

Parents' Stories

Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy

Diagnosis: Schizencephaly

Diagnosis: Spastic Quadriplegia Cerebral Palsy

Diagnosis: Pulmonary Atresia, Brain Hemorrhage from Surgical Complications

Diagnosis: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Global Developmental Delay

Diagnosis: Hemiplegia

Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy, Quadriplegia

Diagnosis: Cerebellar Hypoplasia

Diagnosis: Mild Cerebral Palsy

Diagnosis: Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease

Diagnosis: Sensory Integration Dysfunction

Wilson Barron

Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy

Wilson was born in the summer of 1998, our first child. We awaited his arrival with great enthusiasm and expectancy. He was 10 days late and arrived after a very difficult birth ending in an emergency c-section, rather traumatic for any parent, especially ours being first time parents. He wasn't breathing well so the doctors sent him to transition and eventually the NICU.

The neonatologists could not pinpoint exactly what was wrong with Wilson, some said seizures, some said reflux, the only thing that was certain was his apnea and bradycardia episodes (breath holding and dropping of heart rate). I was discharged from the hospital three days later and Wilson was eventually transferred to the children's hospital next door to my hospital, probably one of the most horrible days of my life

Wilson stayed in the hospital for two weeks. In that time, no neonatologist, geneticist, neurologist nor pulmonologist could definitively pinpoint the problem, nor did they seem concerned that he would remain there until they did. After watching a child turn 1 year old in the next room (she had never left the hospital) I was determined that he was leaving with or without medical approval. After much support from the nursing staff, we were taught to operate the appropriate equipment to bring him home, apnea monitors, oxygen and pulse oximeters. I don't think we slept for 4 months straight and any form of babysitter was out of the question.

At 3 months old, our pediatrician recommended that Wilson start physical and occupational therapy in the event that he had "CP". I had no idea what "CP" or cerebral palsy was. In fact, I had never known anyone who had special needs or a child with special needs. My entire family was extremely athletic and well educated as were all of our friends. I diligently began the assigned regimen and was determined to "fix" this situation (my child). Wilson enjoyed some of the socialization but often cried at the discomfort of the sessions. At one visit with our pediatrician I asked, "What else could I be doing for Wilson?" She recommended a local Feldenkrais practitioner (who used to practice PT). I began visiting her 3 times per week. Contrary to the physical therapy, Wilson loved his lessons and seemed to have much greater ability afterwards. The lessons seemed strange however and I couldn't exactly see how they were teaching him, I could only tell that they were.

Ever the perfectionist, I asked the practitioner the same question "What else could I be doing for Wilson?" and she told me about Anat Baniel in California. Well I was definitely a woman on a mission but this seemed a little over the top. I put a call into Anat's office to

see about getting appointments and/or information. She was scheduling at least 6 months out. I was extremely skeptical as to how one woman; 3000 miles away could help my child. After a great deal of hemming and hawing, I called another parent who had been taking her son to see Anat for years. This mother testified as to what tremendous strides her son had made from the visits, she shared with me what to expect and encouraged me to give it a try. I skeptically scheduled the appointments.

I spoke with Anat briefly the night before getting on the plane. Wilson was 10 months old at the time; I was terrified of wasting the time, energy and money. She told me she could not be sure whether or not she could help Wilson but she would let me know within a couple of visits. Herein lies one key difference between Physical/Occupational therapy and Anat. When I asked the PT and OT when Wilson would begin meeting certain developmental milestones, they responded in a very depressing manner stating, "we just don't know". After asking Anat the same question, she admitted that she didn't know either but if he demonstrated the ability to learn, what would limit him from meeting all of them? For the first time, I had found hope. The beginning of understanding that the steps by which we develop are more important than the time frames in which we or our children develop.

Our society focuses so much on "the norm", "within the range" and categories of deviations from the norm. We have unfortunately lost sight of the value of the quality of the process or the means and just focus on the end. Just as we would not ask a child to do calculus without algebra, why would we ask a child to use a walker until his/her body was prepared to stand independently? The more I understood or the thought process behind the method, the more I realized how logical the lessons really were and the more I watched my child succeed. I gave Anat the third degree the first week of our visit to determine how exactly her work was "reprogramming" Wilson's nervous system. She earned my respect and credibility by patiently explaining how Wilson's brain was integrating what he was learning.

I had brought Anat a child who at 10 months, couldn't roll over, was not even socially present and had severe scoliosis and torticollis. In one week, Wilson had learned to roll over and the severity of the torticollis and scoliosis had been dramatically reduced. She has since returned to me a sassy four and a half year old who is standing beautifully, into everything and is learning to use the toilet. If anyone had told me that I would be traveling to San Francisco 5-8 times per year for my child, I would have told him or her they were insane. However, you don't eat an elephant but one bite at a time. God has provided the resources for our child to be healed from what ails him, resources of people, time and money. We have made the Anat Baniel Method of Feldenkrais the mainstay of learning for Wilson. It has rewarded us with a beautifully developing child with hope of fully functioning adult years ahead. We occasionally supplement the method with cranial sacral osteopathy, sensory integration OT, a strict diet and supplements of "brain foods", floor time play and Montessori school. It is all a fine balance at any given moment some items are added to his diet, some activities removed, however, the Anat Baniel method remains the core focus of the learning methodology for Wilson.

We have been blessed with another child who is now 11 months old. He challenges Wilson daily and pushes him forward as being a big brother has tremendous responsibilities. Who said competition isn't a motivator. Our pediatrician was and continues to be an enormous blessing for our family. She is a balance of reason, medical knowledge, support and supporter of alternative therapies. She has also witnessed the incredible changes in Wilson and helps us in whatever way she can to try to reason with insurance companies about the incredible benefits of the method.

In conclusion, there are so many lessons that I have learned from this experience of being Wilson's parent. My faith has been tested and most importantly reassured.

However I have also learned to question everything, which is in my nature but I question all people thoroughly when it comes to my children. Medical professionals and therapists are not any different than any other hired professional some good, some bad and I have fired my fair share. I regard them as team players and I am the captain. As much as I would temporarily want someone else to take charge of being his advocate, no one will do as good a job as I will as his mother. Therefore, if a professional is going to play on the team their glass must be half full. We have hope for a bright future for Wilson and owe a great deal of credit and thanks to Anat and the other practitioners who have helped us along the way. My motto is never, never, never give up. "I can do everything..." Phil 4:13.

Rachel Barron

**Phillip M.
Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy**

Something great happened yesterday. My son walked out of the screened porch, down the stairs, over the brick path and across the bumpy lawn to help me plant tomatoes. This was no small feat. Twelve years ago doctors had told me that Phillip may never walk or talk.

