell, but he can smell it. Those are an issue for him.

**Interviewer**: And when you say issue, do you mean he gags from all these smells?

**Interviewee**: Yes. So he'll say, *“I have to get out of here because I can't stand that smell.”*

**Interviewer**: Wow. Okay. So it's like a physical reaction?

**Interviewee**: Like, I don't smell anything, but...

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Interesting. For the foods he doesn't like, is it like a texture thing? Is it a taste thing? Do you know?

**Interviewee**: I don't know. Because I can't get him to even try it. Baked beans, he's tried them a couple of times but then he gags right away. So I don't know if it's a taste thing or if it's a texture thing. He does not communicate that to me.

**Interviewer**: Got you. Okay. And going back to sounds, you talked about loud noises. Is it like human noises? Is it like mechanical noises or like car noises?

**Interviewee**: It doesn't matter. If his brothers are here and there's two or three of their friends, he will...I keep saying he's the king of social distancing, because he will social distance. Because they're laughing but they're not being loud, and that bothers him. There's too much commotion going on and it’s too loud. Fire trucks, obviously, are too loud. Fireworks, even if you're away from them, he still has an issue with that. And we always have a pair of earplugs in the car for him to use. He will sometimes say, *“Mom, did you hear that?”* And I'm like, *“No, I didn't hear anything.”* So he'll hear things that he perceives that are there, and I'm assuming they are, but I don't hear them. He goes from one side of the spectrum to the other on his hearing.

**Interviewer**: As in, sometimes it's too much but then also he's very perceptive?

**Interviewee**: Yeah. Because like I said, he'll hear things. We live on a main road and he will hear a fire truck probably minutes before I will hear a fire truck.

**Interviewer**: Wow. Okay. So really strong hearing?

**Interviewee**: Yeah. So yeah, he's really sensitive to **[06:00]** a lot of noise. If we go to my parents’ house, by the time we get my siblings, my nieces and my nephews in there...there's 22 people, and that's just the immediate family...and that's too much for him. The noise is just too much and he'll just wander away.

**Interviewer**: Does he always use this kind of avoidance behaviour when things are too loud? Or does he use other techniques?

**Interviewee**: He tries to stay but he just can't. He gets too overwhelmed. If we're outside for fireworks, like at the 4th of July, he'll put his earplugs in or he'll put his...he calls them ear protectors*...*and he'll put them on and then he's pretty good. But he will avoid loud noises at all costs.

**Interviewer**: Absolutely. Are there other things that he is sensitive to or has a particular interest in, sensory-wise?

**Interviewee**: Not really. I mean, there are certain clothing that don't...the clothing thing doesn't bother him. As far as touch, I haven't found anything for touching that bothers him, or that he's relayed that bothers him anyway.

**Interviewer**: What about vision, maybe?

**Interviewee**: He hasn't said anything about vision.

**Interviewer**: Cool. And so you talked about using headphones, like leaving. How else does he manage or cope with these sensory experiences? Or how do you help him manage or cope with them?

**Interviewee**: If he's able to not get away, he will put his hands over his ears, if we don't have something. But he will immediately cover his ears.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. And has he received any particular services or interventions to help him with his sensory sensitivities?

**Interviewee**: He has not recently. When he was much younger, he was nonverbal until he was about five and a half. And I think that's when a lot of it kind of transitioned for him, as far as his hearing. We did a therapy called Tomatis Therapy. I don't know if you've heard of that.

**Interviewer**: No. What's that?

**Interviewee**: It basically retrains your ears to listen versus just hear. It's through bone conduction. Like, for hearing-impaired people, where they listen to music through bone. That's what they do. And it forces the ears and all of a sudden... We did one week of that and he was talking complete sentences.

**Interviewer**: Wow, that's amazing.

**Interviewee**: Yeah. And that's when we noticed his hearing being...it went from one spectrum to the other.

**Interviewer**: So before this, he wasn't sensitive? Or he was less sensitive?

**Interviewee**: He was **[09:00]** very less sensitive.

**Interviewer**: Okay, interesting. And you said this when he was like, five-ish?

**Interviewee**: Well, he had the Tomatis Therapy when he was four and a half. I'd say four, four and a half. Because he had one year of preschool and he was three. We did it the following summer. So he would have been four when we did it. And it was...I mean, it made a world of difference.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, I'm sure.

