

Training Caregivers in **EpiEco** — A Long-Term, Empathetic Approach for Supporting Autistic Loved Ones with Respect, Care, and Joy

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Introduction

A Mother's Wish's (AMW) self-formulated approach of **EpiEco** — treating the emotional wellness of the autistic loved one as the **EPICENTER** of the **ECOSYSTEM** of caregivers — flips the conventional autism treatment approach on its head:

- It does not expect autistic individuals (**EPICENTER**) to act 'normally', i.e., according to mainstream norms, based on the scientific research that their brains are wired differently.
- It is focused on their emotional wellness (or happiness) and creating an environment where they can be happy.

Therefore, **EpiEco** is focused on creating an **enlightened and empathetic ECOSYSTEM of family, peer, and professional caregivers** capable of supporting the former's growth and development (see Figure 1).

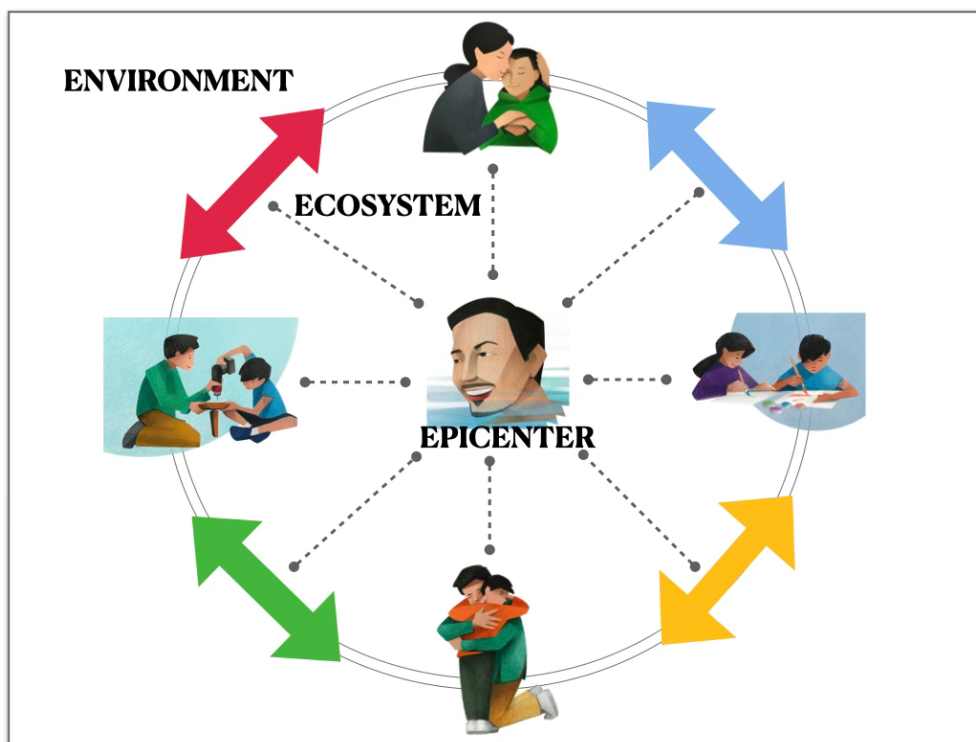


Figure 1. Depiction of EpiEco: Autistic Individual as the **EPICENTER** of the **ECOSYSTEM**. © A Mother's Wish 2025

A key aspect of the Ecosystem is its interconnectedness within a web-based structure: the autistic loved one is connected to the individual caregivers, but they are, in turn, connected to one another:

- The emotional wellness of the autistic individual at the **Epicenter** is dependent on everyone within the Ecosystem working in synchrony with one another to ensure the autistic individual's well-being.
- They need to motivate themselves by recognising that **if the autistic individual is emotionally well, then all their lives will be better.**
- This also means that they need to support one another in supporting the autistic individual.
- As such, EpiEco is an approach that generates a **virtuous circle** to encourage everyone to be their **best selves**.

To adopt **EpiEco**, caregivers of autistic loved ones need to develop the **mindset** and **practices** to be able to (1) properly support their autistic loved ones' emotional wellness and forge positive, respectful relationships with them (**EPICENTER**) and (2) optimise their **ECOSYSTEM** of fellow caregivers to support their autistic loved ones joyfully and sustainably.

The **EpiEco** project aims to help caregivers in the following **interrelated** ways:

- (1) Come to terms with their autistic loved ones' uniqueness and accept their divergence from mainstream norms (instead of forcing them to conform to their norms), i.e., love their children for their unique being;
- (2) Understand the distinctive attributes of their autistic loved ones, including their nonverbal communication and sensory processing difficulties, and interpret their autistic loved ones' atypical behaviours accurately;
- (3) Learn how to connect with their autistic loved ones and with one another flexibly using different ways of communication; and
- (4) Adopt an attitude of mindful kindness, patience, and empathy with a focus on emotional wellness and building positive long-term relationships for all.

Ultimately, EpiEco encourages everyone within the Ecosystem, inspired by their autistic loved ones at the Epicenter, to be their best selves, thus generating a virtuous circle of change.