

KEYS

# TO SPECIAL NEEDS PEACE OF MIND

How to Worry Less & Enjoy More as  
You Navigate Life with Special Needs



Photo by Johnson Wang on Unsplash

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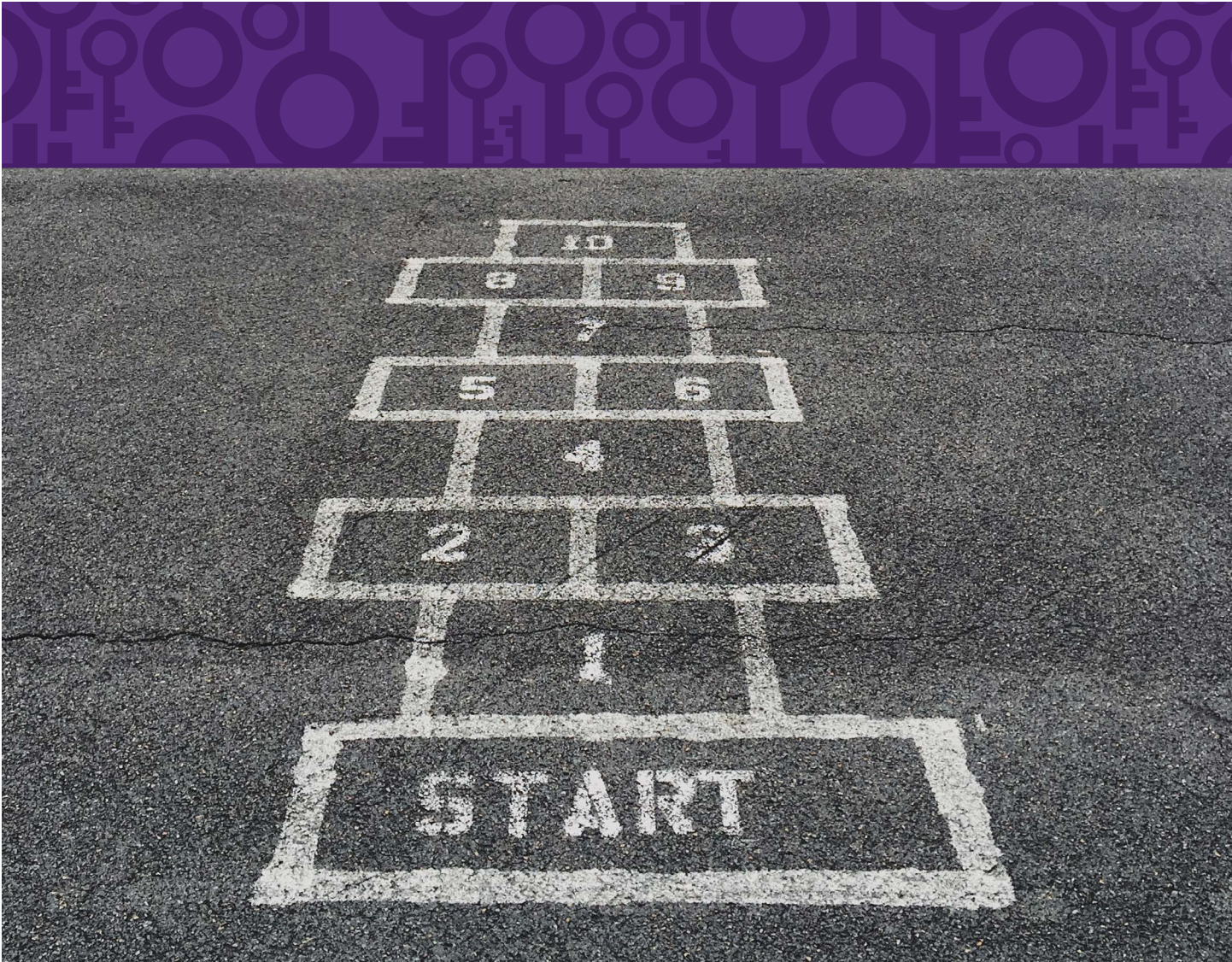


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# BEFORE WE START

We're suggesting 7 Keys to special needs peace of mind.

