

Better to be a Healthy Mom, than a Supermom

When Caroline* became a mother for the first time, she wanted to be a good one. But she had little experience of what a loving and caring mother looked like. “My mother was always abusive when I was growing up,” she says. “The only role models I had for a good mother were the ones on TV.”

Caroline experienced many struggles parenting her first child. She would later find out her son had autism which had gone undiagnosed. When she became pregnant for a second time, Caroline was encouraged to participate in Family Service of the Piedmont’s Healthy Start program for new and expectant moms with high stress factors. “I’ve been happy ever since,” she says. “Healthy Start gave me the peace of mind that this time, I would be prepared.”

Caroline's Healthy Start Caseworker visits the home regularly to share information and resources with Caroline about her growing family. “She keeps me informed on the development stages my kids are going through, as well as what it looks like to be a good parent,” Caroline says. “In talking about discipline, I’ve learned to redirect the energy of my children instead of getting mad at them for doing things that kids do.”

Caroline's particular situation makes parenting an even tougher job: “I have to parent two completely different sets of kids,” she explains. “My older child with autism has a completely different set of needs than that of his younger brother. Healthy Start has taught me to engage in their play and adjust my parenting style to fit what is best and most effective for each child.”

Not only her children, but Caroline herself has also benefitted from what she is learning through Healthy Start. “I’ve started to take time out for myself,” she says smiling. “When I take the time to decompress and de-stress, I am more in control of my emotions and I don’t take my anger and frustration out on my family. I accept that I don’t have to be a supermom; it’s better to be healthy mom, than supermom.”

“Healthy Start helps mothers feel that they are not alone,” Caroline concludes. “There is no shame in reaching out for help. This program reiterates the fact that it’s okay to feel angry and frustrated about certain things, but you can react in a healthy way so that it does not destroy or hurt your child. Healthy Start has given me the knowledge and support I need to be the best mother I can be.”

*Names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.