We tried physical therapy and occupational therapy, while performing tens of thousands of dollars of tests to determine what was wrong. Nothing conclusive was ever determined. But today Phillip does carry the cerebral palsy diagnosis. Fortunately during this blurry of testing and therapy, Phillip met Anat Baniel when he was a year old. (Of course, I always wish it had been sooner, but better late than never.)

When he met Ms. Baniel, he was unable to sit up by himself. If propped into a sitting position, he would topple over. He was unable to roll over, much less crawl or pull himself up to stand. He also had no speech. His tiny fists were usually clenched shut. His personality was also withdrawn, and he fussed frequently. He could not sleep through the night. Phillip's eyes also failed to track together, and his right eye frequently turned into the corner of the socket.

When Ms. Baniel first worked with Phillip, we actually noticed his eyes brighten. She called this the "window shade" effect. It was as if someone had lifted the shades and he was able to see the world clearly for the first time. For a moment, we actually saw his eyes track together. At this point, ophthalmologists were warning us that unless Phillip had surgery on his eyes, he could be blind. Ms. Baniel told us that many of "her" children had eyes similar to Phillip's, and through the work, their eyes usually tracked together, as the central nervous system evolved. I thought, even if nothing else happens, it would be worth it to work with Ms. Baniel, instead of trying the risky surgery, which had no guaranteed results.

At first Phillip was fortunate to have four lessons with Ms. Baniel. Phillip's eyes not only started tracking a little better, but his cognitive functioning improved. He slept through the night for the first time. He started laughing more, and making joyful noises, that sounded like the beginnings of pre-speech. Ms. Baniel urged us to come back to California as soon as possible, and work with her for three weeks. We came back two months later, and were only able to work with her for two weeks, but we saw astonishing changes. When Phillip was 15 months old, Ms. Baniel taught him how to roll over and sit himself up. He was able to balance in a seated position without falling. His clenched fists began to unfold and his fingers began to move a little more freely. His eyes also were working better together. Phillip's personality started to come alive. For the first time in his life, he discovered the joy of moving and learning. As a mother, there was nothing that made me happier than watching my "Buddha" baby break out of his trapped body and move.

It was also obvious that Phillip loved working with Ms. Baniel. He had been working with physical and occupational therapists and screamed in pain throughout his

therapy sessions. When he worked with Ms. Baniel, there was no pain. He looked forward to his lessons with her. It was easy to give up the physical therapy sessions, because they were so painful for Phillip.

But as a mother, I felt afraid to leave the traditional medical model. Our neurologists knew nothing about Anat Baniel's work, and seemed uninterested in learning. So for another year, Phillip continued working with an occupational therapist. We never saw the same results as we did when working with Ms. Baniel, but I was scared to give up the therapy all together. Finally, one day this well-respected O.T. put our two-year-old son in a leather contraption that was suspended from the ceiling. He was hanging vertically and she moved him across the room. Phillip screamed. I asked her why she was doing this, since he clearly was afraid of the movement. She responded, "He needs to be upright, in a standing position." Phillip was not ready to stand, since he was unable to pull himself up. We never went back, and Phillip has mostly worked with Ms. Baniel and a few other Anat Baniel Method for Children and Feldenkrais practitioners.

There have been many victories, both great and small. When Phillip was almost three years old he said his first word, "light," in Ms. Baniel's studio. Today he is speaking fluently, and can be understood 95 per cent of the time. He is also almost fluent in French. His math and reading skills are improving rapidly, where he is mainstreamed in a public school. After learning how to crawl, he can walk easily on a flat surface, and this year he began using a walker at school. Last year, he was still pushed to his classes in a wheelchair.

Yes, it has been hard leaving our family to travel to California, five to six times a year, sometimes for two weeks at a time to work with Ms. Baniel. But the results for Phillip have been life changing. Today, his eyes work together beautifully. When we had his eyes retested, the ophthalmologists said surgery now would be ridiculous. But Phillip's work with Ms. Baniel is more than just helping his eyes to tack better, it is a whole system of functioning at a higher level. Almost after every lesson, Phillip has more options for moving and learning. The possibilities appear endless.

Judith M.

Hannah Frith Diagnosis: Schizencephaly

When my daughter Hannah was only a few months old, I began to notice she did not move her body evenly. I had an uneventful pregnancy and Hannah had no apparent health conditions. I noticed her left hand was always clenched and held close to her body, more so than her right arm. We took Hannah to see a pediatrician who ordered an MRI and Hannah was subsequently diagnosed with schizencephaly, a rare developmental neurological disorder that impairs motor skills. She is hypertonic on the left side of her body. The pediatrician and pediatric neurologists referred us to physical and occupational therapists. We saw therapists for a number of weeks with little noticeable progression. We were frustrated by the limited options presented to us and also the lack of specificity in the work she received.

When Hannah was six months old, a friend of a friend in California wrote to me about the Anat Baniel Method for Children. Her mother suffered from polio and had a tremendous amount of success with the Method. Her mother's practitioner suggested meeting with Anat Baniel on an upcoming trip to California. I researched basic information about the Method and made an appointment with Anat.

I remember having to drag my husband Jonathan to that first lesson. He was skeptical and somewhat annoyed that I had made the appointment that we barely had money for, knew close to nothing about, nor had the time to make the special trip two hours north of

where we were staying. I was determined, however, to try, knowing that neurologically, it was important to do as much work while Hannah was young. Jonathan waited in the car while Hannah and I met with Anat.

At seven months, Hannah did not use her left hand or arm at all. She relied on her right side for everything. She was not crawling, but could bear weight standing. Although her whole left side was affected, her left legs were much less hypertonic.

Anat has a very convincing and persuasive personality - she immediately assessed Hannah and determined she could help her. At the beginning of that lesson, I was careful not to take her advice to heart. Having just met with a number of opinionated physicians, I was not in a position to trust anyone's recommendation. I simply wanted to see results. By the end of her first lesson with Anat, Hannah opened her left hand for the first time. In addition, her whole body seemed more fluid and less tight than ever.

Witnessing real progress for the first time, I immediately booked another appointment. Jonathan was equally impressed with Hannah's movement over the next couple of days. Success cleared away his skepticism and he eagerly joined us for our next lesson with Anat to witness for himself what was the cause of such progress.

Hannah continued to improve dramatically due to the second lesson and we went back to Bermuda to figure out how we could arrange for Hannah to see Anat and continue her lessons.

We continue to see Anat and her colleague, Marcy Lindheimer, as often as possible, despite the time, expense and travel necessary to do so. Jonathan, so moved by Hannah's progress, completed Anat's training and now works with Hannah also. Hannah's hypertonia is now barely noticeable. She is an intelligent, fully capable child with movement abilities that would not be possible if we had not chosen to work with Anat and Marcy. As they say, the proof is in the pudding Hannah's success is evidence of the extraordinary capabilities of this work.

