

Eric's Story

Eric was 19 months old when he was diagnosed with severe global developmental delay and autism. When the neurologist/developmental pediatrician diagnosed Eric she told me to get therapy for Eric and recommended Greenspan floor time. She also recommended putting money aside for a good institution when I was no longer able to care for him myself. She counseled against wasting my money on "alternative treatments" as these treatments were "ineffective and a waste of money." Indeed she left no hope beyond symptom management and eventual institutionalization of Eric. I left that office with a stabbing pain in my chest and feeling my life energy drained from within me.

Eric was born a healthy happy baby. He developed normally and met all milestones. Where did things go so wrong? He had been placed on antibiotics several times for ear infections. At one point he was on continuous antibiotics for 3 months. He developed chronic constipation. By twelve months he started toe walking. He wouldn't sleep but 2 hours per night. I was beyond exhausted and yet still had to take care of Eric and his older brother Luke. Thank goodness Luke was developing normally, or so it seemed until Luke was diagnosed with severe ADHD and a mood disorder, but this is Eric's story.

By the time Eric was 16 months old he spent nearly all of his waking time following lines. Lines on rugs, often rubbing his forehead into the carpet as he traced the lines. Lines on table edges and windows. Lines on rock walls. He would tantrum and had no language. He would never look at me or anyone else even when his name was called out. He could not be engaged in any activity with another person.

Where did my son go? Why did this happen to him, to our family? Like many other moms and dads, I blamed myself. But I refused to accept the hopeless prognosis of the neurologist. "Like hell will my son be institutionalized," I declared.

I had to do something. I researched and began reading everything I could find. I started to thank God that I had chosen nursing as a career because I had medical background to help me in my search. Soon I came across the Defeat Autism Now website. This was a part of the Autism Research Institute, which was dedicated to researching the causes and treatments of

autism. Defeat Autism Now! was formed to educate parents and doctors about promising treatments.

I read the research and looked at the treatments and then, for the first time since the devastating diagnosis, I took a deep breath and felt life and hope once again. It began to make sense. Little by little, I learned about how normal medical interventions might have unwittingly caused harm, about how environmental toxins may be compounding the problems, about how some children are just more sensitive than others to the same exposures.

I attended Defeat Autism Now! conferences and on my own I began starting so many treatments that my head started to spin. But as my head was spinning, Eric's stimming was disappearing! I sought the advice of Maureen McDonnell who helped me organize and understand this complex of biomedical interventions. Maureen also led me to Charlie Fall who was very helpful in understanding diet changes and giving me great suggestions to help with meal planning and so much more. With diet changes and more treatments Eric's constipation resolved. He began sleeping through the night, what a relief! He was beginning to form word sounds and his eyes began to look at me again. He started playing with his therapists and with his family.

Oh my God, I was getting my son back.

Maureen eventually referred me to Dr. Stuart Freedenfeld to introduce more advanced treatment interventions. With Dr. Freedenfeld's help, we investigated many options and discovered very specific treatments that were absolutely amazing. Eric made huge leaps and amazed everyone, his therapists, his neurologist and his family.

Today Eric is back. He is nine years old, attending regular school and getting A's routinely. He makes friends and is usually the "life of the party". He loves his family and is getting ready to play the cello. He wants to be an astronaut, but more than anything else, he wants to help children with any kind of problem.

If there is any message here it is to keep hopeful and never give up. Our children have been damaged by factors that were not their fault and were not our fault as parents. But there is always hope for full and meaningful recovery.

I owe a lot to the Autism Research Institute, to Defeat Autism Now!, to Maureen McDonnell, to Charlie Fall and to Dr. Freedenfeld. It was Dr. Freedenfeld who convinced me that I also have a responsibility to share my knowledge with others. Now that my children are recovered (yes Luke is doing great too), I have dedicated my career to helping parents and children dealing with autism. My personal experience has given me a unique perspective that enables me to help parents through the often very difficult and complex process that has become a path to recovery for hundreds of families in our practice alone.

No matter what, though some treatments may be controversial according to conventionally trained doctors, these treatments are frequently used amongst doctors knowledgeable in integrative medicine. Most importantly, know for certain that autism is treatable and recovery is possible. Hold on to your hope. Find your path. Recover your child.

With loving inspiration, I wish you well.

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