Not 7 "steps" that you must follow. And certainly not another "to-do" list.

Rather, we offer the 7 Keys as a path forward to help you successfully meet some of the toughest challenges you face as the parent of a child with special needs.

We encourage you to fly through the 7 Keys quickly, and pick one or two that seem to hit home. Then jump back to that spot, see if it connects.

Then turn around again and pick another spot. You know, hopscotch.

# 1



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## LEARNING TO CONSIDER YOURSELF, FIRST

Reclaim your own hopes, dreams and goals.

There you are. Resting on some tropical beach, far away. Or in your backyard on a warm summer day. It doesn't really matter where you go. Could be near or far. The point is, it's just you, or the two of you, without your child. Knowing that your child is doing just fine, without you.

As you sway in your hammock, you recall the day when you realized that putting your life on hold and remaining constantly focused on your child's care was not a long-term solution.

You started setting your own goals, reclaiming forgotten hopes and dreams for yourself. You picked a date on the calendar and booked that time for just you. Then you made all the plans needed for your child's care while you were gone.

**By making plans for your own life and then going out and living them now, in real time, you had to make plans for your child's care while you were gone. You left, had some fun, came back. And learned that everything worked out OK without you. Because it must be so.**



# 2



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## BELIEVING YOUR CHILD WILL BE OK WITHOUT YOU

It's not about you. It's about what happens after you.

"I can't bear the thought..." We often hear that.

It's almost too much to ask any special needs parent to think of their child being totally cared for by someone else, for life.

It's true: no one is ever going to be able to love and care for and protect your child as well as you.

But holding on to that thought can ultimately expose your child to huge risks. To truly plan for your child's future, you must let that emotion go. Or bury it deep down somewhere, where it can't keep blocking you from getting your plans done.

Because it's just not possible for you to be your child's forever-caregiver. That's reality.

**You can't afford to let your emotions block you from making plans. You must believe that your child will be OK without you. And then start planning to make it so.**

# 3



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## OPENING UP TO OTHERS CARING FOR YOUR CHILD

The day will come when others must step in.

Yes, there are others who can, and will, step in for you one day. After you leave this earth. Or when you're 95 and unable to even care for yourself. Or when your health declines, scary quick.

It's inevitable. There's going to be a time when others must step in. Life's lurking tragedies hold other plans for your time and energy. When life hits you hard, that's not the time to start looking around for someone to replace you.

Creating a lifetime of interdependence by not allowing others to step in will inevitably lead to bad outcomes. What greater shock can you imagine for your child than coming home in the afternoon without Mom or Dad there, evermore?

**Allowing others to step in and help care for your child, now, gradually, bit by bit, will begin breaking the lurking dangers of interdependence. It's the only way of ensuring positive outcomes for your child as life unfolds.**

# 4



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## CREATING LIFETIME PLANS FOR YOUR CHILD



Transitions are inevitable, but turmoil is not.

For most parents, dealing with the risks of not having a plan for their child's care and future is a waiting game. They simply bide their time until their child grows up. No need for extensive plans for a neurotypical child who has reached responsible adulthood.

As a special needs parent, you don't have that luxury. You must make plans for your child's future care and protection, for his or her lifetime. Because there will never be the day when your child will be totally on their own.

Without a realistic, practical plan for your child's care and future without you, only turmoil will result.

The key to enjoying peace of mind is to start getting those plans done, now. Otherwise, you'll spend a major portion of your life being super-stressed and constantly worried about not having a plan.

# 5



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## EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY

Your child's story must continue being told.

Every life has a story. Most of us can tell our own. But for a child with special needs, it's not so easy.

