

## **What they do not tell you in Nanny 101**

By Monica Schoenborn

Flexibility is a word that goes hand and hand with being a nanny. It's meaning changes with the context that it is being used. We are flexible with our work schedules and duties. We adapt to new environments when we travel with our nanny-families or their family situations changes. The list could go on and on as it relates to flexibility on the job.

There is one area that is little talked about but it is a very real possibility that we will work with a child that has special needs. There are several TCPN nannies that do work with these children at this time.

The child's limitations may be seen or not. They may be overcome or to some degree they will remain for a lifetime. There are business leaders today that were yesterday's children with limitations. Limitations that are still there but they have learned to adapt.

Adapt is the key for a person that chooses to work with a child with special needs. There is no guide book that says what this child will face in the future. A nanny is one person in a team of people that will help this child adapt to her limitations.

We talk about continued education in the form of classes but this area is a place for hands on learning, adapting, and growing. The rewards can be numerous. The childhood milestones that we take for granted can be so much sweeter. The medical and educational professionals involved can give a more in-depth understanding of child development that we may not get in a classroom setting.

The pitfalls are there, too. The multiple doctor or therapy appointments can be stressful for everyone involved. The physical demands in some cases can take a toll on your own body. Finding a balance of work expectations can be hard to maintain if too many demands are put on the nanny. The keys to managing the pitfalls are realistic expectations, balance, support, and optimism.

I previously volunteered in an art class for disabled adults. It was there that I met the Happy Color Lady. She taught me about the power of optimism, adapting to limitations and the need for support. She was in a wheelchair with little control of her body. She painted with the only hand she could move. She would only paint with pastel yellow, blue and pink. Her happy colors as she called them. The class provided her with the balance and support she needed at that time. She provided us a great model of optimism. At an exhibit, her painting was one of the first to sell from the class.

A group like TCPN can help a nanny find balance through support, sharing of ideas and redirecting her focus away from work. Optimism and adapting to the situation can get you far but support and an outlet are much needed. I would encourage anyone to work with a special needs child if the opportunity presents itself. The flexibility that you show can bring a great hands-on learning experience.

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