

Improv meets Autism

- Fund-Raising Improv Festival to Benefit Children in the Autistic Spectrum –
Taking place world-wide from 14th to 22nd June 2008

My name is Deniz Döhler. I have loved and lived improv theatre for over twelve years now. From the year 2000 my wife Christiane and me have succeeded in pursuing it full-time and have made a living from it. Improv theatre has given us more gifts than we would ever have thought possible (for that we are infinitely grateful!).

Yet I would have never imagined that the skills we acquired through improv theatre would help tremendously with one of the greatest tasks our lives had put up before us: **bringing our son Luka Maximilian from his autistic world into ours**. Maybe some of you know Luka, who is now three years old and at the age of 22 months was diagnosed with “suspected early-childhood autism”.



Our search for an autism treatment program led us to one that is still hardly known in Germany: the Son-Rise[®] program. Son-Rise[®] was developed by two parents who treated their own autistic child. After the intense work of three years their son **succeeded in completely losing all his autistic symptoms**. This child that had been rated at an IQ of below 30 when diagnosed by experts who advised the parents to “best put this hopeless case into an institution” went on to graduate from an elite university and today heads the Autism Treatment Center of America. For more information, please refer to the website www.autismtreatmentcenter.org.

Reading about the program we could immediately translate its techniques into the language of improv:

- We work with Luka in a playroom, where everything is accepted (and nothing is in it that would ever over-stimulate him or that would have to be forbidden to him) – The “Yes, and...” room
- The aim is to make it fun to be in contact with our world – by over-accepting every impulse that comes from him
- We work with a team of about ten volunteers – many of the improvisers – and have team sessions for feedback and coming up with ideas for great games – just like with an improv team

The program is a huge success. Luka’s development is skyrocketing. Now, we want to be able to continue the program with Luka and also to help other families get a chance to try it out for themselves.

Therefore, we are holding the Improv festival “Improv meets Autism” as a fund- and awareness raiser. Over 50 groups are coming to Berlin or have pledged their support by donating performances – in Germany and in many other countries – or raising funds in other ways.

How you can help us:

- if you feel to support us in any way, contact us through our website: **www.ArtistsMeetAutism.org** .
- order books through the link to Amazon on our website: **www.ArtistsMeetAutism.org** .
- contact us for any other ideas



Once again, We thank you wholeheartedly!
Best regards from Berlin
Deniz and Christiane Döhler
Players at Improtheater Berlin: the WäM!,
Paternoster and Fatma-Express

www.ArtistsMeetAutism.org