

From Autism Awareness to Autism Action

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In honor of April, Autism Awareness Month, I would like to talk about what parents can do to move from awareness to action, which will also benefit practitioners caring for kids with autism. My son Matthew is 11 and is considered recovered from autism. What does recovery mean? Recovery means addressing the various underlying medical issues that can and do contribute to the behaviors we associate with the diagnosis of autism. As we addressed medical issues, we saw a dramatic lessening of aggression and tantrums, we saw the emergence of better communication and language, and more appropriate social interactions. While each child is unique and there is not a “one size fits all” set of solutions, there are some rather common issues that impact a large number of children with autism.

Gastrointestinal issues can be a huge factor in autism¹. My son struggled for years with gut dysbiosis. I began to correlate the markers for yeast on the Organic Acids Test to behaviors like fogginess, inability to respond to his name, and giggling in the middle of the night. High Clostridia bacteria levels usually meant aggression and very high frustration levels. It was not until we started working on healing his gut that behaviors improved, sleep improved, and communication improved. Probiotics were crucial to that healing process, along with dietary interventions in finally resolving his gut dysbiosis. It took us over 7 years, but those years were worth it to see improved cognition, better communication and behaviors, and increased physical growth, which is so reassuring to see. We still run Organic Acids Tests yearly to continue to track progress and see if any changes need to be made in his supplements or diet.

Testing for and addressing food allergies² was also very instrumental in our road to recovery. My son has had many food allergies over the years. We started very early on with an IgG test from The Great Plains Laboratory to figure out where to start in dietary interventions. The food allergies were contributing to an underlying immune activation, and his immune system was seeing several foods as threats. Once we began to reduce allergenic foods, we noticed not only changes in his illness patterns, but also in his behavior. Over the years, with diligent effort, we were happy to see the number of foods that caused reactions decrease. Now he has healed sufficiently that even a slight infraction of eating an allergenic food has no behavioral or physical impact. This was a child who would scream for up to 3 days and nights straight, with the slightest gluten or dairy infraction. There is no magic bullet when it comes to diet. It has to be what works for the individual child. We went through the gamut of special diets, and now do a hybrid version that works for my son and our family. Don't be limited by any one diet. Find what works for your child or your patient, and go with that. We still do lab testing once a year to keep track of what changes have been made, and see whether any dietary changes need to be made as a result.

We also have focused largely on detoxification and improving the elimination of toxins in his body. We ran heavy metals testing³, and over the years of supporting his detoxification mechanisms, we've seen improvements in every category of autism ratings. We've noticed that as we have reinforced his detoxification pathways, common exposures like chlorine from a public swimming pool, for example, have less of an impact on him than before. When we first started biomedical treatments, our Organic Acids Test showed an extremely high level of oxalates. Oxalates can negatively impact detoxification, and if you have not already listened to Dr. Shaw's webinar⁴ about oxalates, I would highly encourage

you to do so. We also supported detoxification by supplementing with liposomal glutathione, and doing Far IR sauna therapy and foot baths.

Steps to autism recovery are certainly not “one size fits all”, but there are some fundamental strategies that have been shown to be impactful for many children, my son included. Testing was a huge part of his recovery, along with diet and supplementation. Recovery is not static. We are constantly monitoring and maintaining the improved health he has enjoyed because of what we as a family have done. While it has been tremendous work, there is no greater reward than to hear your previously nonverbal child tell you how much he loves you each day. I never take that for granted. I remember the years where I wondered if I would ever hear his voice, not just his screams. Every April, I focus on spreading autism ACTION, not just awareness.

References:

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