**Interviewee**: So I think that was the factor of making him very sensitive to noises.

**Interviewer**: Got you. So that was a therapy for language that impacted his sensory stuff. Did he receive any specific therapies for his sensory needs?

**Interviewee**: No, he has not. He had speech and OT and PT through the school. But as soon as he met their goals, they were gone. Because there was really nothing they could do. So that's the only other therapy. Right now he's in a transition group therapy, which is for anybody 18 to 22. And they meet once a week via Zoom now. But they were meeting in-person, which was supposed to help with the anxiety. They went shopping...so that helps some of it. But yeah, as far as his hearing sensory and his taste sensory, no.

**Interviewer**: Got you. You gave me a wonderful segue to my next question. How has his sensory sensitivities changed over time?

**Interviewee**: His noise sensitivity has gotten worse. His taste, it's like anybody else's. It changes. It hasn't gotten worse, but it hasn't gotten any better yet, either. So there are still those...yeah. And the smells, one day it could be fine and the next day it could bother him.

**Interviewer**: Okay. And it's no more different than it was when he was younger?

**Interviewee**: No, not that. No.

**Interviewer**: Yeah? So kind of like equally inconsistent almost, maybe?

**Interviewee**: Correct. Yep. And with his taste sensory...I'm trying to think... When he was in school, he went on a trip to New York City. And he came home and he all of a sudden started to eat sweet and sour chicken and General Tso's chicken. And I'm not sure where that came from. He is very much a visual learner. Case in point is when he was learning how to ride a bike. Couldn't ride it, couldn't ride it, couldn't ride it. We had a bunch of his preschool friends over one day and they were all riding his bike. **[12:00]** And he went outside and he was riding his bike because he learned how to do it. So I don't know if he started eating it, because you saw other people eating. His peers eating it versus...because I mean, we eat that--the parents eat it--and he never wanted to try it. But I don't know if it was because of his peers...were there.

**Interviewer**: Got you. Do you think any of these changes that you've noticed, if at all, is related to any independence that he's gained over time?

**Interviewee**: Some of it maybe. Like, he's making his own breakfast now. Which he did before, but I was not comfortable with any of my kids in my house using our gas stove, because they all have the attention span of a gnat and I didn't want it to burn down my house. So we've finally gotten to the point that we allow them to use the stove now. And so he's been making his own breakfast when he comes home at six o'clock in the morning, and then he goes to bed.

**Interviewer**: Do you think any of this independence is related to changes in, like say, taste? You mentioned seeing his peers eating something and that might be opening up...

**Interviewee**: I don't think so.

**Interviewer**: Yeah? Okay. And then when he is in a scenario that has sensory modalities that are discomforting, and perhaps lots of loud noises, bad smells, does that cause or increase anxiety for him?

**Interviewee**: Oh, absolutely.

**Interviewer**: Yeah?

**Interviewee**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: What does that look like for him?

**Interviewee**: He covers his ears right away because he usually doesn't have his ear stuff. And he'll cover his ears real quick. He'll hunch over and then he'll close his eyes. That's with hearing. With taste, you can tell. He gets that white gaggy look on his face. And then you know you're done for.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Is that for smells also?

**Interviewee**: You don't get the gaggy look, but he'll wrinkle up his nose and he just immediately turns around and runs out of the kitchen.

**Interviewer**: I see. And how does he manage this anxiety?

**Interviewee**: He's getting better.

**Interviewer**: Great.

**Interviewee**: Three years ago, it wasn't so much. But he decreased. He uses his stress ball. He's really trying to use his coping skills.

**Interviewer**: That's awesome. And what coping skills can he rely on?

**Interviewee**: His deep breathing. If he has the opportunity, he'll go someplace by himself so he can decompress. If he can't he'll just...we all just kind of leave him alone. We will kind of leave him and let him just decompress. And sometimes we have to get him back to reality. Like he'll be so escalated sometimes that you just need **[15:00]** to get him back, focused. And then once he does that, then we're much better.