Kathleen Frith

Jake Froman

Diagnosis: Spastic Quadriplegia Cerebral Palsy

Our son, Jake suffered a severe brain injury at the time of his birth. The obstetrician attempted two forceps applications causing skull fractures and then Jake was born via emergency cesarean section after suffering loss of oxygen. Because of the gravity of the situation, the physician was suspended less than 48 hours after Jake's birth and subsequently, he lost his license to practice medicine. We were told that our son had severe brain damage from this trauma and that we would be better off sending him to an institution.

For Jake's first 9 months of life, we did the typically recommended program of physical, occupational, and speech therapy. At nine months of age, Jake had virtually no head control, terrible neck spasms that affected his ability to eat, fisted hands almost all of the time, tight muscles (unable to bend arms and legs), could not sit or crawl, and made very few sounds. We were desperate to find other types of treatment.

At this time, we started the Anat Baniel Method for Children with Marcy Lindheimer in New York and Anat Baniel in California. We lived in New York at the time and we traveled

to see Anat approximately one week per month. Immediately, Jake started to respond more positively to this work. His head control improved; his hands weren't "fisted" nearly as much; his neck spasms were getting better; and his overall muscle tone started to improve. We stopped physical and occupational therapy almost immediately and have not regretted that decision for a moment. While our progress is still slow, Jake has already exceeded the early predictions.

Jake will be 4 years old in November. Last year, we moved to California so that it will be easier to see Anat with regularity over the next number of years. Jake can now sit unassisted for several minutes; he does a combat crawl up to 30-40 feet at a time; his muscles are no longer tight; he is able to put 5-6 words together in a sentence; his receptive language is more than age appropriate; his current vocabulary exceeds 250 words (with more every day); and his ability to learn new things is remarkable. Jake has no signs of scoliosis or contractures (his doctors seem genuinely surprised at this). Jake's eyes are crossed and we have even seen improvement in that area (after some lessons, his eyes will remain straight for a few hours).

While we still have a lot of work ahead of us, Jake is a different person today because of Anat's effort and determination. Anat's touch is unique and the relationship that she has built with Jake is remarkable. We are truly committed to our work with Anat and believe that she will be able to help Jake to reach his full potential.

Jennifer and Jim Froman

Lucas

Diagnosis: Pulmonary Atresia, Brain Hemorrhage from Surgical Complications, Hydrocephalus with v/p Shunts.

Our son Lucas was born in January 2001 full term and at a healthy weight, but it soon became apparent that he had a congenital heart defect called pulmonary atresia. Lucas had surgery at only 2 days old to correct the problem but suffered complications and ended up on life support and suffered a massive stroke. What followed through the next two years was a whirlwind of 17 surgeries, numerous weeks of ventilation, countless interventions, and many hospitalizations. Lucas' development was hampered by all of the above as well as continued difficulty with his heart, residual problems from the stroke, and the development of a condition called hydrocephalus.

Lucas was quickly started on a regimen of physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and a parent-infant center based program. Although he was progressing slowly, it was neither as fast or as much as all of us believed he could accomplish. He was an incredibly fearful child as a result of so much physical and mental trauma, and his therapeutic treatments were severely hampered by this. Nowhere was this more evident than in his physical therapy. Lucas had a profound fear of being touched and having his body moved out of his comfort zone. He resisted being moved out of a centered, seated position, and got around by scooting on his bottom. He had never been able to withstand the experience of being prone, and so never learned to crawl. His fear prevented the physical therapist from moving forward with him. We came to realize that the style of traditional physical therapy was not working with Lucas and where he was coming from.

We began to hear about the Anat Baniel Method for Children in the spring of 2003, and at first we were extremely skeptical. We did not really understand how it worked and why it worked, and having had such a negative experience with physical therapy we were very reluctant to subject Lucas to any more fearful experiences.

Thankfully, we decided to give it a try. Lucas' first visit with Anat showed us how profoundly different this work was for him. Anat was able to touch Lucas; in fact, he

actually seemed to feel good after his session. Anat seemed able to help Lucas move further than he had before but without pushing him out of a comfortable space. We also started right away working with Anat's colleague Kinga, which was a wonderful experience as well. Lucas felt immediately comfortable with Kinga, and found her presence completely relaxing. Lucas quickly fell in love with both of these wonderful teachers. We were so excited, not only because Lucas was finally able to let someone give him healing touch, but because Anat and Kinga both had such a positive, strong outlook for his potential.

Lucas has now been seeing Anat and Kinga for about four months. He has changed physically as well as emotionally. A fearful child who could not handle any surprises or new situations can now go to a party, meet new people, and is excited to try new things. His attitude toward movement has made a complete turnaround. He loves to experiment with moving, is not afraid to fall, and does not give up when trying something new. He LOVES to move his body! He can now lay prone, be on hands and knees or hands and feet, pull himself up to stand and sit back down, and can even climb up on the couch all by himself to pet the family cat! He does all of this with a gracefulness that I wish I had in my movement. His speech is starting to pick up as well-in fact, all facets of his life are richer and more meaningful for him.

Lucas absolutely loves going to his lessons-they are the highlight of his days! He shows his incredible love for Anat and Kinga by showering them with kisses. All of this from a child who used to scream if anyone other than his parents tried to help him to move. Our only regret was that we didn't start sooner! Lucas has accomplished more in the last four months than the rest of his three years of life, and is on the road to a full recovery. Anat and Kinga have renewed our hope and excitement about Lucas' bright future!

*Jackie Jackson
Daley and Lee Jackson*

On March 16, 2004, Lucas' parents shared the following update:

What an incredible few months it has been for our family! The development that Lucas has experienced since our last report is dramatic to say the least. In the span of about four months, he has gone from a child just starting to gain some freedom and control over his movement in the world, to one who is completely independent in his movement. Lucas took his first unassisted steps only a few days before Christmas 2003, and it was the most amazing gift that we as his parents could ever have received!

Lucas now walks anywhere and everywhere-scooting, which was his only way of moving for so long, has disappeared. It is an absolute delight to see him exploring the world. Every day he is out of the door and walking down the sidewalk a little further. Imagine the joy I felt in having to chase after him while trying to make a transaction at the bank!

Lucas' movement has also continued to become more fluid. He transitions quite easily from one position to another. For example, he can walk over to an interesting toy, squat down to play, and then stand up again without having to sit. He sits cross legged quite easily, and can shift from sitting to hands and knees so quickly that it is hard to imagine that was ever a position of terror for him.

Perhaps what is more wonderful than the new movement is the joy and confidence that Lucas is feeling. He is asserting his independence as any 3 year old would, and is thrilled to explore new things. He has recently started preschool and transitioned so easily into being there on his own. Although he is the youngest child in his class, he is able to interact and move around with the rest of them instead of being lost in the shuffle. His teachers report that he loves the interaction and even has two friends. It is becoming

harder and harder to remember the terrified child that first met Anat and Kinga last summer.