So, it's up to Mom and Dad to record, organize, and share everything needed for their child's care and happiness. But you've learned that it's nearly impossible for you to do all that in a clunky binder or tedious spreadsheet.

This is when cloud technology comes to the rescue. Using apps like [Dropbox](#), [Evernote](#), and [Vest](#), you can now enjoy an easier way to organize, access and share key information about your child's care and protection. Cloud apps let you keep everything in one place, get to it from all of your devices, and easily share information with key people.

**Cloud apps will help you save time, cut stress, and worry less about managing, accessing, and safely sharing your child's key information. It's the best way to let others know your child's story and provide care when you can't be there.**



# 6



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## SEEING YOUR PLANS WORK ON A TEST DRIVE

Seeing is believing.

You know that you must eventually unlock Key #4 and create plans for your child's housing, well-being, and lifetime care. But making those plans is extremely complex, and it's just too painful to think about your child living without you.

This is when Key #1 is pivotal. By making plans for your own future, first, you're going to have to make plans for your child's care. When you commit to leave town for two days, or two weeks, you can no longer keep things "on hold." You must get your plans done, have key people in place, and make it all work before leaving on your trip.

**Without creating a positive plan for your own future and then going out and living it now, in real time, you're never going to actually see how you plan will work for your child's care and protection after you're gone.**

# 7

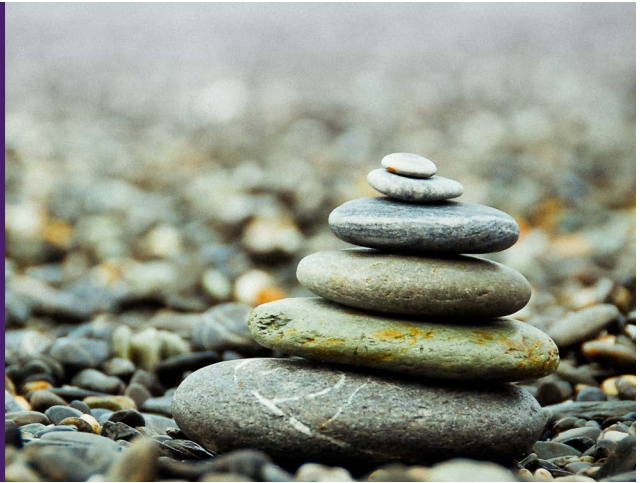


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## ACCEPTING TRUE PEACE OF MIND

Peace of mind is not a destination. It's a process.

There's never going to be a certain document or step or accomplishment that will cause you to say, "Now I have peace of mind." You will always be your child's best caregiver. No-one will ever be able to love your child as much as you. These emotions will never leave you.

But as life unfolds and you pull together all the elements of **your** lifetime plan, you will eventually reach peace of mind. And you'll know it when you feel it.

There will be a sunny day on the beach, swaying in your hammock, when you'll be thinking about all the plans you've made for your child and having seen those plans actually work. Feeling in your heart that your child is going to be OK without you.

And it's then you'll hear that peaceful voice in your head telling you, *"It's OK to have been me."*

**Peace of mind is a process. No timeline, checklist or chart will get you here. But we've learned that the secret to unlocking Key #7 is to first unlock Key #1: Learning to think of yourself, first.**



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I'm Michael, a husband, a father.

As an estate planning attorney, I've had the privilege of helping thousands of parents plan for their children's future.

I've witnessed life cross my desk at an uncommon velocity of marriages, births, hopes, happiness, loss, tragedy, complexity, accomplishment, and passings.

And I've learned much from seeing my own life held in the balance of seven cancer battles. Teaching me that the thing that truly matters is what we leave behind for others.

I don't have a child with special needs, so I'll never walk in your shoes. But after walking alongside the planning path with thousands of parents for the past 20 years, one thing I know is true.

Everything I know about special needs, I learned from you. Thank you.

**Michael Pearce, Founder & CEO, Vest Life Technologies, Inc**



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Thank you for spending time with 7 Keys.  
We hope this helped!



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