**Interviewer**: So you just referenced three years ago. How has this changed over time?

**Interviewee**: I think some of its maturity. Some of it was he was going through a difficult time with his grandparent passing, who he was very close with. So that's an emotion that you...it's hard for anybody, let alone somebody on the spectrum, to deal with. When he was in middle school, he had been bullied...from people that he thought were his friends and they weren't. So every time...he's afraid to tell anybody that he has autism, because he doesn't want to be made fun of. And once we've gotten past that hurdle, we put him in a different school where he was accepted. And it was a much smaller school. And things kind of turned around a little bit. There was a couple teachers and I'm like, *“Listen, you do this kind of stuff with other kids but as soon as my son walks up, you stop and you disperse and go the other way.”* I said, *“Why do you do that?”* I said, *“That just feeds on his anxiety.”* For three years while he was in high school--freshman, sophomore, and junior year--he did this. And I finally told the IP team, I said, *“It stops now.”* I said, *“Because that's a form of bullying.”* So once we got that all taken care of, and he was able to go to the vo-tech program, he spent two years at vo-tech. He did the first year through our logistics and warehouse program. Completed that, was very successful in that. He worked almost from November to May last year.

**Interviewer**: That's awesome.

**Interviewee**: Instead of going to school in the morning, he worked in the morning, and then went to his two classes in the afternoon. And now he's working full time. So I think some of it was maturity. He's not afraid at this point to tell somebody that he has a disability. So, getting over that fear of being made fun of because he has a disability.

**Interviewer**: And that decreased on the anxiety overall?

**Interviewee**: Oh, yeah. And he has lots of anxiety. He worries about everything.

**Interviewer**: That's hard.

**Interviewee**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: I'm sorry he went through a hard patch. That sounds difficult.

**Interviewee**: Yeah, it was challenging for a few years.

**Interviewer**: I'm sorry. Looking a little bit towards the future, what goals or hopesdo you have for your son in regards to his sensory sensitivities?

**Interviewee**: That he continues to learn how to cope with them. **[18:00]** Any little step in the right direction is huge. And you know, and widened his variety of meal choices. You can't live on pizza, hamburgers, and chicken fingers for the rest of your life.

**Interviewer**: People try though.

**Interviewee**: Yes. Yes, they do. And they don't eat any vegetables. My husband doesn't eat any vegetables. So that does not surprise me in any way, shape, or form.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewee**: So that would be my goals for them. The biggest one is learning how to cope and continue learning how to cope with the hearing.

**Interviewer**: Absolutely. The world's a noisy place, unfortunately.

**Interviewee**: Absolutely.

**Interviewer**: We're going to go on to our next chunk of questions. But you just gave me some lovely pieces of information, so I think it'll be a natural transition. I'm thinking about community. How has your and your child's community reacted to his sensory sensitivities and sensory needs?

**Interviewee**: Up until he started this transition group, there wasn't a whole lot of community. Even though we're in the central part of the state, we are two and a half hours from Pittsburgh and we're two hours from Philadelphia. So we're kind of like right in the middle of that. So all the services are either in Pittsburgh or Philly, which makes it difficult. There's nothing in our area that supports youth and teens. I would say, once you reach that 13-year-old, there's no support services for anybody in our community. And then for him to participate in this transition group, he had to have a diagnosis of anxiety, not just autism. We were able to get the diagnosis of anxiety, because we all knew he had it. So there's really no support system in place in our community for anybody with any types of special needs, which is a little frustrating. Within the school, he participated in the marching band, which was a big adventure to begin with because he's very uncoordinated. But it is what it is. But he was very successful. The first couple weeks they have the band camps out here, which is like from nine o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night. Which, first of all, is overwhelming for anybody, let alone somebody on the spectrum. So there was some training there--the band teacher--to get him to understand. But they were always open. I don't want to say always. **[21:00]** He kept getting into trouble because he would have a meltdown moment and he would curse and swear. And instead of trying to figure out what the solution... what caused the **[21:15 antecedent]**,what that was, they would just yell at him, which would escalate the problem even more, and say, *“You can't do that.”* Well, what was the cause of his reaction? And I've told him. I said, *“If he tells you he needs a break, you need to let him have a break.”* So there was a lot of training. And by the time his senior year was here, we finally had them understanding that if he says he needs a break, you better let him have the break or you're going to have problems. They're like, *“Well, he can't be off by himself.”* Okay, but if you're sitting here, he can go five or six feet to de-escalate and have that break and still be within that line of vision. So there was some there, he was doing the musical. He helped with the musical set crew until the whole world shut down. So there was some acceptance there. So it was getting better throughout the school, but it took us three years to get the school there, which is a shame.

