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# A Boy Called Po - story of a boy with autism

## Abstract

This paper explores a film, A Boy Called Po, discussing the challenges Patrick, best known as Po, lives with the daily challenges of autism. Autism is a mental condition, present from early childhood, characterized by difficulty in communicating and forming relationships with other people and in using language and abstract concepts (Google).

## Introduction

There are a slew of developmental disabilities such as, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, sickle cell disease, hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and many more. Today, we will discuss a developmental disability labeled as autism. Autism, autism spectrum disorder, is an umbrella for many challenges these persons with autism may face; ranging from social skills to speech and nonverbal communications. ???A Boy Called Po is a film about the life of Patrick Wilson (the son) and David Wilson (the dad) whom face many obstacles at work, school, and more. A Boy Called Po is about how Patrick, best known as Po, is living with autism after the death of his mom and now only having his dad. A common misconception is that persons with autism are not smart. You would be sadly mistaken or proudly proven wrong. Po is very intelligent and keeps his mind afloat by reading the paper and studying stocks on the regular. In this film, the problems Patrick (Po) deals with his extensive/ perplexed/ complex imagination that is affecting his school, social life, and daily life activities. Let's get to it!

Autism can be distinctive! Persons with autism can often be seen as different from their peers, resulting in being excluded, bullied, and/or not accepted amongst everyone. Unfortunately, Po was bullied in school for his uniqueness. In addition, with the passing of his mom, things got worse for him and he began declining in school; instead of being attentive in school, he would draw, doodle, and sketch things. As mentioned prior, Po has an extensive imagination and doing artistic things and/or being artistic took him away from his reality as a ridiculed, motherless child.

Most times Po separates himself from his friends. (I wondered if Po did this because he didn't feel accepted?! I, personally, would not want to be with people that will only belittle me) However, subsequently, students picked up on his distance and began targeting him. Thing is, Po was only trying to find his place and/or comfort in a school that had a more fixed school plan against his developmental disability than for his well-being.

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Then, due to the lack of school accommodations established by the school system and principal, the abuse Po often experienced led to frequent clinic visits and calls to his father to come pick him up, each and every time. With the physical absence of his mother, his dad became his sole guardian and provider; leading to, his job gave him a mandatory deadline to meet or else he'd lose his job as an engineer. (O'Malley, 2012) David, the father, did not meet the deadline because his main priority quickly became Patrick.

With the time off, David had the opportunity to truly advocate for his son. And luckily, things began looking up for Po, after some assistance from the janitor, the student bullying Po got expelled and the school began accommodating more of his needs. Po was even able to help his dad come up with an airplane model that aide with global warming.

To continue on with, Po was in two rehabilitation centers throughout the film; one more intense than the other. Rehab center one, required Po to attend short sessions that created divergent activities that stimulates the mind. Patrick responded very well at this center, partly due to the occupational therapist he worked with. However, after the death of his mom, he needed more intense care and had to leave. Sadly, Patrick did not like the new center, at all, and eventually escaped because he was so unhappy.

After all was said and done, David decided to retire early and fully devote his time to Po. Crazy enough, Po saves the day again; as mentioned in the introduction, Po loves studying stocks. What I did not mention is that, Po would also invest in them! So, instead of the twenty thousand dollars David was expecting back from his retirement, Po's stock investments brought in over four hundred thousand dollars.

Analyze the person's story according to the components of the WHO/ ICF model, including body functions and structures, activities, participation, environmental factors and personal factors

Patrick's environment did not want him to succeed!! I believe that personally and professionally based of the ICF model, the problem is not the disability, but results from assets/ barriers within the environment. As stated, Po's school environment was not in favor of him. Resulting in numerous additional struggles, on top of the challenges Po faces with autism, as is. One obstacle being, Patrick's lack of participation; due to his moms passing, Patrick felt quite alone, even in his imagination it was just him. It was not until the latter part of the movie, things got easier for Patrick following his dad and school understanding him more.

Lastly, Patrick had exceptional body function in the film because his autism did not create physical barriers.

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Describe positive and/or negative coping strategies employed by the individual as well as the impact (positive/negative) of social support on the individuals' recovery

Some of the positive coping strategies Patrick had were studying and investing in stocks, reading the newspaper, and using his imagination via drawing, painting, doodling, and sketching. These hobbies were a positive because they exercised his mind which maintained his intelligence. These hobbies also allowed him to express his imagination in his own safe place. As a bonus, he turned his love for sticks into money for him and his dad; a lot of money. All while allowing him to cope with his life in a positive manner.

Some of the negative coping strategies Po had were randomly leaving supervision:

1. Recess- separating himself from everyone.
2. Escaping from the rehabilitation center.
3. Destruction of material things.
4. Breaking down when being yelled at.

However, breaking down can go as a negative and a positive; often times, it can be seen as a weakness because it's a sign of weakness. While on the other hand, it can be a positive because tears can be his way of releasing the anger and/or frustration. Lastly, the drifting is seen as a negative because his safety is being put at risk which is never good. He would escape by putting a blanket over his head or his favorite, going to the dock where his mom would go because that was his way of remembering her.

Evaluate the individual's overall response to disability as generally positive or negative and defend your answer with concrete examples from the story

Patrick Po Wilson response to his uniqueness (autism) was fairly blended. It was neither all positive nor all negative; the negative did outweigh the positive throughout the film. Some of Po's reactions were not good such as, being in class but not being attentive, instead floating in space. Or being around his peers and intentionally separating himself; or him going under his covers and daydreaming about an imaginary world. While in the same token, Po did what was best for him with what environment, accommodations, and circumstances he was given; ultimately, making decisions that just allowed him to get through his days. In addition, he already had and/or has one challenge in life, but the loss of his mom truly took a toll on him, as would anyone, with or without a disability. Anyways, that took a tremendous growth decline in his life in school and in his rehabilitation centers. For example: Po had to switch rehab centers because he needed more extensive care once his mom passed. After he found ways to cope; for example, going to the dock he and his mom would go to together, in order for him to reflect on the good memories they made.

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With all of that being said, although Po's negative coping methods outweigh his good ones, he responded to his disability well; especially when proper school and life accommodations were made for him.

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