The Anat Baniel Method has been the key that has allowed Lucas to change his world. Without question, deciding to engage Lucas in these lessons was the best decision we ever made.

Jack Tobin

Diagnosis: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Global Developmental Delay

Our son, Jack, was born April 13, 2001. When he was nine months old we noticed that his right eye was turning in. We brought Jack to his pediatrician who suggested we watch him closely for the next three months.

Jack was not babbling. He was not making eye contact. He did not seek out affection, and never hugged or kissed us. He played independently for long periods of time and did not seek out our participation in his play. He did not point at objects. He did not respond to his name. He did not stick his tongue out or allow his teeth to be brushed.

By the time Jack was fifteen months old, he was evaluated to have a ten month delay in his receptive and expressive language. His pediatrician said that Jack is very likely to be autistic and recommended that we seek early intervention. We chose the Anat Baniel Method of Feldenkrais for Jack.

We began the process with Marcy Lindheimer in New York City. Marcy gave him his first series of four lessons in October 2002, when Jack was seventeen months old. The results were staggering. By the end of the four lessons, Jack hugged his father spontaneously for the first time. Marcy was so encouraged by the way Jack responded after each lesson, she suggested we take him to California so that Anat Baniel herself could give him lessons as well. Two weeks later Jack had six lessons with Anat. The change in him was dramatic.

During these lessons, Jack began responding more comfortably to touch. He discovered his face, touching his nose and mouth for the first time in his life. His movements became more fluid. He started pointing at objects and making vocalizations. For the first time, he began pulling on my arm or tapping my leg to get my attention, then led me to the object that interested him. He began to clearly exhibit comprehension and receptive language. He also initiated sitting in his aunt's lap for the first time.

In January 2003 we went back to California for more lessons with Anat. During this visit Jack began babbling a great deal more with a lot of intonation. His vocalizations rapidly improved. He started relying more on verbal communication and interaction. He continued to show growing spontaneous affection and clearly enjoyed close contact. For the first time he engaged in play with a group of people and looked to be the center of attention. His movements became even more fluid and refined, and for the first time he put his hand in his mouth.

When we returned home from this trip, we discovered that Jack stopped having tantrums when in public places. He was no longer overwhelmed. He responded to his name consistently. He now spoke about 15 words that most people could understand, and vocalized many more words that were just not clear to us yet. His receptive language was reevaluated to be age appropriate. He knew his body parts and had a sense of self. When asked, he would stick out his tongue and allow his teeth to be brushed for a few seconds.

We took Jack to his pediatrician for a twenty-one month visit. The doctor said we are no longer looking at autism or the autism spectrum.

In March 2003, Jack spent 2 weeks receiving lessons from Anat. Most significant after this series of lessons was Jack's language. Everyday he began using new words. By July Jack had about 75 words. He spoke in sentences, using mostly jargon, but with enough recognizable words to understand his meaning. His speech therapist was especially surprised and impressed with his rapid development.

We continued to take Jack to see Marcy twice a week. His development consistently improved. His eyes were by this time completely straight. He could be described as a pleasant and interactive child, who spontaneously seeks affection from his parents and follows directions very well. It was by now difficult to see any developmental differences between him and other children his age. In fact, we often observed that Jack had better communication skills, finer distinctions, and more language than his peers.

In August 2003, when Jack was 2 years and 4 months old, we again took him to California for another week of lessons with Anat. At the time of his first lesson, Jack still sat on the floor in a V position and only occasionally side sitting. He had never sat Indian style. He still had a severe sensitivity to having his feet and toes touched. When lying on his stomach he was unable to lift his head up. His behavior had started to become somewhat aggressive.

After 6 lessons he was doing much more intentional side sitting. He became more comfortable sitting Indian style although still did not choose that position. His feet were much less sensitive. So much so that I was able to cut his toenails while he was awake. It still was not something he enjoyed but he tolerated it much better. For the first time I saw Jack raise his head while lying on his stomach. His R sound became absolutely clear. His sentences started having less jargon and more specific words. He spoke in paragraphs. He learned the difference between gentle and hard.

After that visit, Jack went four weeks without lessons due to summer vacations and travel. His regression was significant. His right eye crossed again, he had shorter attention span, his behavior was often aggressive and he threw temper tantrums. He began screaming for no apparent reason, and was not sleeping through the night.

After ten months of work with Anat and Marcy, it became abundantly clear how vital it was for Jack to have consistent lessons. This is a child who responds so beautifully to the lessons and achieves such growth and development with them. Without the lessons, he was not able to hold what he learned for more than two weeks. The subtle pull towards autistic behavior became evident.

Today, in early 2005, we have been in the process with Anat and Marcy for more than two years. Jack is in a mainstream pre-school, and is doing wonderfully. He is very bright. His vocabulary is off the charts. His teacher told me that she thinks the other kids would say Jack is the smartest in the class. He is very sociable, and plays well with other kids. He is polite, friendly, and has a great sense of self.

We know that all of Jack's improvement is a direct result of the Anat Baniel Method for Children. We find that Jack is now able to go for four weeks without lessons before we see some regression. We are continuing the process, seeing Anat every quarter and Marcy on a regular basis.

Olivia Dolemba
Diagnosis: Hemiplegia

Miracles happen to those who believe in them

Dear Anat,

"Today, children don't need to tie their shoes."

This was the response that the therapist in one of Chicago's leading rehabilitation facilities provided to our inquiry if Olivia would someday be able to tie her shoes, just before our first visit to see you in California three years ago.

I wondered if she would ever run with joy.

I wondered if she would ride a bike.

I wondered if she would climb the monkey bars.

I wondered if she would hold a glass.

I wondered if she would wave her hand.

I wondered if she would caress her mother's face.

I hoped and prayed that she would be able to do all of this someday.

Today she can.

We considered our first trip to see you as an experiment, comparing your method against the conventional methods we had employed to date, afraid that the wrong choice would have a negative impact on the rest of our daughter's life. The results of that first lesson and each lesson that has followed were immediate, cumulative and dramatic. The best example of this was at the park the day before our last lesson on that first trip to California. For Olivia to play on the swing we would have to unclench her fist and re-clench it on the seat in front of her so that she could hold on. Instead, she raised her arm and grabbed the seat all by herself. Tracye and I marveled in disbelief; did this just really happen? Was that her left hand? Of course not, it was her right. This kind of experience has been repeated time and again since then. Sometimes the successes were small incremental advances and sometimes they were great. But most important, they were consistent. As we continued our visits to you I asked myself, what could I reasonably expect Olivia to do from her lessons by the time she was five. Olivia has met and in many instances exceeded the capabilities I had hoped and prayed for and her advancements continue at a time when we expected them to end.