**Interviewer**: That's hard. Was musical theatre and the band, was that okay with him? Because those are very noisy things.

**Interviewee**: He loves music. Absolutely loves music. So that was okay. But even during band, there was a point where he had to say, *“I need a break.”* And he would come back. They gave him the opportunity to wear earplugs while he was marching, if he needed to. But he didn't need to. It's a different pitch, a different tone. Perfect example is he absolutely hates anything sung by Adam Levine. And it's not the music. It's not Adam. It's his voice. I don't know if there's a pitch that really bothers him. But as soon as he hears Adam Levine, he turns it off. And there are other musicians that he does the same thing with also.

**Interviewer**: Interesting. Does he seek out music in general?

**Interviewee**: Yes. Absolutely.

**Interviewer**: And will he use that to maybe overpower bad noises, like with headphones or something?

**Interviewee**: Yes. Yes, he will. He can play the trumpet. He taught himself how to play the saxophone. He can play the bass drum, the mellophone.

**Interviewer**: The what?

**Interviewee**: The mellophone. It's the marching band's version of the French horn.

**Interviewer**: **[24:00]** Oh, I didn't know that. Cool.

**Interviewee**: Those are all the things that he can play. And he's taught himself how to play the drums. He's got a drum set. So that kind of stuff doesn't bother him. But there's...

**Interviewer**: Interesting. **[24:13 crosstalk]** I'm sorry.

**Interviewee**: Oh, yeah yeah yeah. Yes, he can still play. Absolutely. He hasn't played in a while, but he can still play.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, good for him. I'm sorry, I cut you off. You were going to say something.

**Interviewee**: No, I don't remember what I was going to say.

**Interviewer**: Oh, I'm sorry.

**Interviewee**: It's okay.

**Interviewer**: Was his community and your community more less accepting when he was younger?

**Interviewee**: I can't answer that question. I know in school it was challenging. Because again, the parents don't know anything and the teachers know everything. His peer base was very limited. And even to this day, his peer base is very limited. There is no good support system in our community. It's worse when you get to be 13 and older.

**Interviewer**: Yep. Got you. What about maybe other types of community, like family or maybe a religious group if you are part of one.

**Interviewee**: My family is not from around here, so it's hard to interact. My husband's family is not far from here, but they don't interact with us. They're kind of in their own little world. My sister-in-law...I mean, there's some interaction there. But I will tell you, she has not gotten to the point yet that he's older, he's 19, you need to let him make his own choices. And she struggles with that. She'll ask 5,000 times if he's okay. And he gets annoyed with that. Which, I get it. It would annoy me all the time. Most of his community is within our own household. Even his brothers, to this day, sometimes struggle with his disability. They just don't understand. Which makes it hard.

**Interviewer**: It is hard. Thank you for sharing that.

**Interviewee**: Yep.

**Interviewer**: I'm thinking a little bit towards the future. What goals or hopes or worries do you have in terms of how his community will react to his sensory needs and sensory sensitivities?

