



Being a military kid can have its own challenges, including transition, family separation, and mobility. Struggling with developmental or social disorders can heighten these difficulties. Dax, a student at Stacey Junior-Senior High School in San Antonio, Texas, moved to Texas when he was six years old. His father was re-stationed at Lackland Air Force Base, and his family has lived in San Antonio for the last 10 years. “Mostly we stayed here for medical issues and I believe, by the grace of God, it was a good thing,” shares Dax, who was diagnosed with autism as a baby.



BADGE of HONOR

Dax enjoyed moving as a military child but prefers the comforts of familiarity. “One of the things that is great about moving is getting a fresh start with new friends, and better influences,” he explains. “An advantage of staying in the same place is familiarity. You’re never lost. People ask all the time for information, and I give them directions.”

Dax is considering a career in the Air Force and is currently in a dual credit program which will allow him to earn an associate’s degree by the time he graduates high school. He has always been interested in a career in law enforcement, stating, **“I was born with autism, and things to me are mostly black and white. It’s hard to see grey areas, so I found an interest in rules and take them seriously.”** Dax used to call his parents and tell on himself for cursing because of his strict adherence to rules.

In sixth grade, Dax would come home from school crying frequently because other students bullied him. He didn’t understand social cues, so students would call him names and pick on him.

As a result of being bullied, Dax invented a game that helped him cope with his challenges and teach him communication skills. Each of the characters in the game had their own

behavior, way of speaking, and beliefs, and each conversation he had or decision he made would carry on to the next game, making Dax’s decisions in the game consequential. Dax says that the game showed him “how relationships work, how to establish them, and how to communicate with others.” “If I didn’t like the response I could go back to the start and begin the conversation over again,” he shares. Another component of the game portrayed prejudices. “One character didn’t agree with having aliens on the ship; he would work with them but didn’t want them on the ship.”

The game was able to teach Dax social cues by showcasing the results of his decisions all while reinforcing the rule-driven behaviors in which he found an early interest.

Dax has also been a member of the Military Child Education Coalition Junior *Student 2 Student* (JS2S) and *Student 2 Student* (S2S) programs for the last five years. Dax loves to meet people and says, “S2S is about welcoming people and having a whole climate of acceptance of people for who they are.”

Dax works hard each day to support the people around him in the ways others have done for him. When asked why he decided to share his story he explained, “Because it’s who I am, and I see it as a badge of honor.”

