

Lance's Story

A Child With Autism: One Family's Story of Success

by Lance's mother

Two years ago, our son Lance was diagnosed with 'Pervasive Developmental Disorder/Atypical Autism'. He was three years old at the time.

In our search for treatments for Lance, we came across a wonderful therapy called Tomatis auditory stimulation. It is a listening program that, the way I understand it, works with the difference between hearing and listening, and also helps to straighten out the 'crossed wires' in the brain that may have resulted from illness, disease, or brain injury. Doctors may give the result of these 'crossed wires' the label 'autism', 'ADD', 'ADHD', 'dyslexia' or a host of other communication, language and auditory processing disorders.

The way the program works is that a person wears specially designed headphones with filtered music played through them, for a designated amount of time, usually two hours a day for two fifteen-day segments, with a four -week break between segments.

Sometimes during the program, sometimes in the months after the program, dramatic changes in the person's behavior, ability to listen, process, understand and comprehend, are obtained. receptive and expressive language can skyrocket ... all the result of the 'uncrossing' of the wires in the brain. Visual, auditory and tactile overstimulation tend to lessen and be more in control.

When we found this program for Lance at The Listening Centre in Dallas, my first thought was that there was no way that Lance would ever wear headphones. I was assured by one of the directors that that would not be a problem because the music coming through the headphones would make Lance feel better and he would be given time to adjust. This was very comforting, so my husband and I decided it was worth a try.

Lance's program consisted of two hours of listening a day for fifteen days. We would then take a break for several weeks and return for a second fifteen day 'intensive.' One of the goals to be reached was to give Lance more control of his sensory system, and improve his communication skills.

During the two-hour listening session, the staff worked one-to one with Lance on skills that he needed to work on, as well as introducing concepts and skills which he had never seen. He was always invited to discover things in his environment. I have never seen such an accepting atmosphere as we experienced at The Listening Centre. If I wanted to see Lance, or Lance wanted to see me during his session, we were always allowed to have contact with one another. While there, parents are offered a listening program too, which allows me some freedom and time to myself while the staff works with Lance.

The results from the Tomatis Listening Program have been astounding for our family, although we are aware that things are different for every family. When we brought Lance to The Listening Centre, he was not potty trained, had little or no self-awareness, no language or communication skills and could follow no directions. He hummed songs over and over and had a lot of visual tracking problems.

After the first listening intensive, Lance potty trained himself within a week, his receptive language greatly increased and expressive language (single words) began to appear. Upon completion of the second intensive, we noticed still more improvement in language and self-awareness. Also after this session, basic communication skills began to emerge.

We returned to the Centre approximately five or six months later for a booster session. People asked why we were doing this again - was it because it didn't work? My answer to this question is because it helps Lance so very much, we want to keep giving him the benefits of listening therapy.

After the booster session, Lance started to smile more and started to hug people. This made a huge impact on our lives. Since then, we have returned twice for short boosts. Lance now has a large vocabulary of single words, can link two or three words together, and can use simple phrases. His ability to listen and process information has increased dramatically, as has his ability to follow directions. He is much more focused and even his visual 'stimming' (non-productive repetitive movements which provide visual stimulation) has diminished.

As I write this I am watching Lance as he and his sister play together outside. They re interacting and having fun. To look at Lance now after so many interventions, I can barely visualize the child he used to be. We feel that the Tomatis program has greatly contributed to Lance's emergence from autism. It provided a big piece of the puzzle, and other interventions have contributed, too. We have certainly done our homework, researched and visited doctors, changed Lance's diet, attended conferences and have tried a lot of different therapies, interventions and approaches. This program has helped integrate everything we have done and has added the improvements I have shared with you. God keeps transforming our child into a happier, more normally functioning child, and we are thankful for all the things that have helped him.

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