**Interviewee**: Work community, they're pretty good right now. Knowing that he went in...**[27:00]**. He was very upfront. He goes, *“These kinds of things bother me and I just need some time to help.”* And they've been actually very good. Within our house, it would be trying to get his brothers to understand what challenges he has, and getting him under to understand his brothers' perspective. When I say, *“You can't do that because that bothers Zack,”* they're like, *“Well, that's stupid.”* But I'm also trying to get him to understand that, yes, you have a sensory, but your brothers also have a right to do this as well, thus creating that happy balance.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, for sure. That makes sense.

**Interviewee**: That's still the goal for the future.

**Interviewer**: It's a very good goal to have. That's very real, very valid. Been thinking a little bit differently. In this transition to adulthood, where do you see your son?

**Interviewee**: He's independent. I would say he's probably about 30% independent. He does his own laundry, cooks for himself. He's finally got his driver's license. He has a car, teaching him responsibility. Would like to, at some point...he's not ready to live on his own yet, because he can't organize his way out of a paper bag with three holes in it. So there's still some there. I would say probably within the next five years he would be ready to live on his own.

**Interviewer**: That's awesome. What are some things that he is able to do by himself and what are some things that he needs more support from you?

**Interviewee**: Financial. Learning to manage his money, which is a hard concept for anybody. But for him, it's like, *“Okay, just because you have it doesn't mean you have to spend it.”* He's very good at savings. And we've talked to him about taking money out of his savings account and taking it to an investor and letting him invest it, so that, you're 19 years old, by the time you want to retire you're going to have a nice little nest egg that you will successfully be able to retire. We're talking to him about that and getting him on board with that. So financially, that's his biggest challenge right now.

**Interviewer**: Absolutely. You mentioned cooking. What is he able to prepare? Can he go shopping for himself?

**Interviewee**: He could go shopping with a list. Everybody goes to the store with a list. **[30:00]** He could probably make himself...with a microwave, I mean, everybody does everything in the microwave now. He can make chicken patties. And I think he could make hamburgers, with some supervision. He can make pizza in the oven. Yeah, I could definitely see him being able to grocery shop, especially with a list.

**Interviewer**: Especially with what? Sorry?

**Interviewee**: With a list.

**Interviewer**: Totally. Absolutely. You mentioned laundry. What other daily habits, daily chores, hygiene is he able to do?

**Interviewee**: He showers every day before he goes to work. Every week they have chores to do. Now, his are a little less because he works third shift. So some of those responsibilities fall on his brothers. However, I'm like, *“Just because you're working third shift doesn't mean you get to get out of doing the dishes and cleaning the bathroom and cleaning your room.”* I said, *“Those are all things you're going to still have to do at some point in your life.”* So it's creating that balance for him.

**Interviewer**: Totally. Absolutely. And so, you mentioned his job. What is this job? What does he do?

**Interviewee**: He works in a warehouse. I think he does order picking. But I don't know that for a fact.

**Interviewer**: That's okay.

**Interviewee**: He works 10 pm to 6 am.

**Interviewer**: That's a hard shift, I imagine.

**Interviewee**: Sunday through Thursday. He goes in at 10 o'clock on Sunday night and then he's done Friday morning at 06:00.

**Interviewer**: It must be a little hard.

**Interviewee**: I think it would be harder if there were people here during the day. But there's nobody here during the day. And his two other brothers, when they do have remote learning on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, they're doing their homework. So there's no noise in the house.

**Interviewer**: Oh, that's great. That's really great.

**Interviewee**: So he has the ability to sleep.

**Interviewer**: That's awesome. Does he ever express interest in wanting to live by himself or live more independently?

**Interviewee**: Not yet. He's got it too nice here.

**Interviewer**: I'm sure he does. And you mentioned that he doesn't have a lot of peer support. Does he have some sort of social life that he manages?

