

Building a Strong Foundation

It takes a village to raise a child. Sharna had thought about that expression many times since her son, Xzavier, had been born. She knew she was lucky, because she had wonderful people who she could lean on in times of stress. But as Xzavier grew, Sharna also learned that new challenges might mean seeking the help of new people to build a positive life for her son.

Sharna had always focused on three building blocks that she knew would provide the right foundation for Xzavier. The first, love, would make sure Xzavier knew he was supported and cared for. The second, faith, would teach him to be humble, have a caring heart and know the difference between right and wrong. And the third, education, would allow him to learn and grow into a productive member of society.

When Xzavier started preschool, Sharna realized that another building block may be needed to help strengthen her son's foundation: emotional support. In school, Xzavier had trouble handling his feelings. He would get anxious and upset, often throwing tantrums rather than following the rules. To help Xzavier



Xzavier and his therapist Beth.

learn how to interact with others in a positive way, the school referred Sharna to OhioGuidestone, where Xzavier started working with Beth Baron, an Early Childhood Mental Health therapist.

Beth taught Xzavier to express himself in ways that were positive through play and modeling healthy choices. She also taught Sharna how she could support her son's progress. With Beth's help, Sharna developed a positive incentive program to motivate Xzavier to change his behaviors. Beth also encouraged Sharna to find ways to incorporate the work they were doing together in the other aspects of her and Xzavier's life. Sharna began to use what Beth had taught her to incorporate spirituality into Xzavier's

emotional support. She encouraged Xzavier to pray as a way to help him calm down when he was feeling sad or angry and used Bible passages to help him contemplate his behavior.

With the addition of Beth to their system of support, Sharna saw a real change in Xzavier and the way he dealt with others. He would ask for a hug to help him calm down rather than throwing a tantrum when he was upset, and he used words to express his feelings. His participation at school improved and he was able to go shopping and accompany Sharna on errands. At church services, Xzavier listened to the pastor and showed admiration for him and the rest of his church family.

Sharna worked hard to nurture Xzavier with love, teach him about faith, instill in him the importance of education, and support his emotional growth. She knew that raising Xzavier really would take a village. But, with the help of OhioGuidestone, she also knew she had access to the support she needed. With Beth, and her church family, Sharna realized that Xzavier was building a strong foundation for the rest of his life.