

Written by Dawna Toews.

Autism, the most extreme and highest rising epidemic to hit our children - present stats claiming every 1 in 65 boys, rising over 600% in the last 20 years. Autism has become a very real and present danger, touching not only the lives of at least one person you know, but also reaching the inner core of my own home.

My oldest son, a boy who by all other measures was perfect, was stolen from us by this awful and very prevalent disorder.

Our son was the poster child for health and happiness. He loved being held (and oh, did we hold him). He loved being social, and was above or on par with every single developmental milestone in the first year of his life. It wasn't long though, before I realized he wasn't talking like his peers. This didn't seem like a problem at the time, as I was a very present mother in his life and knew what he wanted before he even seemed to want it (if you're a mother such like myself, you will know exactly what I mean). Yet, after he turned one, he seemed to lose some of his sign language and any intelligible words we thought he was using. It wasn't until after he turned three, however, when we really knew something just wasn't quite right.

Before I continue to share more of my journey with you, I want to say I have shared this many times. Yet, nowhere am I more pleased to share this particular story than here, on my Mother In Law's amazing nutrition blog! Influenced by her passion for health, her son (and my amazing husband) has helped make this journey I'm about to share a very supportive one. This was not an easy journey. My mother-in Law has ran many a marathon and knows training can be hard and grueling. But the reward at the end of the race is worth its weight in gold. This is how we now feel and I am grateful to her for her support, endurance throughout the ups and downs, and encouragement along the way.

Our story has not ended in the same way it might have twenty years ago. They didn't know then, what I and thousands of others like us, know now. When we were told our son had Autism, the doctors told us that this was a "neurological disorder he would have for the rest of his life". They prescribed forty hours of therapy for our son - per week! Given time, if we had continued to use their services, pharmaceutical drugs, countless trips to specialists and therapists, life-long support would have been his fate. This epidemic creates countless dents on our country's health care - the byproduct of our present-day medical system. To this day, they still tell every parent whose child they diagnose the exact same thing.

But we have come to know a very different outcome.

#### WHEN WE FIRST KNEW

We knew that something was not quite right with how our son was acting by the time he reached the age of one. But, we couldn't quite fit him into any "list" we found

on the internet or in any books. He was such a happy and content baby most of the time and we thought he was just perfect no matter WHAT he did!! ;) Yet, the older he got, the more some of those "lists" started looking somewhat familiar. I was in disbelief for many years... or perhaps denial. I was afraid of any labels placed on him, knowing the "industry" as it were. I didn't want my son to be "broken" and didn't want to be 'that mom with the broken son'. Now, however, this label I once feared was the best thing that we could have ever done for our son.

Behaviors became worse as he grew older. Parallel play (where two toddlers in the same room will play NEXT to each other, rather than WITH each other), normal at age two, didn't seem to ever go away... even at age five. Here are some of the other symptoms our son had at this tender age of five, which for some symptoms, no child should ever have to suffer. For other behaviors, no child should have had past the age of two, much less past the age of five:

### Behavioral Symptoms

- Constant Drooling
- Picking his nails until they bled
- Chewing on cords, wood, dirt, toys, plastic, etc (pica)
- High tolerance for pain, despite an obvious painful event
- Minimal affection
- Little eye contact
- Late to Potty Train for bowel movements
- Temper tantrums lasting over an hour at times
- No reciprocal communication
- Spoke 2 to 3 unintelligible words only his parents could understand
- Running away
- Inability to detect danger
- Obsessions
- Inability to socialize with peers
- Lining up toys
- Climbing obsessions (needed to be off the ground)
- Scripting
- Overly compliant (out of fear)
- Anxiety
- Fear - objects he loved, once close up
- Lack of empathy
- Inability to play, using his imagination
- Clumsy
- Loud
- Property destruction
- Professor-like speech
- Echolalia
- Not referring to self as "I"

- Reverse pronouns
- Self interested topics with peers
- Inability to point at objects of interest
- Parallel play
- Excellent visual memory (many kids with autism are particularly bright in one specific area - certainly not a "flag" without the other symptoms, of course).
- Excellent computer skills at early age
- Taught himself to read at early age
- Low muscle tone
- Late to potty train
- Flapped hands over his ears when anxious, scared, or angry
- Sensory Integration Disorder (this covers so many various symptoms such as the inability to wear any pants that were not soft or noises which were loud – i.e. vacuum)

#### Medical Symptoms

- Bloated belly
- Constipation
- Peri-anal rashes
- Mouth rashes
- Red cheeks
- Red ears
- Itchy skin when he sweat
- Constant low grade fevers
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Frequent ear infections
- Frequent illnesses (every two weeks)
- Dilated pupils

Many of these symptoms, we were made to believe were just ‘normal’ for kids. That’s what the doctors tell you don’t they?

