What Diagnosis Felt Like—and What Made the Difference

Shared by the mother of a 9-year-old diagnosed with ADHD, Hyperactive Presentation

When we were told our child has ADHD, the clinical team did their job well.
They explained the diagnosis. They answered questions. They were kind.

But when I walked out of that office, the spiral began:
I wasn’t overwhelmed by information — I was overwhelmed by fear.

> What does this mean for my son’s future?
> Did I miss something earlier?
> What do we tell the school?
> Do we try meds? Coaching? Therapy?
> How do I explain all this to my partner — who wasn’t even in the room?

I nodded through the meeting. I heard the words. But in my body? I was spinning.
It wasn’t until **weeks later**, after the friction, the Google rabbit holes, the fights over routines,
and the questions we couldn’t answer, that someone told us about the Dear Parent™ Letter.

We read it together.

And that’s when everything changed.

What the letter did that weeks of research couldn’t

It didn’t rehash the diagnostic report.
It didn’t throw more terms at us.
It spoke to us — like it understood what we were *actually* going through.

It slowed us down.
It gave us words we didn’t have.
It helped us explain things to each other — not just to our child.

Until then, **we weren’t parenting from the same page**.

I had been in the room with the clinician. I heard the nuance, felt the urgency.
My partner hadn’t. And no matter how well I tried to explain it, something got lost.

His expectations stayed the same.
I was already grieving.
That gap turned into tension.

The letter bridged it.

It let him hear it for himself — not in my voice, but through our child's lens.
That changed everything.

Why that shifted how we parented — immediately

Before the letter, everything felt personal.
When my child refused → I thought they were rejecting me.
When mornings fell apart → I thought I was failing.
When school called → I felt ashamed.

And my partner? He just wanted us to "get it together."
He didn't have the context I had — so when our son melted down again, he snapped:
"He's 9. He should know better by now."

The letter reframed all of it.

It helped us see:
"This isn't about motivation.
This isn't about defiance.
This is about a nervous system under pressure."

That shifted our entire approach — as a team.

We responded instead of reacting.
We paused instead of escalating.
We stopped punishing symptoms and started supporting needs.

And that's when everything else — therapy, coaching, strategies — finally started to work.

Why this matters for other families too

If I'm honest, if I had to choose between:

- A clinician who gave us a diagnosis and a list of next steps
- And one who gave us those *plus* a letter that helped us understand our child *and* each other…

I would choose the second — every time.

Not because they were "nicer."
Because they understood what it *actually* feels like to be a family in this moment.

This letter didn't replace clinical care.
It prepared us for it.
It gave us the emotional foundation we didn't even know we needed.

And that made all the difference.