

## THE LETTER...

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have found your mail address looking desperately some solution regarding my son's problem. He has been diagnosed as a child with Developmental Coordination Disorder. Diagnosis was delivered by a psychiatric clinic team of a large child hospital. We asked their helps because our son (7.5 y.) was facing severe learning difficulties which have been more obvious last year when the kid went to 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Since he was 4 Paul had difficulties regarding his manual dexterity (he refused to hold the pencil or to paint). More than that he could not "fit in" socially (from kindergarten until now) and he was very sensitive emotionally. As he was growing up his difficulty to put his shoes on and to hold the spoon was being more and more obvious. He refuses to participate in school physical education class, he has gained a lot of weight lately, he gets tired easily and he avoids participation in every physical task.

I turned to you because the only guidance we received from the hospital was to receive occupational therapy (OT). After 2.5 years of OT we have not see some major improvement. Paul is getting dressed by himself however he still avoids holding the fork or spoon during meals. Moreover, because of his dysgraphia he has developed negative feelings towards school, reading and writing.

I am an educator myself (in secondary education) and I am well aware of the inadequacies of both the system and the teachers regarding the management of students with learning disabilities.

Paul, apart from his difficulties, is highly sensitive, quite "closed" and for a long time I was afraid of Asperger or Autism. Due to a psychologists help Paul has been opened up, expressing feelings and communicating even though he remains a child who likes many times to withdraw, to watch a lot of TV and to find enjoyment in eating. School is rather a painful place, because he gets bullied and has a tendency to cry. He is not aggressive at all, on the contrary he gets hurt even by small things and this makes him hard to communicate. He is unable to make friends and therefore school is a tough and unjoyful place. Fortunately, within class he is well adjusted, his classmates love him (according to his teacher's word) and it seems that he participates in class discussions often. He refuses to wright though. In general, his refusal to trying remains one of our biggest challenge, mainly at home. He also refuses to read and wright at all.

Regarding sports, I have tried to direct him to swimming but he still is afraid to get into the deep pool. I have also noticed that it is rather hard for the coach to manage Paul (even though he tried hard) since he had to copy with another 15 children.

I also think about martial arts. What scares me though, is the comparison with other children. Currently, I am thinking of visiting a center with physiotherapists that I know because there exercise will be personalized. I already know that a friend's son, with different type of motor problems, has been benefitted by the specific place, especially regarding his self-esteem. So I am thinking that this is a place to start twice a week (one OT and one exercise). His weekly

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program is so loaded (once a week psychologist, twice special education teacher) that I feel sorry for him!

What is really scary with this disorder, is that it is spread everywhere and I have the feeling that there is nowhere to turn him to receive some positive feelings of self-esteem and adequacy. Learning problems, sport problems, music (obviously) problems.

To tell you the truth, I am terrified because I do not know what to expect... On the other hand, I know I myself am a person full of fears that I have to fight to overcome, for everyone's sake.

So please, based on your knowledge and experience help me in any way you can. For example: 1) What am I going to tell to the physical education teacher this year? Which way should he manage Paul so he will participate in some way during Physical Education? Are there specific exercises? 2) Should Paul keep going to OT despite the lack of obvious results? Should I find another place with gymnasts and physiotherapists? 3) I'd love to enroll him in some sport but I do not know if this will be good for him or it will bring him even lower regarding his self-esteem. Do you think that there's a specific sport that is appropriate for this kind of cases? 4) Is there a specialist here in the country that could be of more help? 5) What is the prognosis? Is Paul going to be a normal adult? Is there an improvement as years go by?

Any help and information and advice will be more than welcome. Please help us.