Well, of COURSE they are normal to them! Every fourth child they see is riddled with some of these medical symptoms. Looking back, I wish someone told me differently. I might have made changes that would have taken me on a completely different course. But, here I am for a reason. Perhaps it is so that I can share this very story with you today. ☺

Something amazing has happened. But, you’d never believe it until it happens to you or someone close to you who has the courage to go down this path. With merely changing the way we eat, we have changed the course of our son’s future forever.

Today? Well, today you would see a very different child. Today you would see an amazingly social child who has various interests including a variety of sports,

fishing, and all sorts of various nature-oriented subjects (whereas for years it was ONLY dinosaurs). He has best friends who love being with him. His empathy (a very difficult emotion for those with autism) has, in my opinion, surpassed even his own NON-Autistic siblings at times. Absolutely every single behavioral symptom on that list is seriously minimized or has disappeared all together.

As for his medical symptoms - Gone! All gone. Every single one of them, gone, when we follow a better nutritional path for him. His progress is so amazing to us even the medical professionals want him reassessed.

Now, I see autistic children and autistic adults all the time. I work with some who have this disorder. Let me tell you, I see what my son could have been. Some of them still drool, have pica, have damaging behaviors toward themselves, others, and property. Some can barely glance at their mother or father, have a meaningful conversation, and still flap their hands at any signs of distress. I hear of countless stories of Autistic children running away and know... that could very well be our son.

#### HOW NUTRITION CHANGED EVERYTHING

Before our son was diagnosed, our high-tolerance-for pain son would be buckled over on the couch with stomach pain. Our son was not alone. In fact, it has now been found that up to 80% of autistic children have a gut disorder and don't even know it. We knew that changing our diet had already helped our son. Not unlike other children with autism, our son also had ear infection after ear infection and was prescribed antibiotic after antibiotic. It wasn't until we removed dairy from his diet that his ear infections completely ceased.

With the stomach pain becoming more and more frequent, we finally decided to take this too into our own hands and made the difficult decision to get rid of the one food we felt would be the hardest of all to get rid of.

#### Gluten

Gluten was the second food we eliminated strictly. After both gluten (the protein found in wheat, rye, spelt, etc) and casein (animal protein) were removed from his diet, it wasn't a month before we saw more eye contact, more affection, and the articulation in his speech improving, if only slightly at first. His ability to talk back, meaningfully, to us was one of the most surprising symptoms to have regained.

Our son always responded when we talked with him. Usually by scripting a phrase we taught him or something he remembered. But, never did he ask US a question. Never did he return a question with another question. It was usually, "otay" or "Yeth!" Oh, he could babble and ramble on and on. But, never as a full sentence, much less a meaningful "conversation".

#### WHEN WE FIRST KNEW SOMETHING WAS HAPPENING

I remember the moment my son spoke to a stranger for the first time. It fills my eyes with tears just thinking about it. We were at a grocery store and as usual, one of the

cashiers asked my son a question about something or other. EVERY other time, I have had to answer for him. He sometimes did well with answering questions, yet not one person was ever able to make sense of the words, grandparents included most times. I would always have to interpret his answer. But, this day – oh how clear it is in my mind. I remember the exact grocery store, the exact aisle, and the woman... I will always remember her. She asked him how he was doing and as usual, I was about to encourage him to answer “some”thing. Well, not only did he answer her question with a phrase I’ve never heard from him before but, he even furthered the conversation! As I stood there in shock, I remembered that I should probably interpret what he just said. But, this day... this day someone for the first time actually understood him! She even answered HIS question back to her!! I will never forget the change. Yet, this was just the beginning. Oh the beautiful and most meaningful conversations I have with my son now. It is mind-blowing how far he has come in such a short time.

This journey, although seemingly short looking back, is a long and difficult road at times. But, the end result with every person I have worked with and met has been the same. Full recovery or not, parents are able to see a side of their children that was never before possible with traditional methods. Food in our North American culture is damaging this next generation. Once used to build, maintain, and even heal our bodies, is now used to passify, persuade, and cause the top major diseases of our day.

Presently, we are pursuing nutrition in a way that is mostly raw, in order to get the most nutrients out of our food. Since eating more raw and using the Hippocrates Diet, which includes wheatgrass, algae, and greens juice daily, we have seen our son even more grounded than ever before. We have changed our lifestyle to bring in the best nutrition possible and without any therapy or drugs whatsoever, we have found our son once again.

Thank you for reading our story. I work with people almost every day who are teaching me time and time again, that this fight is oh-so-worth it. Food can heal! Science is now catching up with the countless stories like mine who have had to go down our path when told it was not possible. This is, indeed, possible. It is indeed, based on science.

I am so glad for the support, encouragement, and inspiration I have received from those around me, and most notably from the author of this very blog. If you know someone like me who is on this journey, please support them. Even if it doesn’t make any sense to you right now, please encourage them. This is a tough journey but, it is absolutely real. Our son is a living example.

If you are a parent of a child like mine, please look into this further. As I said before, there are thousands of us out here. You are not alone.