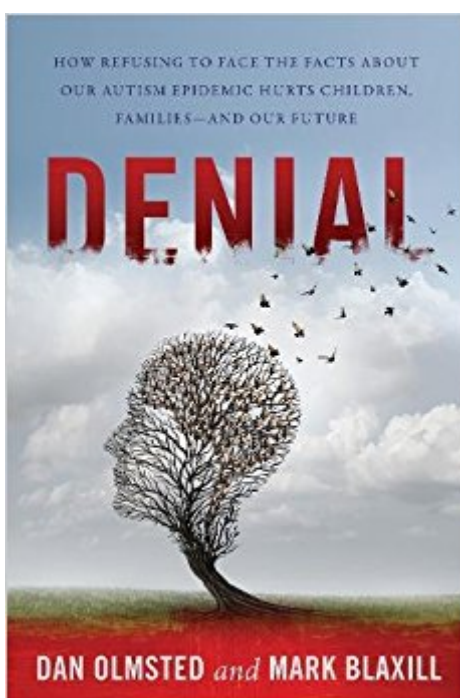


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# Denial: How Refusing To Face The Facts About Our Autism Epidemic Hurts Children, Families, And Our Future



## Synopsis

Even as the autism rate soars and the cost to our nation climbs well into the billions, a dangerous new idea is taking hold: There simply is no autism epidemic. The question is stark: Is autism ancient, a genetic variation that demands acceptance and celebration? Or is it new and disabling, triggered by something in the environment that is damaging more children every day? Authors Mark Blaxill and Dan Olmsted believe autism is new, that the real rate is rising dramatically, and that those affected are injured and disabled, not merely "neurodiverse." They call the refusal to acknowledge this reality Autism Epidemic Denial. This epidemic denial blocks the urgent need to confront and stop the epidemic and endangers our kids, our country, and our future. The key to stopping the epidemic, they say, is to stop lying about its history and start asking "who profits?" People who deny that autism is new have self-interested motives, such as ending research that might pinpoint responsibility; and, most threateningly, liability for this man-made epidemic. Using ground-breaking research, the authors definitively debunk best-selling claims that autism is nothing new; and nothing to worry about.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mark Blaxill is the father of a daughter diagnosed with autism. He has authored peer-reviewed articles on time trends in autism and founded advocacy groups to spur action. He co-wrote two books with Dan Olmsted - *The Age of Autism* and *Vaccines 2.0* - and is editor with Dan Olmsted of the widely read *AgeofAutism.com*. He received degrees from Princeton University

and the Harvard Business School. He resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Dan Olmsted was an award-winning journalist, co-editor of AgeOfAutism.com, and co-author, with Mark Blaxill, of two books. He was a former editor at USA Today, USA Weekend, and United Press International and a graduate of Yale University.

I will be up front and say that I know there is an epidemic yet this book brings all of the facts together to understand how and why it is so. I am a contributing writer for Age of Autism and have the privilege of sharing articles over the years with both Mark and Dan. I am also the parent to a severely affected, adult daughter, plus I have been in the field of special education since 1984. We, educators have been eyewitnesses to these drastic changes in the health, social-emotional well-being, and learning abilities of more and more students each year. Autism is the huge iceberg that keeps growing, and the historical and current research in this book are the red flares to acknowledge it. There has been an explosive tsunami of challenges for the students, the families, the school districts, and now adult services are in jeopardy. "Denial" will make even the doubters wonder what can be done now to change the future.

There is no question that the rate of autism has exploded over the last few decades. Many question this fact, attributing the rate to better diagnostics, expanding the definition of autism, or heightened awareness. Dan Olmsted and Mark Blaxill take on those who deny that there is an epidemic of autism in *Denial: How Refusing to Face the Facts about Our Autism Epidemic Hurts Children, Families, and Our Future*. That lengthy subtitle says much about the theme of the book. Olmsted and Blaxill argue persuasively that there is an actual epidemic, and that denying it is harmful to those touched by autism. The numbers are too high to attribute societal factors or awareness: "The autism rate is up one hundred-fold in the three decades with a clear inflection point around 1990, pointing to environmental exposures, not better detection or broader diagnosis." They address the historical references other researchers make to argue that autistic individuals have always been among us, but we just didn't have the language or diagnostic tools. Even given the historical presence of mental illness among children and eccentric geniuses, there is no way that a population with traits indicating autism would be unnoticed or not remarked on for all those years. "The Epidemic Denial theory--that autism hasn't really increased at all--requires centuries of observational failure in the medical and educational professionals who cared for children." In the first decades of the 20th century, doctors began to observe and document what we now know as autism. "The paucity of cases before 1930, followed by the first clusters, followed by a slow rise, followed by today's