It truly was a miracle that we found our way to you for Olivia to benefit from your gift for teaching children how to overcome their disabilities. But the real miracle of Olivia's recovery from cerebral palsy is as much of a physiological event as it is believing it can happen.

I never thought Olivia would be able to play the piano, but I now truly believe that someday she will as well as be able to tie her shoes.

We will never be able to repay you for what you have done for our daughter and how your gift, your conviction, your dedication and compassion has changed our lives.

Mark Dolemba

AJ Arkebauer

Diagnosis: Cerebral Palsy, Quadriplegia

*"Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul..."
- Emily Dickinson*

My three-and-a-half-year-old son is a beautiful little boy with bittersweet chocolate eyes. He has a lively sense of humor and an infectious giggle. He worships his big brother and Blues Clues. He will start preschool this fall. He is also quadriplegic, having suffered profound brain damage at birth. He has great difficulties eating and drinking and receives the vast majority of his nutrition through a g-tube. While his doctors are careful not to give prognoses as to what he is capable of (intelligence testing shows him to have normal or high intelligence), he is not expected to ever be able to sit up, walk or speak coherently.

When we finally brought our baby home from the NI CU, I at first hoped wildly and passionately, needing to believe that an outpouring of love would be enough to make his myriad issues go away. As the months and years went by, I learned, with some bitterness at first and with a matter-of-fact quality later, to scale my hope back. Way back. Bit by bit, the things most parents don't even realize they hope for were dropped from my mind. Walking, talking, crawling.. .one by one I shed those future pictures of my child, and learned to not even really look back at them, or at least to look back academically rather than emotionally. But hope is a tenacious little bird, and there is always something left. Not things that you really, truly believe can happen, but a tiny secret part of you still hopes they will ~ against all evidence to the contrary. I sometimes admit to one or two of these hopes with our various specialists almost in a self deprecating way, dismissing them as my "if I could have my world on a silver platter" wish list. Normal parents would laugh to see what tiny things are on my wish list.

Given the sheaf of cat-scans, EEGs and MRIs that we had in hand, there was certainly no delay in my son's diagnosis. At six weeks old, he began receiving physical, occupational and speech therapy, several times a week. He has had regular, sustained services from therapists uniformly acknowledged to be some of the best in their field, who genuinely care about my son and I am confident are doing their best work. But by age two it was clear to me that physical therapy had taken us about as far as it was going to go. We had made little if any progress in many areas, and the recommendations were becoming increasingly counter-intuitive to me and distressing to my child: AFO's, standers (which if you are not familiar with them look for all the world like medieval torture devices) and botox injections to combat spasticity (which I refused). When my son screamed with rage and fury at being strapped into a stander, I was told to "distract" him.

The direction we seemed to be moving was counter to all of my instincts as a mother and to my son's personality. I began to hunt in earnest for something else. Through parent word-of-mouth, I heard about Anat's work with children. We started with Anat in October 2001. (We also see Marianne Kagan in Chicago in between visits to California.) To make room in my career for regular visits to California, I changed jobs and took a part-time position. My husband and I looked at our family finances and realized this new undertaking would mean that my salary basically covered nothing more than these lessons, our other medical bills and our nanny expenses. I signed up for a full season of lessons with Anat promising myself that we would make this investment for at least a year before we looked for any results. My "silver platter" wish list wasn't even on the agenda.

The most remarkable thing about the lessons was immediately observed: my son, who has an intense distrust of strangers and who is capable of hollering nonstop through an

entire conventional therapy session, giggled his way all through his first week of lessons with Anat. We used to have to spell the word "t-h-e-r-a-p-y" to avoid screaming fits, and yet this same child smiles happily when we enter the lobby of Marianne's building, clearly eager to see her. Within six or seven weeks of starting the lessons, even my son's conventional therapists were exclaiming over how improved his hands were. Instead of tight fists, for the first time in three years his hands were open. When he reached for a toy that intrigued him, his fingers were outstretched. He started rolling onto his side and stomach with great glee (clearly proud of himself), whereas before he would occasionally flip onto his stomach by accident and immediately start screaming with rage.

By spring of 2002, he was holding his spine differently and was a markedly happier little boy, generally, which made its own profound difference to our life as a family. He was also, for the first time ever, occasionally sucking on a bottle when drinking. At this writing, in June of 2002, he is interacting with the world in new ways. Instead of crying when a DVD stops playing on the laptop computer, he has scooted his way over to the computer and started whacking at the buttons (even successfully bringing up the control panel). Instead of screeching when left alone on the floor of his room while I run to get the evening's last g-tube feeding accoutrements, he rolls on to his side and starts playing with a ball. With all due respect to our conventional therapists, we have seen far more progress in the first six months of our work with Anat and Marianne than we saw in three years of conventional therapy.

I don't know where we will end up, and my wish list is still a closely-guarded secret. I've always known, as an absolute, that my son will do big things in his life. For the first time, though, I also feel a tiny little rush of feathers.

Evelyn Arkebauer

Elizabeth

Diagnosis: Cerebellar Hypoplasia

Elizabeth's mother speaking to a group of therapists:

Many of you may know of my daughter Elizabeth... Some of you have met her personally and others of you have watched Dr. Feldenkrais and Anat working with her those early years through the practitioner training tapes. The reason that I want to speak to you today is that it is impossible to fully imagine the miracle of who Elizabeth has become unless you know how far she has come from where she started out in life. When she was born, Liz had no movement in her body. When I say "no movement," I mean that her condition was so severe that she could not even move her eyeballs, and for a time we believed that she was blind.

My husband and I were determined to leave no stone unturned to help her. We started with the "low incidence" early intervention services provided by our local school system who offered physical and occupational therapies...all were painful and unproductive experiences for her. Adding insult to injury, therapist after therapist told us "There is nobody home inside this child." When she was four months old, the chief of pediatric neurology at the University of Chicago told us that she was globally brain damaged, that there had been no brain development since birth, and that he saw no reason to believe that there would ever be brain development in this child. He felt that the best we could hope for would be profound retardation. He suggested that she probably would need to be institutionalized and that we should "prepare" ourselves because he did not expect that she would ever be able to sit up on her own, to walk, to be continent, or to feed herself.

You understand that the brain cannot develop if the body does not move, and vice versa. This child's body was rigid, at the same time as it was floppy and hypotonic; she was virtually imprisoned within the confines of her damaged brain. It is my belief that had we not found the Feldenkrais (later: the Anat Baniel Method) Method when we did, had we done nothing to bypass the damage that had occurred in utero, had we made no effort to re-route and create new and healthy neural pathways, she would in fact have become more and more disabled and would have fallen more and more behind intellectually, true to the doctor's most dire predictions.

