

An autistic girl and her mum making observations: Stop adding bricks!

This morning my 12 year old autistic daughter was chatting to me going to school. She asked me if I would write a note for one of her teachers (she's selective mute and unable to talk in school) to ask if she could take another child's shortbread they made in home economics yesterday to the girl's house as she lives near one of her relatives. I wasn't sure if this would be allowed so told my daughter this honestly. I asked why she even wanted to do this as surely the child would get the shortbread herself?

My daughter then started saying how the child has severe anxiety and struggles to even get in to the school. "I just thought it would be better mum as otherwise it's just another brick people use to put pressure on her." Confused I asked if she could tell me more:

"Well you know that jenga game where you pile bricks up but then the tower gets dangerous and then eventually falls? That's like how I see anxiety and PDA and autism. People think they are helping by saying things like 'if you do this task you can get a fidget toy' or 'come in tomorrow and you can use an iPad' or 'if you go to school all week I'll get you McDonald's' but really all that's doing is piling more and more bricks on the tower and making a meltdown or breakdown even more likely. One of the things I heard the teacher say yesterday to **** was 'if you come in tomorrow you can get your shortbread you made today to take home'. I was just wanting to stop adding another brick to her tower and maybe she might actually come in."

I had never thought about it this way but as an autistic herself she seems to understand in a way so many of us don't. We feel we are doing the right thing by offering incentives and rewards but perhaps for many children all we are actually doing is adding more bricks to an already unstable tower then we wonder why it all collapses around us.

Maybe you know someone today who has a wobbly tower. In trying to support them just be careful that you are not inadvertently just adding more bricks.



Credit to: Faithmummy (facebook)