



# I'd rather play with the boxes!

By Bebe Bode

As a parent of a child with autism, I'd constantly worry whether I was doing enough, or doing the right things to help my son thrive.

Personally, our family celebrates Christmas, so when Seth was a toddler and this time of year rolled around, I used to struggle to figure out what would be the best educational, social and/or sensory toys I could buy to help him. Educational experts, pediatricians and scientists all had their own advice for parents on what toys they thought were best for children on the spectrum.

So I bought into what the experts would recommend. I'd wrap them up and eagerly wait for Christmas morning for him to open them up and be excited. Unfortunately, that is not what would happen.

Seth spent more time playing with the cardboard boxes his toys came in than the actual toys themselves. To us, as parents, that was quite stressful and something we didn't expect. It happened more than one Christmas and began to depress me. Especially when I'd see other children enjoying opening their gifts and playing with their toys. After the holiday season was over, I was able to engage Seth in play with some of the toys we bought him, but not always.

So, another year goes by and the holidays are creeping up on us again. I'm in crazy bat mom mode trying to figure out what I could possibly get that he would enjoy. What could I find for him to play with that would interest, engage him and that HE would be overjoyed to receive?

Back when Seth was young, VHS tapes were what was available in video. Seth loves Disney movies and inside the



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VHS tapes there were always offers for different items. As I was looking through the offers, I found a big red cardboard Winnie the Pooh schoolhouse for \$12.99. I'm pretty sure I leaped for joy!

**A BIG RED CARDBOARD BOX** with his favorite Disney characters on it! The box is the present!!!!!! I'm so getting this for him for Christmas!

I knew he'd love it, and of course he did.

Once he opened it, we put it together and wa-lah an awesome colorful cardboard schoolhouse with his fave Disney characters. That box saw Seth and every single one of his cousin's, us as parent's, aunt's, uncle's and friend's children inside it playing with him.

That cardboard box had all the components both the professionals and I looked for in a toy. It engaged him in pretend play and socialization. We'd cuddle up in there with pillows and blankets, read books, complete puzzle's, bounce on balls, etc... The list is long. All for \$12.99 plus shipping and handling.

The reason I share this is we can all get creative and not get caught up in the trap of having to buy the most expensive toys and gadgets that our children don't even really want at such a young age.

We didn't have Pinterest back when Seth was a toddler, but times they are a changing! Look at these fabulous ideas out there now for some inspiration: <http://tinyurl.com/qhsynsu>



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