I am happy to report that today, this same little girl has become a beautiful young woman who is not only walking, but at age 25 is in graduate school getting a second master's degree in social work, after having received her first master's degree in Judaic studies from Brandeis University... a thousand miles away from her family. She has become, in other words, a totally independent and happily well-functioning, highly educated human being with one of the strongest and most positive senses of self esteem of anyone I know. You know there is an expression in Yiddish which says that "God slaps you on one cheek and kisses you on the other." My husband Lou and I have been profoundly kissed.

I must tell you that regarding the Feldenkrais work, we were very fortunate to find Moshe Feldenkrais himself... and when Elizabeth was so young. By 13 months of age, Liz remained virtually paralyzed; the only movement she could muster was to roll over on one side. Within her first five 20 minute sessions with Moshe, however, she had begun to make the reptilian movements of creeping. Here was the real beginning of this child's life, the real birth and awakening of her brain and body. Moshe says, "Movement is life." From that moment on, this imprisoned, in pain, and truly miserable infant was snatched right out of the jaws of Hell, as were we, her parents and family. Though it was I who gave birth to my daughter, I believe that it was Anat and Moshe who truly gave her life... and life quality.

We followed Moshe everywhere that he happened to be in this world until he died, when Liz was three years old. We traveled to New York, to Washington, to Toronto and to Massachusetts. We would pick him up at the airport in Chicago when he would be passing through en route to California, we'd take him to a near-by motel to work with Elizabeth, and then would deliver him back for his connecting flight. We even took Liz and her three year old brother Adam to Israel to work with him and spent as much as a month at a time there, on three separate occasions, to receive his work.

One of the most precious legacies that Moshe left to us was this beautiful, incredibly gifted and talented woman, Anat Baniel, a practitioner trained by him, who was no more than a girl herself in those days old when she first began to work with Elizabeth side by side with Moshe. When Moshe died, he bequeathed Elizabeth to Anat as her sole caretaker and therapist, and this she has been to this very day. Lou and I followed Anat in the same way that we had first followed Moshe, taking time from our personal and professional lives to bring Liz to her wherever she was, for one week out of every eight weeks throughout Liz's growing up years. At one point, we even brought Anat to Chicago from her home in Jerusalem to work with our daughter. The optimistic results were well worth the personal and financial sacrifice; there was simply no question about it. To this day, Liz still sees Anat for lessons whenever possible

Regarding Anat, - I am going to go out on a limb now to make a statement which I hope is not inappropriate to say - I believe that she is, without question, the most talented human being on this earth in terms of what she has been able to accomplish with children through her work. As an expert in the Feldenkrais Method, she developed, expanded and

evolved this technique into her own Anat Baniel Method for children based on the work of Dr. Moshe Feldenkrais... in my opinion, taking the work even BEYOND where Moshe had been able to go in terms of diversity of function, technique, child and parent relationships, and professional training.

It is always interesting for me to hear the parents of Anat's child students speaking about how they can observe differences in their child after a single lesson, because we did, too... as amazed as we were to observe Liz's continuing perceptible gains, it never ceases to amaze me that such miraculous results happen so consistently for so many other children as well. Our lives together with our daughter... which started out with such fear and depression, such disillusion and trauma, not knowing what was to become of us all... became so full of hope. To this day, I am always a little taken aback when anyone perceives or refers to me as the mother of a handicapped child. I don't see myself this way at all, nor do I see Liz that way. To me she is simply one great girl who has had so much to offer us and to everyone who knows her ...and we are the luckiest parents who ever lived to have found Moshe and Anat. Our entire family moved from a state of darkness into the light as Moshe and Anat released and nurtured the human being inside of Elizabeth.

We did what we did for our child, because it was her due and our responsibility, because we loved her, because we felt there was no alternative. Quite honestly, we did what we did, too, for ourselves. Living with despair is an intolerable way to go through life. Replacing despair with optimism and hope, the achievement of potential, the energy to keep moving forward, the motivation to not stop till you are there, the knowledge that you are upgrading your child's existence day to day despite her limitations and that tortuous first year was of invaluable benefit for us. Without hope there would have been no life to speak of... for her or for us.

Abigail Natenshon

John*

Diagnosis: Mild Cerebral Palsy

My son whom I will call "John" for this article was diagnosed with mild spastic CP when he was 2yrs old. The doctors declared John as fully functional and placed him in PT where he was fitted with AFO's. During our 3yrs in PT, we made progress in muscle strengthening and therefore gaining some beginning skills of jumping, hopping, one leg standing etc. Our biggest challenge was the mobility of the hips. All effort put into opening up the hips, still brought no results.

Then we started seeing Anat Baniel for a series of lessons each month and in between our visits with her, we've been seeing Cheryl Eichner a team practitioner. To say the least, it has been an amazing journey so far. If the long-term progress will be as effective as the short-term results that I have seen, this will some day be short of a miracle.

I keep a journal of my observations and want to give you an idea of the changes that have occurred during this short amount of time:

In the 1st month of working with Anat and Cheryl, John spontaneously touched his heels to the ground while running and his knees began straightening. We stopped wearing AFO's. My son was elated. The daily struggle of forcing him to wear the braces was over.

The 2nd month changed his rigid, stiff and arching back into a much softer, more fluid upper torso. His hips began to open up and he could now sit criss-cross. He started hopping and skipping all day long.

During the 3rd month John started jumping down from heights that scared me. He would jump everywhere and from anything feeling his own body balance. One day he just walked for half a day; effortless, calm, perfect posture and body movement.

And then 2 weeks ago he surprised us all. He hopped on one leg. Something I had only dreamed of my son being able to do.

Dr. Feldenkrais once said “you have to see it to believe it” in reference to Anat Baniel’s work with children and CP. That is so true. If you could see the happiness and quality of life my son has gained in these few weeks that have past, you would believe it. Thank you Anat and Cheryl for the work you do.

-John’s mother

A letter from John’s* physician:

4-16-04

To Whom It May Concern:

It has been my pleasure to be one of the doctors taking care of John. John is a very sweet little boy who was born with cerebral palsy. His parents have made numerous attempts with different therapies; unfortunately they have had little success so far. Indeed, most children with John’s condition typically face a miserable succession of painful and costly surgeries and/or orthopedic interventions.

John may be able to avoid this unhappy outcome. Fortunately, the world’s leading expert in the neuromuscular reeducation of children with cerebral palsy, Ms. Anat Baniel, has agreed to work with John. She utilizes a technique called the Feldenkrais method. This type of therapy, often used to rehabilitate stroke victims, utilizes subtle movements to repattern the brain’s circuits to allow the child to learn to move in a normal way.

I have seen firsthand the excellent results. Traditional surgical and orthopedic therapies are *many times* more costly than this method.

Please don’t hesitate to call me if I can answer any further questions.

