

# Telling the inspiring story of son's life

## Father's book about how family helped autistic Robert live independently

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» A Belsize Park man is hoping his family's story of overcoming adversity can inspire others to never give up hope.

Walter Solomon, of Buckland Crescent, was shocked when he was told by doctors that his son Robert would have to spend his life in an institution.

Born in Manchester in 1968, Robert was aged just two when doctors told his parents that autism had left their son "remote and sub-normal".

Fast forward more than 40 years and – thanks to his parents' unwavering desire to never give up and the "genius" of Manchester doctor Geoffrey Waldon – Robert is now living in the United States with a wife, two children and a steady job.

Walter has now detailed the family's journey in a book, *Autism And Understanding: The Waldon Approach to Child Development*, which he hopes will help others.

He said: "I have absolutely no doubt that had it not been



■ Walter Solomon with son Robert and his family

for Geoffrey Waldon's help, Robert would have been placed in an institution and that in all probability he would have been there for the rest of his life."

Robert first met Dr Waldon when undergoing a hearing test in 1970.

The doctor told his parents that Robert could be helped.

Once a week for the next

seven years he was taught movements which, if missed during the early years, could lead to underdeveloped areas of understanding.

"As the understanding

grows so the lessons develop to include the learning-how-to-learn-tools which form a part of all children's growth, but which need to be emphasised in lessons for children who have failed for whatever reason to practice them on their own," said Walter.

Robert's tantrums and rocking movements dropped away and he learned to speak before being put in a private school by his parents and later passing his 11-plus exam.

### Ideas

After moving from Manchester to the USA, Walter retired to Belsize Park following his wife's death but frequently returns to Baltimore to see his son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren.

"Sadly, Dr Waldon is no longer with us," said Walter.

"But it is my intention to ensure that his ideas, and the practices he applied to the teaching of autistic children like Robert, are disseminated as far and as widely as possible."

The book is released today.