

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing about the grave concern I have regarding screening zero to three-year old for mental illness and putting them at risk of being drugged as a result.

My son, now 19 years old, didn't speak until he was at least four years old. At the time, I had people telling me that I should send him to a speech therapist and all kinds of things. I decided to allow my son the right to speak when he chose to. By 4 ½ years, my son decided to speak. His kindy teachers and my friends were then telling me very different things... how well he spoke, how articulated his words were and how able he was to communicate to the other children and adults. My son is educated and has gone on to pursue a life that he loves, has great friends and relationships. Doesn't have drug or alcohol issues and is a very decent human being.

Had my son been screened between zero to three as suggested, this picture would be very different today. The thought that someone would observe my son like some sort of guinea pig and tell me what is right or wrong about his mental health is inconceivable and to me a human rights violation. I have spoken to people/adults who were diagnosed for some sort of imperfection as a child and carried through to adulthood, the stigma that there's something not right about them that they need to be drugged to be 'normal'. This is as far from normal as it gets. I have also observed that people put on psychiatric drugs go on to other drugs and alcohol. Effectively, this is setting up children and a generation of being introverted and drugged.

I am 100% against mental illness screening of children and believe anyone forwarding this has actual mental illness issues. There are solutions for helping children and people that don't involve evaluating individuals but instead, treating them with the right to develop at their own pace, in their own way. More emphasis needs to be put on creating safe environments where children can grow and develop without fear of some 'doctor' deciding how they should or shouldn't be.

Sincerely,

Rachel Jacomb