Very Truly Yours
Eugene Benjamin, MD
Pebble Beach Health and Wellness Center

**The child’s name in the story and letter has been changed to John to maintain anonymity as per the request of the parents.*

Donovan

Diagnosis: Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease, Sensory Integration Processing Problems, Anxiety Disorder

Donovan just turned three years old a few weeks ago, but he's already experienced significant challenges. Born with Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), and dysfunctions in his sensory integration processing, he's experienced pain, medication, fear, anxiety, overwhelm and sensory overload daily. He has had many visits to the doctor and other professionals, two trips to a Denver feeding specialty clinic, and eight therapy sessions per week (for two years straight), working hard in therapies almost every single day of his life. His schedule could make even the busiest adult tire. His therapies consisted of physical therapy, occupational therapy, feeding therapy, music therapy, habilitation, facilitated playschool, early intervention, and other special services that we found for him. He has made significant gains through these therapies; however, he has come as far as he can with these traditional methods. He will start preschool in the fall, but still has some major hurdles.

Through working very hard daily, Donovan has eliminated his fine motor delays altogether. We are very proud of him. He still shows gross motor delay, low tone, feeding issues revolving around being disgusted with foods because of sensory issues, lack of appetite and his GERD. The sensory integration dysfunction causes him to hear things way too loud, see things as way too bright and have poor visual tracking of objects, to feel things like lotion or pudding that literally hurt him or make him nauseated, to not be sure of where his body is in space, and to not be sure of how lightly or firm to touch something. He has had severe panic attacks (shaking, sweating, fast and pounding heartbeat, etc.) over hearing, and/or seeing a vacuum cleaner, and has grown to have such a significant fear that even talking about it produces the same reaction out of extreme fear. Sensory integration is a very real neurological diagnosis. While an MRI shows no abnormal brain development with Donovan, there is inappropriate brain communication on some level, causing misinterpretation of stimuli.

Two of the most difficult issues that he has to combat daily are feeding and anxiety from overload of sensory stimulation. As his mom, it breaks my heart that a boy his age should encounter such fears and anxiety of normal daily occurrences. For example, when he would like to play at the playground with other children his age, Donovan hears their laughing and squealing as yelling. He misinterprets the sounds, thinking that they are being mean to him by yelling at him, therefore he becomes afraid. He cannot go into public restrooms because the sound of the toilets flushing for him is like being at the bottom of Niagara Falls for us, and household appliances can sound as loud as a rock concert. He cries if he has to go outside without sunglasses because the sun burns his eyes so much. A few short months ago, he would throw up from being a bystander as we fed his infant sister cereal. Imagine the feeling of having your foot fall asleep for a moment, . . . Donovan feels that in his body, not knowing clear boundaries of where his body ends and something else begins, not knowing exactly where his body is in any space.

These are just a few examples of Donovan's hurdles. We are very proud of his progress to date, his strength and determination, his spirit, intelligence, and superb imagination. We also still feel desperate to help him overcome and/or learn to cope with these challenges so he can thrive and even enjoy his childhood days.

His well-known developmental pediatrician tells us that if this level of anxiety persists, he will surely need anti-anxiety medication by the time he is five years old. Medications of this sort influence all other bodily systems, causing terrible side effects. Donovan is an extremely intelligent little boy with a whole lot of potential. Although he has battled delays in gross and fine motor skills, he has recently began spelling and reading at least ten words, and has many other tremendous skills that indicate that he is learning at a much higher age level. He has so many gifts, and he is incredibly sweet and nurturing.

A few months ago, Donovan's wonderful feeding therapist, Betsy, told us of this method of helping children with developmental challenges in San Rafael, California, where they do a form of Feldenkrais for children. One of Betsy's other little clients had gone to this office for about three visits (each visit is usually five days long), with incredible results. Knowing this little girl before the Anat Baniel Method and seeing her after was not only convincing that I had to take Donovan, it was breathtaking. This little girl has had similar challenges with sensory, feeding, and low tone and now she has become a vibrant, beautiful picture of typical preschooler activity.

Called the Anat Baniel Method for Children (anatbanielmethod.com), the office consists of Anat and three or four other practitioners. Anat is an amazingly talented, compassionate and brilliant woman who through movement lessons and awareness of movement, teaches children to overcome major challenges. She does so by providing "meaningful and useful information to the nervous system." She uses "movement and touch as a language, as a way of communicating with the nervous system of the child."

Anat says: "we know that the brain is a highly complex, self-organizing system that organizes and controls movement." She adds: "we look to provide the child with experiences (information) that would allow it to reorganize itself and bring about the desired changes spontaneously." This approach does not focus on what is wrong or unhealthy with the child. It focuses on the health and brings out lovely, welcomed changes from physical, to mental and emotional, encompassing every inner system

On June 7, 2004, Donovan had his first weeklong visit with Anat. He received a daily lesson from Anat and an additional lesson each day from either Kinga or Joseph-two of her team teachers. He progressed in a big way with the Anat Baniel Method! He had amazing gains and my husband describes it as transformational. While some changes seemed subtle at first, they occurred very quickly during this week and Donovan's system seemed to make a shift. These "little" changes are really not so little to us, as he has worked in conventional therapies to overcome these things for years. There is also a big change in the whole package of Donovan. Some changes occur immediately as the lessons are given, and some occur over a period of time after the lessons as the brain adopts these new teachings and adapts to a new, welcomed, better way of functioning and being. Donovan actually fell asleep on the table twice and when he was not sleeping, he appeared to be "drinking it in", as Anat well described his response.

According to Anat, Donovan will likely need three or four more visits to get him to a successful place of functioning. Some of the changes we have seen in Donovan in just one weeklong visit have been:

1. **Better posture** – looking less low-toned. Prior to going for lessons, Donovan's tone grew worrisome and his posture looked like he was in his eighties.
2. **Less crankiness and anxiety** – Donovan had a tendency towards becoming cranky, and used to get overwhelmed and explosive - over the top at any moment. These occurrences have lessened in frequency and depth since our first visit.
3. **New mouth and tongue movements and noises** – Since his lessons, Donovan is able to stick his tongue far outside his mouth and did so many times. Prior to lessons it may have occurred a few times and not nearly as far. He is even able to bring his lips together almost in a pucker for a kiss, making the kissing noise which he was unable to do before the lessons.
4. **More hand exploration** – Donovan spontaneously began to clap his hands firmly and for a good length of time while in lessons with Anat, and has done so since. Prior to lessons, Donovan would only clap when asked, and lightly without his fingertips touching because he did not want the input (tactile defensiveness).

