

Jeff's Story*

...Jeff is a tall, handsome 9 year old boy with straight brown hair and a confident manner. Until he speaks, you would not expect anything out of the ordinary...Jeff, as far as I can remember, has always been quite different. As a baby, he seemed to be able to amuse himself for hours on end...Play and language didn't develop...talking playing, interacting, or interest in other children were not developed at all.....

“Jeff, as far as I can remember, has always been quite different. As a baby, he seemed to be able to amuse himself for hours on end. When you have a child, this is considered as a miracle baby, right? He would find something of interest like his hand, or an object, and would look at it for a long period of time. He didn't cry and fuss a lot. He was a very easy baby to have. By the time his little brother arrived, who was an extremely demanding baby, I realized that Jeff was quite unusual. It was not a normal thing to have a child to be so self-sustaining. Play and language didn't develop. Instead, very unusual activities like sitting in one stationary position for hours at a time, looking at what appeared to be bits of dust filtered through sunlight in the air, or gathering all the shoes in the house and making perfect 90° angles, different pattern out of shoes or any other multiple objects. There was not any play in the traditional sense, like making “vroom vroom” noises with trucks or that kind of thing. Although all the milestones were met in terms of crawling, walking, sitting, even feeding himself, others like talking playing, interacting, or interest in other children were not developed at all.”

“Jeff has been coming to The Listening Centre since he was 3 1/2. Prior, he had been to regular auditory testing because you would call him and there was no response at all – none! Nothing! No responses to his name, to human voices, no eye contact, nothing like that.”

“After the first session here (15 days at 2 hours per day), I had taken my boys to a bakery and John always liked dust light and that kind of stuff, fluorescent light. You could see that he wanted to go and see the light. He was going towards the light and, out of habit, the other little one was there as well, I called him and they both stopped, and they turned around and looked at me. It was the very first time Jeff ever acknowledged his name. One day he didn't and then all of a sudden, he did!”

“So, over the course of our years coming to The Listening Centre, he has been open to all the information that we want to give him thereafter. His development has always been very even. He doesn't use the verbal skills that he has which are still developing at 9 for giving you a long conversation about a topic you may or may not be engaged in. He uses his language for communication purposes, even though it may be limited. Though, for him, it is all part of life. That is his big expression. ‘That is part of life’ and he can deal with it. So, I give him a lot of credit.”

“He comes here for his ‘tune up’ (5 day – 10 hour boost) every six months and every time something new happens. He is first very cranky for the 2 – 3 weeks after he comes here. He is very silly, giggles a lot, he seems to have a hard time focussing on anything. Then suddenly there is a new skill. I know it is an odd thing to say, but they are little miracles in themselves. I think what happens is this. Jeff takes everything and he logs it all as if it is going into a big computer. But he doesn't have good recall. Then he has all this information and he cannot get it all together to give it back to you. At the beginning of Grade 3, he had Math skills at a junior kindergarten level maybe. Three weeks after he had been at The Listening Centre, for one of the tune-ups, he was doing Grade 3 Math. How does he do that? It is all of a sudden all this information that has been going in that everyone has painstakingly put into his head starts to make some sense. And once it all starts to make some sense, he is able to work it around in a

way that all of a sudden he can multiply and add. Although the Math is getting harder this year, he does Grade level math in Grade 4.”

“One time, when he came home after his tune-up at The Listening Centre, he could dance. Another time, he could wave. For some reason, for an autistic kid, waving is a very difficult thing to do. Another time, he could all of a sudden draw a figure that was more than just a stick. I can’t explain why that happens, but it does. It just seems that listening therapy – I am just a lay person, it is just my opinion – always creates in him a desire for more, the desire to be a part of things, the desire for a bigger life. The world of an autistic kid is very teensy because they close everything off and what else is left? But with him, always since the beginning he wanted more.”

“I don’t know if, in Jeff’s lifetime, one will find a cure for autistic disorder, I don’t know. If they do, that will be wonderful. In the same time if they don’t, well, life is not a perfect thing. Jeff will have to deal with these aspects which are not so perfect and I don’t think this is such a bad thing.”

* The names in this story have been changed at the family’s request