catastrophic numbers, means autism is a new, disabling, environmentally triggered disorder--an epidemic disorder." I freely admit that I had accepted the position that autism was nothing new and that our recognition and diagnosis of it is new. I have read books like Steve Silverman's NeuroTribes, which Olmsted and Blaxill criticize for his Epidemic Denial. Contra Silverman, Denial makes a very convincing case that the rate of the incidence of autism is unprecedented. The further argument is more controversial and not quite as strong, but still should force consideration. They raise the hackles of the medical community by pinning the cause on vaccines. Reviewing possible environmental factors, they conclude that "The highest correlation between the rise in autism and any one environmental factor is the increasing number of doses of vaccines." They go on to paint a picture of the nefarious interrelationships between drug companies, the media, pediatricians, and political pressures that work together to deny a link between vaccines and autism, actively ostracizing and striving to discredit people like Olmsted and Blaxill. Denial is surely not the last word about the cause or causes of autism. But to this reader they made a very convincing case for an autism epidemic. The case for the link to vaccines is weaker, but is still quite compelling. When someone on TV, whether a doctor, politician, or celebrity spokesman, denies the autism epidemic and downplays the possibility of vaccines playing a role in autism cases, sit up and take notice. Ask the question that Olmsted and Blaxill ask, Cui bono? Who benefits? In the interest of science, but more importantly in the interest of those suffering from autism, we should heed the message of Denial. Thanks to Edelweiss and the publisher for the complimentary electronic review copy!

I have 3 daughters with full blown autism - and there is nothing "normal" about their lives at 16, 21 and 22 years of age. They live a sheltered life with full time care, day programming, special education and assistance with all skills of daily living. To say that what they have is a new normal is a travesty. I work with Mark Blaxill and worked w the late Dan Olmsted covering the autism epidemic. Do we LOVE AND ADORE our kids? Of course - but someday we will DIE and the world will not be ready willing or financially able to care for my girls. CT had a FURLOUGH day last week denying the disabled their day programs because of budget issues. School districts are crumbling under the crushing weight of kids on IEPs. This isn't better diagnosis - it's a real CHANGE in how kids function and learn. Call it autism in some - call it neurological difference in others - this book carefully dissects the vast LEFT wing conspiracy to normalize brain injury. Imagine calling Alzheimer's a late life benefit? Now imagine Alzheimer's for 70 years in a able bodied person. READ THIS BOOK and form your own opinion - I'm biased by virtue of my own children and my relationship to the authors. Kim

Great book! Lots of good information on the vaccines autism link.

Thoroughly shreds the arguments of the "autism has always been with us" crowd. One point that deserves more emphasis is that things have not slowed down at all -- rates of autism have been doubling roughly every 6 years and are still increasing; the longer we wait to stop poisoning our kids, the worse it will get. The same poisons cause more than autism:our kids are very sick and things get worse every year.

Fascinating read by two solid authors on the topic. They make information interesting. A real eye opener! Worth the read!

This book is a mixture of old-fashioned investigative journalism and quiet scholarship. Apart from anything else it patiently dismantles the media-hyped books on the history of autism by Steve Silverman, and by John Donvan and Caren Zucker. They ought to respond - more likely you won't see them for dust. But then hit and run is the story of our time.John Stone, UK Editor Age of Autism

So glad someone has written an entire book to argue that "better diagnosis" and "changing the label" are NOT the reasons that autism rates are sky rocketing. There is plenty of research data on childhood diseases and before 1930 autism was virtually non-existent. This book makes it clear that autism is new, the incidence continues to sky rocket, and we as a society cannot realistically support the thousands upon thousands of autistic adults. Tick tock.....

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