

# Listening to your heart and working well with your therapist

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Building positive relationships between  
parents, teachers and therapists

Healthy development:


The only observation that was on my baby's delivery sheet at hospital: "normal ASPGR, mother under stress and baby slow in sucking"



*But there were two signs...*

## The first signs appeared:

- \* she did not crawl, but shuffled on her bottom
- \* she walked when she was 17 months



Behaviour: tantrums in public places, got stuck in her routines, found it hard to accept other rules or ideas when playing with other kids, her way of doing things was always dominant.

Holistic therapies started (between ages 3-5)

- my belief in natural healing to support the immune system of the body :

\* naturopath GP, homeopathic therapists, to deal with child's challenging behaviour at home

\* osteopath, to correct flat feet

\* nursing therapies: oiling, to soothe moods, support body imbalance (recurring high temperature).

## Spiral of frustration (6-7 years):

- \* difference from her peers became more visible with motor skills: challenges with outdoor games - coordination skills: catching a ball, skipping, swimming lessons
- \* confusion in following a group, in coordinated movement (arms and legs)
- \* activities with fine motor skills (finger knitting, grasping a pencil, playing a recorder)

First recommendations:

Teacher: curative eurythmy to strengthen vitality and immune system.

Osteopath: take for assessment by vision optometrist  
- child as an object of study

South America trip: assessment with an occupational therapist and psychologist: a daily programme with exercises

Both assessments confirmed: development delay in her sensory-motor integration

Summer 2007: 7 years 4 months, a turning point in her development:

3 worries:

1) How to put into practice all these recommendations? (child would refuse a special programme at home)

2) Child very lively after exciting activities (eg going on a flying-fox), but bruises - no pain but numbness

3) I became more aware of need to stop work, to help child: her tendency to get overloaded was increasing

*I wanted to console her when she had some tricky falls , but her reaction was to refuse my closeness*

A Steiner teacher's practice in the morning: to shake hands with the child, say 'good morning', look into the child's eyes with reverence - observe how the child is.

My child was unable to hold the teacher's hand firmly, & look directly at him, was always excited and swinging her hand: a sign for the teacher of some lack of balance in development.

Recommendation: make an appointment with the learning support teacher

That meeting was crucial, in this journey of wondering, discovery & then acceptance.

First discussion with school therapist:

I listened, tried to understand her preliminary observations.

She listened carefully to my worries & explanation of steps I was taking following my intuition & heart.

It was a meeting of minds – we designing a learning support programme for my child.

But: a long waiting list... I was told that my daughter had to wait until the end of 2008.

Openness, determination and positive action:

- \* openness and understanding of the therapist, who offered private treatment, which I accepted.

- \* second thoughts: a special budget would be necessary; but my child's well-being was 1<sup>st</sup> priority.

- \* my determination helped to take the case to the teacher who, in the end, found a solution: a space was made available during the 1<sup>st</sup> term 2007, within school hours & from the school scheme.

## Therapist's role:

- \* 3-hour assessment of child, observed by 1 parent; a developmental history obtained by detailed questionnaire to the parents.
- \* process helped to identify areas of the lower senses (especially touch, movement, balance) that were not integrated & not fully supporting the physical body.
- \* Also identified: primitive reflexes still retained...\*

Purpose: to give a whole picture of child as an individual, with all her challenges & gifts.

\* sense of body geography & spatial awareness, fine & gross motor skills, dominance (left/right); auditory processing, eye tracking & convergence, barrier integration; coordination of speech & movement

Parent: mixed-up feelings:

- \* Getting the report aroused feelings of sorrow & grief; grief for the years when there had been no answers, sorrow at having to admit that the child was different.

- \* but class teacher & therapist were working closely together, providing the stimuli necessary for the child to overcome blockages in her development.

Teacher's advice: to keep a sense of perspective....

*“celebrate Fiona, see Fiona as a whole picture”*

Role of the therapist: to be a curative educator and practitioner/specialist in the task of conducting the lesson according to the needs of the child.

Extra Lessons™ is a holistic approach to make the motor abilities, the reflection of brain development and integration reach their full potential and to rebuild the child's self-esteem and to overcome the difficulties of learning.

The child is given a second opportunity to develop a more balanced life, to meet the world and to enter into meaningful interactions with others


Parents may assume that the therapist “*will fix the child’s issues*” - but it doesn’t work like that.

It requires a real commitment.

In our case, both parents engaged with this process; discussions with a parenting counsellor helped us work together better.

Passion, dedication, observation and compromise were part of my learning.

The sense of warmth, trust and mutual respect were some of the basic ingredients to make this journey of acceptance, celebrating achievements and progress and sharing the stresses of the challenges and burdens that a child with developmental delay brings into the world.



So parents, teachers and therapists are there with support, nurturing, knowledge, expertise and warmth to make it work.

## Supporting other parents on the same journey:

- \* it is important to strengthen parent support groups in the area of learning difficulties, esp. dyspraxia.
- \* inter-dependence and sharing help make the journey more enjoyable and rewarding.
- \* look after parents who may be on their own & withdrawing into themselves.
- \* Positive action is the best approach to challenges;
- \* parents really are the best advocates.

*We live in one another's company.  
Together we can diffuse the pain  
And multiply the joy of being*

(Brenda Neal)