**Interviewee**: Not really. That kind of ended when school ended.

**Interviewer**: That makes sense.

**Interviewee**: In March, when they shut everything down, it kind of went by the wayside.

**Interviewer**: That's hard.

**Interviewee**: Yeah.

**Interviewer**: And then do you think he will be able to achieve more independence in the future?

**Interviewee**: I think so.

**Interviewer**: Yeah? What do you...

**Interviewee**: Yeah, absolutely.

**Interviewer**: Sorry.

**Interviewee**: No, I just said, absolutely.

**Interviewer**: That's great. What do you think will help move him into adulthood then?

**Interviewee**: **[33:00]** A lot of support from us, getting him prepared for that.

**Interviewer**: Do you think there are particular services or interventions that could also help with this?

**Interviewee**: I can't answer that because I haven't been able to find anything yet.

**Interviewer**: Absolutely. And then putting these two things together, his sensory sensitivities and his transition to adulthood, how do they intersect for him?

**Interviewee**: I'm not sure what you're asking.

**Interviewer**: Like, do you think his sensory sensitivities impact his ability to transition to adulthood?

**Interviewee**: I don't think so.

**Interviewer**: No? Okay. Why not?

**Interviewee**: Because he's coping with his hearing. Taste sensitivity and taste and smell, he can navigate and make what he wants or make...it doesn't bother him. He doesn't eat watermelon so he's not going to get it. So I don't think that that would be an impact. Now, if he lives in an apartment, and somebody either above him, below him, or next to him is making a lot of noise, that will bother. So that will be a...learning how to cope with those types of behaviors.

**Interviewer**: Got you. And you kind of just answered this, but do you think his sensory sensitivities are an obstacle, a vehicle, neither, or a bit of both, towards his independence?

**Interviewee**: I think a little bit of both.

**Interviewer**: Yeah? In what ways?

**Interviewee**: Like, it's the whole...if there's somebody next to him, that will be an obstacle. But as far as taste and smell, again, if it bothers you, you don't eat it and you don't buy it, you know?

**Interviewer**: Yeah, absolutely. **[35:13 inaudible]** my questions. What do you think will be challenging for him in regards to his sensory sensitivities as he does gain more independence?

**Interviewee**: Letting things go and not worrying about everybody else. Somebody else is being too loud and he will fixate on that for a very long time instead of just letting it go. So it's not just the loud noise, it's the fixation of somebody's being loud and not taking into consideration that it's bothering him. So that's a huge obstacle for him.

**Interviewer**: For sure. How has he managed that type of **[36:00]** fixation?

**Interviewee**: He doesn't manage that very well right now. He gets very angry because he doesn't know how to manage those.

**Interviewer**: Got you. Absolutely. And again, this may not be super relevant for you because you said you haven't been able to find things, but what do you think would help him in this intersection of sensory sensitivities--loud noises--in this transition?

**Interviewee**: Honestly, I think a peer base would be helpful for him.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, for sure. What do you think that your base would provide?

**Interviewee**: Another level of support, another level of understanding, it would provide normalcy. So when I have three or four other...five or six other kids in my house, that's normal. That's what people do, is they laugh, they scream, they yell, and not let it bother them.

**Interviewer**: Absolutely. Kind of like provide some examples for him.

**Interviewee**: Yep.

**Interviewer**: Do you feel like there are gaps in the available services interventions for kids like your son?

**Interviewee**: Absolutely.

**Interviewer**: Yeah? Where do you see those gaps?

**Interviewee**: All over.

**Interviewer**: Yeah? Like in terms of the types of services, the ages, the geography?

**Interviewee**: All of the above? Literally, I cannot find any support services in this area. I would literally have to drive an hour or an hour and a half to get support services.

**Interviewer**: Really hard?

**Interviewee**: Yeah. So, all of the above.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. I'm sorry, that must be frustrating.

**Interviewee**: It very is much frustrating.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Thinking a little bit more broadly, how have your child sensory sensitivities and sensory interests impacted your goals, hopes and expectations for him as he does gain independence? It's okay if they haven't.

**Interviewee**: I don't know how to answer that right now. As much as he tries to not let that stuff bother him, he just can't. The anxiety then just starts to build. So he tries to be normal, but he just can't. So that's part of the impact that we see.

**Interviewer**: Absolutely, that makes sense. We're going to move into our last chunk of questions. We're flying through everything today. As a mom, as a caregiver, as a **[39:00]** parent of someone with ASD but also some sensory sensitivities, what does transition to adulthood mean to you?

