

Peter's Story

"I am telling you about my two boys, Peter, eight, and Jason, six. Both were adopted three days after their birth. Peter was a very big baby, and because of that we were not worried by his being at the slow end of normal in his physical development. We were concerned enough to have him tested at the age of two because of his delay in language development. At seven months he could use words, and pronounce them perfectly, but he'd use them only once and never return to them. Throughout his second year, he learned all the words from songs. That was the only language he used. The testing showed that he had developmental problems with "autistic-like features."

"He would spin tops and focus on lights, or play with the wheel of cars for what seemed like hours; and he would always want to be alone."

"Through a program from the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential in Philadelphia we helped Peter to achieve good physical coordination, very good control of his body. He learned to read, and he learned to do mathematics. By the time Peter was seven and a half, he had achieved so much physically, but we still hadn't improved his language or his awareness of proper behavior."

"I heard about The Listening Centre from a woman who convinced me I should come. What I'd heard might apply immediately to my younger son, Jason, who had an anger that had been building for about a year and a half, and I was always hoping to find further help for Peter. Before I came I sent a detailed letter describing our boys' problems. I received a nice reply saying that the Tomatis program would be effective for both boys. As they had had difficult starts in their lives, they could benefit from a positive re-experience of that developmental stage."

"The first three week period was not easy. Although Jason was very happy, Peter became very agitated and upset. He got very sad and wanted to cry. He wanted to go back to the hotel and just lie down and cry. Also, he looked for affection from everybody. Toward the end of the first three week intensive both boys went through the sonic birth phase of the program. This changing sound reawakened Jason's anger; on the other hand, for Peter, it seemed to ease out all of his tensions."

"At that point there were few changes for Peter that I could put my finger on. Jason, after the difficulties during the sonic birth, seemed to have lost a lot of his anger, and that was significant."

"When we came back for the second intensive, Peter had a much easier time. That's when I started seeing tremendous changes in his use of language. He had more of a desire to communicate. He never wanted to be alone, but was always looking to be with other people."

"He started to use language more expressively, not perfectly, not appropriate for his age yet, but using full sentences, using adjectives, and finally starting to say how he felt. I thought these were monumental changes, as they all occurred between the second and third visit."

"Between the first and second intensives I had seen little change in Peter. Maybe if you were really looking, you could see that his eyes were clearer or he was more tuned in, but after the second visit, the changes became very apparent. Throughout his third visit, there's more coming from him - more wanting to share what he's thinking with people around him, and definitely not wanting to isolate himself."

"Unlike many autistic children, Peter loved the people around him, and was always very affectionate. Initially as he changed, he looked for more affection from everybody, but now he wants to share some of

the things that he's obviously been thinking about. That's the difference. It's not just looking for affection, but wanting to share things. He can now be a companion for Jason."

"The boys' relationship to their father has changed. My husband came to Toronto to see what was happening, and at home he has taken on a more active role with the children. He's trying to be the one where the discipline comes from, and I can give the children the love they're looking for."

"Previously, the relationship had been one-sided with Peter contributing nothing. Now they're able to share more things and to have a relationship that's more intimate, not as separate. Peter has more of a trust and confidence in his father, and can communicate with him."

"My listening to the parents' program of music has been very helpful. I haven't the foggiest idea why, but it has. For some reason it relaxes you. It makes you feel everything that you've been keeping inside and then it eases out. Once the emotions have sort of spilled out, you feel better. Then you're ready to withstand another build-up."

"Talking with Tim Gilmor has also been helpful. He's been guiding me on how I can react better. Jason, for example, will try and push me up against a wall and now I'll hold my position and make sure he doesn't get the upper hand. The important thing is that I won't feel guilty about what I am saying or doing. I have the courage to be firm."

"We've finished the third intensive and we'll be going home for a while. We're taking a six month break to see what kind of changes develop. At that time I'll measure what sort of hostilities Jason still has and if he needs to come back. I'll definitely bring Peter for another visit. In the meantime I'll be watching for the next steps in language, and for changes in behavior. I still want him to be more happy. He is already much happier."

"Peter's behavior is not yet appropriate for his age, but I think it would be too soon to see that I think he has to have more interaction with more people in order for him to realize that what he is doing is not what everyone else is doing. His behavior is changing, but the biggest area of change is in his use of language. That was always the biggest part of his problem, the lack of a desire to communicate and share. That's totally different after just six months."

"All we parents come into the Tomatis program feeling skeptical. We don't have any confidence about what it can do, but we are willing to take our chances, as long as we feel there's no harm going to be done to our children. My skepticism has vanished after six months because I can actually see changes."

"During an interview, Dr. Tomatis said that in Peter's case there'd be 100% recovery. At that point I was saying to myself, "I'd settle for 50% right now," because what he's saying sounds like a lie. You get so skeptical, and at the same time you want to take chances. After six months, I figure we're 80% and still settling upwards!"

- taken from "About The Tomatis Method"