5. **Willingness to try new foods** – During the week of lessons, Donovan tried and ate two new foods, and had a better appetite. We have not been able to have an increase in volume overall yet, but I know we will get there.
6. **Expression of feelings** – Donovan recognized his fears and was able to appropriately express them to his father. Donovan hit a child on the playground. When talking with his Dad about it, for the first time Donovan was able to express that he was afraid because he did not know the boy and wanted him to go away. Donovan was also able to accept his father's invitation to introduce himself to the little boy so he would no longer be afraid.
7. **Better eye contact** – It can be extremely overwhelming for a child with sensory issues to have eye contact with others. Donovan has been able to increase the length of time he makes eye contact since his lessons.
8. **Improved neck movement** – As an infant Donovan suffered from Torticollis, and we believe that due to his severe reflux, he had learned how to hold his head to a certain side to minimize discomfort from his continuous and chronic vomiting. His neck has been so stiff, that he could not shake his head yes, or even nod it. His head and neck were very uncomfortable for him and it was clear that it did not work well with his body. While this area still needs a lot of work, we are thrilled to report that he can gently, slowly nod his head when in his car seat since his lessons. This is emerging and we can see the progress made.
9. **Coordination and sturdiness** – Donovan is more coordinated. Being a quiet bystander, it is awesome to watch Donovan's ability to navigate through his environment with more ease and agility than before.
10. **More tolerant of touch** – Donovan better tolerates light touch since lessons.
11. **Running with heels down** – Donovan used to "run" on his tiptoes with the heels off the ground – more like prancing. After his first few lessons, we noticed that he now can run with his heels touching the ground.
12. **Blowing out a candle** – Prior to lessons, Donovan was only able to blow out a candle using a straw. He has blown out candles now on his own, with his new lip movements.

The above twelve items of progress are changes that we hoped would occur. Anat asked me to write a mini version of Donovan's story as soon as I could, because she said I would forget just how tough things were. To imagine being able to forget exactly how much we all struggled in the last three years brought tears to my eyes, but joy and hope to our hearts. To think that this brilliant little boy could progress to the point that he could do what he wanted to do in any given day without being so limited and imprisoned with challenges is quite a gift. To have met Anat, Joseph and Kinga and to have them work with Donovan, was transformational. As with anything in life, it is always prudent to focus on the positive, manifesting the good that we want. As a spiritual and transformational life coach, I can appreciate the simple magic of the world. They are exactly what I had hoped was out there to help my little boy.

-Gina

Lindsay

Diagnosis: Sensory Integration Dysfunction, Low Muscle Tone, Problems with Feeding

It is May 2004, my daughter Lindsay has just returned from her third visit with Anat. She was 2 1/2 years old when we first saw Anat, four months ago. We have had fifteen sessions during this time. Lindsay's life has changed dramatically for the better in these last four months.

Before coming to Anat, when you saw Lindsay standing on the playground she looked just like every other healthy child. The only problem is that she was not. She has sensory

integration dysfunction and low muscle tone. She consumes very small quantities of food and liquids. Four months ago her diet consisted mostly of crackers with cream cheese, chips, chocolate and baby formula. We were in constant fear of her getting sick and worrying if she would end up in the hospital again for dehydration. Socially it was difficult to watch her stand back and not be able to go on the playground if there was more than one child. She was a very inactive child. She was always the last one in line in class. She was so shy, quiet and timid. I just assumed that was her personality.

She also has something going on with her right side, not being able to roll over on it. Watching her run is interesting as her left arm moves and the right side stays still.

The first visit(one week): The main reason I went to see Anat was in hopes that we would be able to get Lindsay to eat and drink. When we came home from our first visit with Anat I was terrified. My sweet, well-behaved child had turned into someone I had never met. She was a true challenge and was very loud. After ten days of this, I finally had to email Anat to find out if this was normal. Eventually, she balanced these aggressive emotions out and became this unbelievable child with a lot of self-confidence, which was something I didn't even know to hope for. Also, during the first two weeks, she ate and drank more than she ever had. She was a little more open to trying a few new foods, which was a big breakthrough because we had been in therapy with Lindsay since she was 9 months old.

Unfortunately, the increase in volume faded after time, but there was a slight increase in liquid consumption and a little bit more variety in the foods she ate. Her self-confidence stayed with her, along with a little more movement on her right side.

My second visit I was scared to go to see Anat. Although I believed that it could truly help Lindsay, I didn't know if I could handle another two weeks of an extremely challenging child when I came home. It was a pleasant surprise to have a completely different outcome. Lindsay just laughed and sang all the time. It was wonderful. Her level of confidence continued to increase and the most noticeable change was the increased level of activity. She was running, jumping and playing just like the other kids. We had some incredible changes in eating also. The child who normally drank 8-9oz. of formula a day, drank 30oz one day. She was just so much more open to trying things especially fruit. She consumed larger quantities of foods. After two weeks, the effect on the eating again began to decrease. Then she got sick, but actually consumed more liquids than normal, instead of refusing them, like in the past.

Recently we went to a birthday party with about 20 kids she did not know. She walked right up to the front of the group to sit without any encouragement from mom or dad.

I no longer watch her every bite and count her every ounce of formula. Not only has Lindsay changed, but, I her mother, has changed. Although Lindsay's eating habits are still very limited, we are making some progress with them, which is major, because I was losing hope not knowing what else I could do to help my child. For me, I finally feel like Lindsay is going to be O.K. and we will not end up on a feeding tube, which has always been somewhat of a threat over the last year and a half. More importantly, Lindsay has evolved into a completely different child, so full of life

We just had our third visit to Anat's. I was amazed watching Anat working on Lindsay's mouth and jaw. It was 2 years ago, but I still vividly remember how when the therapist just tried to put a finger around Lindsay's mouth, how she cried hysterically because it was so sensitive. She still does not really enjoy this, but has very little trouble tolerating it. Also, the minute Anat started working on Lindsay during the lesson, the immediate laughter began again.

We went right from our lesson to the park that day. Here she was able to do things she never had been able to do in the past with the level of energy and activity being so high. Since we've been home, she is now holding her own bottle, after 2-3/4years of mom holding it for her. She is much more open to potty training, which we have been struggling with. Best of all, she is so full of happiness and energy, she is now asking to run and play with the other kids.

We are anxiously awaiting our fourth visit, which we scheduled only three weeks apart from the last one. We are hoping that the increase in food consumption will continue with the closeness in lessons. Only time will tell.

We live out of state, so these trips to San Rafael are quite expensive for us. The changes I have seen in my daughter in such a short amount of time make it worth every penny. I have been in therapy with my daughter over 2 years now and have not seen a fraction of the progress that I have seen working with Anat in just four months. She has been able to change things that I didn't even know could be changed. As her pediatrician said "Standard medicine is only the tip of the iceberg." Anat has been able to help us where no one else has. I feel blessed every day that a friend I met at a feeding workshop was kind enough to let me know about Anat's work.

Terry