**Interviewee**: He can live independently--successfully independently--and not just financially support himself, but mentally support himself, and be able to de-escalate, and be able to in those heat of the moments be able to realize that he needs to step back, breathe, and everything will be okay. And that's hard for him right now.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. It is hard in general, though. When things are moving, it's kind of hard to move forward sometimes.

**Interviewee**: Yeah. It's the hearing sensitivity that is my biggest fear, again.

**Interviewer**: For sure. How has his perspective changed over time?

**Interviewee**: He's really trying. He recognizes the fact that he's different from other people. So he really tries to go with the flow. And if there's a lot of noise, he really tries not to flinch or run away. His perspective on that end is getting better, but it's not. It's going to take him a long...I don't even know if he'll get over that.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, for sure. Has your perspective on what it means to transition into adulthood, has that perception changed?

**Interviewee**: Yes. From where it was a few years ago? Yes. A few years ago, I was afraid that he would never be able to live on his own. And now, maybe down the road, yes.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Got you. And what do you see happening in your son's future?

**Interviewee**: That he's successful--and not just in a job--that personally and mentally he's successful.

**Interviewer**: Do you see him having a job? Do you see him with a family of sorts?

**Interviewee**: I don't know so much about a family right now, but definitely a job. Because he's being very successful right now. And he wants to continue his education. He wants to go into auto body, which is fine. But you know, you got to take those classes you don't want to take. Just because it's auto body...you have to take math, and you have to take all those classes yet. So it's still a transition.

**Interviewer**: For sure. Final question, and you kind of touched upon this so it will be a bit repetitive, but **[42:00]** this perspective of what it means to transition to adulthood, that independence and success, how much has your son's sensory sensitivities played a role in that perspective?

**Interviewee**: Again, I don't think it's the hearing sensitivity that is the contributing factor. Taste and smell, you can overcome, because you can avoid those situations. Hearing's a little harder to avoid. Do I see him getting there? Yes. Because he's using his coping skills. He doesn't go anywhere without his ear protectors. And he will put them in if he needs to. So his perspective on not necessarily being afraid to go at this point is huge. He would never go to fireworks before because they used to bother his ears. So he is growing. He's understanding that there are coping mechanisms to be successful.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. And that makes you feel like he'll be successful in his transition.

**Interviewee**: Yep.

**Interviewer**: Got you. That's awesome. That's all I actually have. We flew through these, which is good.

**Interviewee**: Okay.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Would you like to add anything else?

**Interviewee**: I don't think so. The biggest thing is, would be able finally to support for him in the community with peers that accept him. That would be the biggest thing that I would hope for.

**Interviewer**: Yeah, for sure. We all need that, we all need support for ourselves...and acceptance.

**Interviewee**: Yeah. Other than me, his dad, his aunt, maybe his brothers.

**Interviewer**: I'm sure they'll get there.

**Interviewee**: Yeah, so am I. But it'll be a while.

**Interviewer**: Sometimes that happens, unfortunately.

**Interviewee**: But other than that, that's, I think, all I have to add.

**Interviewer**: Awesome. Well, thank you. This has been so wonderful and so valuable. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me and to fill all those surveys. Thank you.

**Interviewee**: No problem. Thank you.

**Interviewer**: Yeah. Do you know anyone else who might want to participate? Any chance?

**Interviewee**: That are transitioning into adulthood now? Because everybody else I know is kind of already there.

**Interviewer**: Sure. As long as they're under 26, they're eligible.

**Interviewee**: Yeah. No. Everybody that I know is over 26, or they're still way younger than...they're not even ready to transition.

**Interviewer**: All right. Well, that's okay. Always have to ask.

**Interviewee**: Alrighty.

**Interviewer**: Well, thank you so much. As soon as this is done rendering, I will send you a big thank you gift card as compensation for your time **[45:00]** and effort.

**Interviewee**: No problem. Thank you.

**Interviewer**: Thank you. Have a great afternoon.

**Interviewee**: You too. Bye.

**Interviewer**: Bye.

**[End of transcript]**